Sault Ste. Marie Public Library

"One stop….endless possibilities"

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

(2023-2028)

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Accessible formats of this document will be made available upon request.

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

The Sault Ste. Marie Public Library is committed to providing opportunities for all our community members to discover, learn, and grow. We serve as a community partner offering spaces, resources, and connections which contribute to quality of life. We are committed to fostering engagement and active participation with all members of our community, regardless of their abilities and limitations. Accessibility, diversity and inclusion are some of our strongest values.

We are committed to doing our utmost to ensure that we meet the differing accessibility needs of our employees, volunteers and patrons. This Multi-Year plan outlines our Library's approach to ensuring an accessible and inclusive workplace and community hub in the years ahead. It describes how we will prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and fulfill our obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.*

An accessible library is truly a library for anyone and everyone.

Matthew MacDonald, BA Hon., MLIS
Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Library is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity. We will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and by meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Pursuant to the Act and the Library's 300-23 Accessible Customer Service Policy, the following sets out an action plan to ensure that services at the Library are relevant, inclusive and responsive for all.

DEFINITIONS

Accessible - Easily used or accessed by people with varying abilities and needs.

Accommodation - Any change in the work environment or the terms and conditions of employment that allows a person with limitations in their abilities, or who faces barriers from the standard rules and conditions of work, to perform their job.

Barrier - Any systemic, attitudinal, technological, informational, or architectural limitation that prevents someone from participating fully in the library due to their disability.

Disability – A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

Vulnerable Worker – a worker with an elevated risk of occupational injury or illness due to their lack of experience, reluctance to ask questions, communication barriers and type of work.

GLOSSARY

AODA - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S. O. 2005, C. 11

IAP - Individualized Accommodation Plan

IAS – Integrated Accessibility Standards O. Reg 191/11

OHRC – Ontario Human Rights Code

PAC – Public Access Catalogue

WCAG - World Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

POLICIES

The Library's *300-23 Accessible Customer Service Policy,* which is posted on the Library website, guides staff in making the Library accessible. Accessibility standards have also been incorporated into other Library policies where appropriate. Related policies include:

200-01 Purchasing and Procurement Policy
300-03 Collection Development Policy
300-08 Visiting Library Service Policy
300-09 Rules of Conduct
300-17 Volunteer Program Policy
300-26 Computer and Internet Use Policy
400-01 Hiring Policy
400-03 Health and Safety Commitment Policy
400-05 Workplace Code of Conduct
400-09 Human Rights Policy
400-14 Performance Appraisal Policy

Except for policies which must be reviewed annually in accordance with applicable legislation, the above policies are reviewed by the Board's Policy Committee every three years and on an as needed basis.

PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Library understands that equitable access may require different treatment including separate or specialized services and that such services must be offered in a way that respects the dignity and full participation of persons with disabilities.

Collections
The Library provides access to and arranges for the provision of access to accessible library collections where they exist as described in the IAS. Collections have been developed so they contain materials in alternative formats and for audiences with varying levels of literacy and comprehension while maintaining aisles to be at least 48 inches wide in order to accommodate mobility aids.

Accessible collections include:
- eAudiobooks & Books on CD
- Daisy Books
- Closed-captioned DVDs & Blu-Rays
- Large Print Books
- Decodable Books
- Low Literacy Books

Technology
The Library's public workstations are all equipped with *Windows Accessibility Features* to assist users with visual, auditory, learning, or physical disabilities.

In 2023, the Library added Optelec ClearView+ Magnifier – Desktop video magnifier located at the Centennial library. This device magnifies print material to be more legible for those with visual impairments.

The Library has several Daisy Readers, special CD player that plays DAISY Book formatted discs, available to borrow by patrons with visual or learning disabilities.

Outreach

To assist those Library members that are homebound, the Library offers a Visiting Library Service in which materials are selected by staff and delivered by volunteers to people's residences. This service is available to eligible residents of the City of Sault Ste. Marie who, for reasons of restricted vision or mobility, or long-term injury or illness, are unable to use regular Library facilities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Library understands that people have varying communications needs and may receive and interpret information differently. The Library communicates with the public in ways that takes into consideration each individual's abilities.

Accessible Formats and Communication

The Library provides for and arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports upon request, at no additional cost, in a timely manner, and in consultation with the person making the request.

