

**The  
City of Portage la Prairie  
2021 -2023  
Accessibility Plan**



## Statement of Commitment

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The City of Portage la Prairie is committed to providing equal service to all citizens and visitors regardless of their abilities. We strive to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility and to meet the requirements of the “Accessibility for Manitobans Act”.

## Accessibility Legislation

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The Accessibility of Manitobans Act (AMA) was passed December 5, 2013. Its goal is to enable the implementation of the measures, policies, practices and other requirements necessary to make significant progress towards achieving accessibility in Manitoba by 2023. Municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 were required to have an accessibility plan in place by 2016. The legislation required accessibility standards to be developed over the following several years. The standards will address barriers and set out requirements in five key areas of daily living. These standards are:

1. Customer service
2. Information and communication
3. Transportation
4. Employment
5. Built environment

The Customer Service Standard was adopted in 2015 and the City of Portage la Prairie was required to be compliant by 2017. The Standard requires organizations to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to customer service. Where this is not possible they must provide equivalent customer service. To provide accessible customer service, organizations need to:

- review physical barriers that prevent customers receiving service
- consider the communication needs of clients
- allow service animals
- allow assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walkers and oxygen tanks
- let customers know your accessibility policies and procedures
- let customers know when accessible services aren't available
- invite customers to provide feedback
- understand The Human Rights Code (Manitoba) and provide reasonable accommodations
- train staff on accessible customer service

The Employment Standard was the second to be put into place. The deadline for large municipalities to comply was May 1, 2021. This Standard calls on all employers to have policies

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and practices to provide reasonable accommodations for job applicants and employees. Requirements include:

- offering reasonable accommodations when recruiting new employees
- informing job applicants about workplace accommodation policies and practices when making an offer of employment
- considering workplace barriers that may affect employees as part of performance management or career development
- developing and implementing individualized accommodation plans at an employee's request
- sharing information about policies and practices related to employment accessibility with employees, and ensuring this information is available in accessible formats or with communication supports, upon request
- implementing a return-to-work policy for employees who have been absent because of a disability, including a process to introduce reasonable workplace accommodations if these are required
- keeping employees safe during an emergency
- training human resources, management and supervisors about accessible employment and related legislation

The City began providing accessibility training to all staff in 2017, and will continue with regular, updated training as per the Standard.

## Accessibility Committee

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The Portage la Prairie Accessibility Committee was established in August of 2015 to facilitate the development of the Municipal Accessibility Plan.

The Accessibility Committee is a working group comprised of staff representing various City Departments. The primary role of the committee is to demonstrate leadership in recommending innovative approaches and progressive solutions to make city services, programs, by-laws, policies, and practices more accessible to employees and residents of Portage la Prairie.

## Consultation Activities

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A public open house was held on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to seek feedback on the accessibility of city services as well as to present draft plans. This event was advertised on the city website, through social media, and through local media. Local organizations that advocate for, or provide services to, persons with disabilities were invited to take part. The results of this open house were used to identify areas of concern and to help prioritize actions. The city has continued to invite feedback and has received several emails which were passed on to the appropriate departments. A new website and mobile app were implemented in 2018, containing a service request form that can be used for accessibility feedback.

## Multi-Year Action Plan

This section outlines the policies and actions the City of Portage la Prairie has put in place to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities, in compliance with the AMA accessibility standards. Our goal is to remove accessibility barriers and prevent further barriers.

<b>General Requirements of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (C.C.S.M. c A1.7)</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Complete</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Responsibility Of</b>
Create Accessibility Plan	X			Accessibility Committee
Consultation with persons disabled by barriers - open house, online survey, etc.	X			Accessibility Committee
Post the Plan on the City website	X			Accessibility Committee, Communications Coordinator
Update the Plan at least every 2 years	X		X	Accessibility Committee
Develop Accessibility Policies according to applicable Acts and guidelines	X			Accessibility Committee, Administration
Create accessibility customer feedback process and invite users to provide feedback	X	X	X	Accessibility Committee, Communications Coordinator
Identify and compile all City publications and ensure that they can be converted to an accessible format in a timely manner.	X		X	All Departments
Include an "active offer" on all City documents informing that they are available in an accessible format on request	X	X	X	All Departments
Develop a training plan to ensure all employees and volunteers who deal with the public are trained in accessible customer service. Review training plan every 2 years.	X		X	Accessibility Committee, Human Resources, Management
Update website and provide mobile app to allow some services to be accessed easily online regardless of location	X			Accessibility Committee, IT

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Explore alternate methods of providing customer service where physical barriers exist. Determine costs and feasibility and find an alternate method of service delivery if required.	X	X	X	Accessibility Committee, Management
Make every effort to ensure that public events are accessible. Develop an accessible events checklist.	X	X	X	Accessibility Committee, All Departments
Create a web page on the City's website dedicated to accessibility and update it regularly.	X	X	X	Accessibility Committee, Communications Coordinator, IT
Review existing Accessibility Policies	X		X	Accessibility Committee, Administration
Develop Accessible Employment Policy	X			Accessibility Committee, Human Resources

### Future Planned Accessibility Action Items

This section will be updated as new projects or information is made available.

## Methodologies

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### Review of Current Activities to Identify Barriers

A review of current activities to identify barriers is ongoing with the goal of creating policies and procedures to prevent future barriers from being created and viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. Barriers will be addressed on an ongoing basis.

### Monitoring Progress and Audit Function

As an update of this Plan is required every two years, reviews by the Accessibility Policy Review Committee will occur prior to the budget preparation cycle each year. The purpose of an annual review of the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan is to evaluate whether or not targets are being met and to adopt a plan to meet current expectations. The Accessibility Policy Review Committee will meet semi-annually, or more frequently if required. Public feedback will be invited continually in a variety of ways. Feedback will be recorded and tracked through a City software program.

### Communication of Plan

The plan is posted on the City's website and will be updated bi-annually.

## Conclusion

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The City of Portage la Prairie is committed to continuously addressing past and present accessibility barriers and to being progressive in developing innovative solutions to accessibility matters. We believe in integration and equal opportunity and are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City recommends that the Province co-ordinate the preparation of uniform Municipal Accessibility Guidelines so that the guidelines can be implemented in a consistent manner and that the Province provides Accessibility Funding to assist municipalities in the implementation of barrier-free services and facilities.

## Further Information

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For more information on the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan for the City of Portage la Prairie, please contact Diane Van Aert, Chair of the Accessibility Committee

- By phone at (204) 239-8337
- Via email at [accessibility@city-plap.com](mailto:accessibility@city-plap.com)