

North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Accessibility Plan 2018-2022

Prepared by the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit AODA Committee

This publication is available on the Health Unit website (www.myhealthunit.ca) and in alternate formats and/or with communication support upon request.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* was enacted. This act led the way in identifying, preventing, and removing barriers. The ODA required municipalities with over 10,000 people to:

- Prepare an annual accessibility plan
- Establish and seek advice from an Accessibility Advisory Committee, whose membership included people with disabilities

The ODA applied only to the public sector, and did not provide direction for organizations on what to focus on, or how to ensure accessibility of goods, services, and facilities, and hence, resulted in inconsistencies across the province.

In 2005, the Ontario Government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* to make Ontario accessible by 2025. This act (AODA) applies to every person or organization in the public and private sectors in the Province of Ontario, including the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The Act allows the province to establish standards related to accessibility that apply to both the public and private sectors. These standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario need to follow to identify, remove, and prevent barriers so that people with disabilities have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

The government of Ontario committed to the establishment of standards in:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* became law in January 2009. This regulation established accessibility standards relating to customer service that applied to every public sector organization and to every other person or organization that provided goods or services to members of the public or other third parties that have at least one employee in Ontario. The compliance dates for organizations to meet this standard spanned from January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012.

On June 3, 2011, the Province of Ontario released the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11*. The *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* includes general requirements such as policy development, planning, and training and applies to all Ontario organizations that have at least one employee that provide goods, services, or facilities to the public or to other organizations. Three standards – Information and Communications, Employment, and Transportation were combined under this one regulation. The Transportation

Standards apply to organizations providing transportation services, and as such **do not** apply to the Health Unit.

In January 2013, two regulations amending the AODA's Customer Service Standard and Integrated Accessibility Standard (IAS) came into force. The Customer Service Standard was amended to include a new schedule for submission of accessibility reports. The amendment requires that large organizations file an accessibility report every three years with the first report being due December 31, 2014. The IAS was amended to include a standard for the Built Environment that focuses on removing barriers in public spaces. The Built Environment Standard applies to new construction and significant renovations, not requiring the public or private sector to retrofit existing built environment elements to meet the standards¹. Buildings must also comply with the obligations under *Ontario's Building Code*, which governs new construction and renovations in buildings.

In July 2016, the Customer Service Standard Ont. Reg 429/07 was revoked and was moved into the *Integrated Accessibility Standards* (under Part IV.2).

The AODA regulations divide organizations into categories. An organization's requirements and timelines for compliance depend on which of the categories it falls under.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Our mission at the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is to foster healthy living within our communities by preventing illness, promoting healthy choices, and providing trusted support and information. This mission applies to all people who reside in the Health Unit's service area. In Ontario, 1.85 million people live with a disability. That means one in seven people have a disability that is either visible or invisible. By 2031, over six million people in Ontario will be either living with a disability or be 55 years of age and over¹. It has been said that almost everyone will experience either a temporary or permanent limitation at some point in their life².

Accessibility ensures that all people of all abilities have equitable and barrier-free access to physical spaces, programs, services, and employment opportunities. The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is committed to meeting the needs of people in a timely manner by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to accessibility, and by meeting the accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. We are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. **Accessibility is part of all Health Unit business, and we believe in providing accessible service to all.**

¹ Sudbury & District Health Unit. 2013. *Sudbury & District Health Unit, 2013 Accessibility Plan: Working Towards a Barrier-Free Public Health Services* (Draft).

In June 2012, the Health Unit began its accessibility planning process. Under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards* regulation, it is required that:

4(1) The Government of Ontario, Legislative Assembly, designated public sector organizations and large organizations shall,

- (a) Establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organizations' strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation;
- (b) Post the accessibility plan on their website, if any, and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request; and
- (c) Review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years³.

The intent of this requirement is that obligated organizations develop a multi-year accessibility plan, outlining their strategies to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. A plan describes the actions an organization takes to prevent and remove barriers, and when it will do so. It puts into action an organization's commitment to accessibility.

Since the formation of its multi-disciplinary AODA workgroup in June 2012, the Health Unit's commitment to meet the obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and compliance with the regulations has been ongoing. This document represents the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit's Accessibility Plan which tracks our progress toward accessibility.

¹ Access ON. (July 2012). *A Guide to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*.

² World Health Organization. *World Report on Disability*. (2011).

³ *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11*

AODA COMMITTEE

In recognition of the Health Unit's ongoing commitment to accessibility, the original AODA workgroup became an official committee in 2013.