The Library offers several methods of communication, including in-person conversations, telephone services, and online communications through web forms, email and social media. Library notices will be given via telephone, mail, email, or through social media platforms, as per each patron's preference. Staff will communicate with people in ways that take into account their disability.

Website

The Library's website and web content conforms with the World Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.

Notice of Disruptions

The Library provides patrons with notice whenever there is a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services frequently used by people with disabilities. Notice includes information about the reason for the disruptions, anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if they are available.

EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

The Library is an equal opportunity employer. As such, the Library takes into consideration the individual needs of all job candidates, employees and volunteers.

Hiring

A Diversity and Accommodation statement is included in all Library job postings so that the public and those interested in employment will know of our commitment.

Volunteering

The Library is committed to taking reasonable steps to accommodate differently abled volunteers, such as adjusting volunteer duties and ensuring an accessible workplace for them to work in.

Employment Accommodations

The Library provides IAPs to staff as needed. Included in IAPs will be individualized emergency response information in case of emergencies.

Performance Management

The Library shall take into account the accessibility needs of employees as well as IAPs when conducting performance evaluations.

PROCUREMENT

The Library acknowledges that in order to help make Ontario accessible for all, it must work with Ontario contractors and suppliers who also comply with the AODA and meet IAS.

General

All Bidders, Suppliers and Contractors who provide Goods, Services or Construction to the Sault Ste. Marie Public Library Board are required to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and all Regulations emanating therefrom.

SELF-SERVICE KIOSKS

The Library understands that individuals, including those with disabilities, value their independence.

Public Access Catalogues

The Library has Public Access Computers (PACs) to allow for the public to browse the Library catalogue independently. Each Library location has a PAC that is at a lower height for ease of use for patrons using wheelchairs and other mobility aids.

TRAINING

The Library provides training to all employees, volunteers and others who interact with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of accessible customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Accessibility Training

Training includes the following:
- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Other accessibility standards such as employment/employee rights and the Ontario Human Rights Code
- The requirements of the Customer Service Standard and Communication Standard
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use the equipment or devices available on department/branch premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Library services
- Library policies, practices and procedures relating to this customer service standard.
- Applicable staff/volunteers will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way services are provided to people with disabilities.
- Staff and volunteers are trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Each staff member and volunteer receives training specific to their role and each individual's needs.

Training Responsibility

Managers ensure that staff and volunteers receive accessibility training no later than one month after commencement of duties.

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

The Library is committed to meeting the requirements of the AODA with regard to codes, acts, regulations, and by-laws with respect to library facilities.

Public Washrooms

The Public washrooms on the lower level of the James L. McIntyre Centennial Library were renovated in 2018 to meet accessibility design standards. Each washroom has Accessible Door Operators and accessible washroom stalls.

North Branch

The North Branch was constructed in 2019. It is a single-story building that is completely accessible, with its own accessible washroom equipped with an Accessible Door Operator, lock button and emergency call button.

Parking

The Library has off-street parking including accessible parking spots in accordance with the AODA. Four (4) accessible public parking spots and two (2) accessible staff parking spots are available at the James L. McIntyre Centennial Library. Two (2) accessible parking spots are available at the North Branch.

Service Desks

All existing Library service desks incorporate accessibility features. Each service counter is able to accommodate a mobility aid.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Library is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

Technology
The Library will conduct a comprehensive accessibility audit of library technology and incorporate accessible software and features where available.

Timeline: *September 1, 2024*

Support Persons
The Library is committed to welcoming people who are accompanied by a support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises.

A support person may provide American Sign Language Interpreting services, physically transferring an individual from one location to another, assisting an individual with eating, medical needs, etc. The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a volunteer, friend, or family member. They do not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

Fees will not be charged for support persons attending with persons with disabilities who are conducting Library business. Support persons may be charged for events, if the event is not a Library sponsored event.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters costs will be covered at no charge to persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing who are conducting Library business.

Timeline: *As needed*

Policy

Update the Library's Rules of Conduct to reflect current legislated requirements for persons with disabilities, including the assistance of support persons and the use of service animals.

Timeline: *October 2024*

Film Screenings

Closed captioning for film screenings will be introduced at the Library.

Timeline: *When available*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Library is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities.

Board Meetings
Make Board meetings more accessible for the public by streaming them and posting the recordings online. Posted videos will include Closed Captioning for those with audio impairments.

Timeline: *March 31, 2024*

Communications Plan
Develop a communications plan that includes standards and best practices for those with vision loss and those with learning disabilities. The communications plan shall include information about accessible formats of documents and how they may be requested.

Timeline: *April 30, 2025*

Website
The Library is committed to renewal of its website and web content. The Library will use Web accessibility evaluation tools (WAVE) to determine accessibility issues of website and ways to improve. All updates will conform with the most recent WCAG.

Timeline: *December 31, 2026*

Notice of Disruptions

Notice of disruption at any Department/Branch will be placed at their public entrance and service counters. Notice will be posted on the Library's website and social media whenever possible.   Notice will be provided via a recorded message on the Library's main telephone line at 705-750-5230. Media releases will also be issued in advance for planned disruptions.

Timeline: *As needed*

Emergency Procedures
Review and update public and staff emergency and evacuation procedures regularly to ensure they include provisions for persons with disabilities.

Timeline: *June 30, 2024*

EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

The Library is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Hiring

The Library will provide any requested assistive technology/equipment as part of the hiring process, in consultation with the candidate.

Timeline: *September 1, 2023*

Accommodations

The Library will add a statement in all employment letters, informing new hires and transfers of the accommodation process for employees with disabilities.

Timeline: *September 1, 2023*

The Library will continue to provide IAPs to staff as needed.

Timeline: *Ongoing*

Performance Management

The Library will continue to take into account the accessibility needs of employees as well as IAPs when conducting performance evaluations.

Timeline: *Ongoing*

PROCUREMENT

General

The Library will continue to require all Bidders, Suppliers and Contractors who provide Goods, Services or Construction to the Sault Ste. Marie Public Library Board to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians Act, 2005, and all Regulations emanating therefrom.

Library contracts and Purchase Orders will not be issued to Bidders, Suppliers and Contractors who do not comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians Act, 2005, and its Regulations.

Timeline: *Ongoing*

Technology

The Library will only procure new computers and mobile devices equipped with software that can accommodate the needs of people with vision loss.

Timeline: *October 1, 2023*

SELF-SERVICE KIOSKS

The Library is committed to incorporating accessibility features/ considering accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

Self-service Checkout

The Library currently does not have any self-checkout machines at any of its locations. The Library is committed to ensuring that should a self-checkout kiosk be installed, that it will be accessible to patrons with mobility aids and have software features to assist patrons with vision impairments.

Timeline: *If implemented*

TRAINING

The Library is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities.

On-going Training

Continue to provide training to staff related to appropriate service processes that support accessibility for all.

Training will be specific to each staff and volunteer role and their individual needs.

Timeline: *On-going*

New Training

The Library will create a training module with additional information for vulnerable workers, including workers with disabilities.

Timeline: *December 31, 2023*

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

The Library will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces.

Audit Library Facilities for Accessibility

The Library will conduct a comprehensive accessibility audit of library facilities and attempt to resolve accessibility issues as they are discovered.

Timeline: *May 2024*

AODA Requirements

The Library will meet the requirements of the AODA with regard to codes, acts, regulations, and by-laws with respect to library facilities.

Timeline: *On-going*

Doors

Install Accessible Door Operators at the James L. McIntyre Centennial Library on the staff entrances and Program Room A's doors.

Timeline: *December 31, 2024*

Washrooms

The Library will investigate demolishing its two inaccessible children's washrooms at the James L. McIntyre Centennial Library to be replaced with a single gender neutral, family washroom that is fully accessible.

Timeline: *December 31, 2026*

REVIEW

Feedback Process

The Library receives feedback and reports of barriers to accessibility through the Administration Office. Feedback and reports can be made in person, by telephone at 705-759-5242, by email at admin.library@cityssm.on.ca or using the question/comments form on the Library's website at https://ssmpl.ca/about-us/contact/#comment_form

Information about the feedback process is also available on the Library's website and community boards.

Plan Review

Library Management will review and update the Accessibility Plan on an as needed basis and at least once every five (5) years. The current version of this plan **will expire on August 11, 2028**.