Current committee members consist of Executive Director of Corporate Services, Managers from Building & Maintenance/Information Technology, and Emergency Management, staff representatives from Communication Services, Human Resources, Quality Assurance, Building & Maintenance/Information Technology, Finance, and Oral Health.

Under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards*, the Health Unit must develop, implement, and maintain established policies, practices, and procedures on providing goods or services to persons with disabilities. The policies are consistent with the following principles:

- The services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities; and
- The provision of services to persons with disabilities must be integrated with the provision of service to others unless an alternative measure is necessary, temporarily or permanently, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Health Unit services or facilities; and
- Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use or benefit from the services or facilities; and
- When communicating with a person with a disability, the Health Unit shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The AODA Committee develops accessibility policies, develops a multi-year accessibility plan, and submits Accessibility Compliance Reports as required. All members consistently contribute ideas to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements.

MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY WORKPLAN

The 2018-2022 multi-year work plan sets out the steps in the upcoming years so that the organization may examine and remove potential barriers, both visible and invisible, thus allowing better access for all. The Health Unit sees this plan as an opportunity to do better than just meet the minimum requirements.

The plan is a living document that is adjusted as actions are completed. Accountabilities with timelines are an inherent part of the work plan. The plan is officially updated yearly since it is the Health Unit's goal to identify and remove barriers in a fluid and ongoing manner.

MAKING THE 2018 - 2022 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit 2018-2022 Accessibility Plan is available electronically via:

- Website
- Intranet

Upon request, the plan can be made available in alternative formats as per Health Unit policies.

All comments and feedback from the general public on this plan are appreciated and encouraged. Our goal is to **provide accessible service to all**.

To provide feedback:

- Request a feedback form and self-addressed stamped envelope from Reception at the North Bay office (345 Oak Street West) or Parry Sound Office (70 Joseph Street, Unit 302), either in person or by phone.
- Telephone the Health Unit and ask to speak to the Executive Director, Corporate Services at:
705-474-1400 or Toll free at 1-800-563-2808
- Write and mail a letter to:
Executive Director, Corporate Services
North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
345 Oak Street West
North Bay, ON P1B 2T2
- Download the Client Feedback Form from the Health Unit website and mail to Executive Director, Corporate Services, 345 Oak Street West, North Bay, ON P1B 2T2
- Send an email to contact@healthunit.ca

PREVENTATIVE AND EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE OF ACCESSIBLE ELEMENTS IN PUBLIC SPACES

Under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (section 80.44) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the Health Unit has procedures in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in its public spaces. Accessible public space elements maintained by the Health Unit include exterior paths of travel, such as walkways, stairs, and ramps, where these elements are not already covered by the Ontario Building Code, and parking lots.

The Health Unit's procedures include the following:

- The Facilities team, responsible for maintaining accessible elements in Health Unit's public spaces, in conjunction with appropriate personnel, have developed or will develop preventative maintenance schedules, as required, to keep the elements in good working order or restore them to their original condition when necessary.
- To the extent possible, notice regarding any disruption to accessible elements due to planned maintenance or repairs impacting customer accessibility will be posted in advance.
- The Health Unit personnel will inspect applicable accessible elements that are available for use by the public regularly. Any elements that are found to have defects or need maintenance will be identified so they can be addressed. A Service Request will be submitted through the self service portal and assigned to the Facilities team and, upon review, arrangements will be made to correct the defect(s) or perform the necessary maintenance.
- In the event the Health Unit receives third-party information that an accessible element needs maintenance or repairs, the information will be sent to the Facilities team, so the element can be inspected and appropriate action taken, as noted above.
- In cases where it is determined that emergency maintenance or repairs to an accessible element are required, the element will be taken out of service and the necessary repairs will be assessed and addressed as a priority.
- To the extent possible, Health Unit personnel will ensure steps are taken to divert individuals from accessible elements that are not in working order or pose a danger to safety, and to provide information regarding any alternate useable elements that exist. Steps taken may include putting in place barriers and temporary wayfinding signage, and/or posting notices.

SUMMARY

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of its communities. This Accessibility Plan reports on the actions that have been taken to identify, prevent, and remove barriers, and also provides a status update that outlines the actions planned for 2018 and future years.

For more information on any aspect of this Accessibility Plan, please contact the Executive Director, Corporate Services at:

Telephone: 705-474-1400

Toll free: 1-800-563-2808

Email: contact@healthunit.ca