



# SAULT STE. MARIE

## Accessibility Status Report, Year Ending 2023

This Accessibility Status Report and all documents referenced within, are available in accessible formats upon request by contacting:  
Diane Morrell at [d.morrell@cityssm.on.ca](mailto:d.morrell@cityssm.on.ca) or 705-541-7310

Prepared by:  
Diane Morrell  
Accessibility Coordinator  
City of Sault Ste. Marie  
[d.morrell@cityssm.on.ca](mailto:d.morrell@cityssm.on.ca)

## Purpose of this report:

To prepare an [annual status report](#) on the progress of measures taken to implement the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, including steps taken to comply with the [Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#).

## Background - Accessibility Legislation

[Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(ODA\), 2001](#)

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\) 2005](#)

[Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations \(IASR\), 2011](#)

- Customer Service Standard (updated in 2016)
- Information and Communication Standard
- Transportation Standard
- Employment Standard
- Design of Public Spaces Standard (DOPS) added in 2015

### Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Mandate, Mission, and Vision

**Mandate:** The Accessibility Advisory Committee advises City Council in promoting and facilitating a barrier-free Sault Ste. Marie for citizens of all abilities.

**Mission:** We are committed to continually strive towards identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in our community.

**Vision:** Promoting and facilitating a barrier-free Sault Ste. Marie for citizens of all abilities.

## Statistics on Disability in Ontario

People with Disabilities (PWD) are one of the largest population categories in Ontario.

**Approximately 2.9 million Ontarians aged 15+ currently have one or more disabilities.** By 2040 this number is anticipated to increase by another one million. The majority of these functional disabilities are also not visible.

The above information is from the [2023 Legislative Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#), by Rich Donovan.

## Barrier Removal Projects in 2023

Project	Amount	Status	Notes
Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR)	\$20,000	Complete	Financial contribution to maintain the VPR
Support to improving curb cuts	\$10,000	Complete	The Accessibility Coordinator maintains a list of all feedback received regarding curb cut repairs. Public Works administers repairs.
Pedestrian crossing proximity sensors	\$10,000	Complete	Recorded message at all PXO's updated for consistency
JRCC pool adult change table and ceiling lift replacement	\$10,000	Complete	Replacement complete. Cost overrun of \$3700; Unused budget amounts covered overrun.
Parks; 2 accessible swings and 2 instruments	\$10,000	To be completed in 2024	This line item will be combined with the 2024 project for efficiencies in shipping. This will go to Council for approval.
Accessible outdoor seating (benches)	\$10,000	To be completed in 2024	This line item will be combined with the 2024 project for efficiencies in shipping. This will go to Council for approval.
Captioning city council meetings	\$ 6,000	Complete; no cost	Captioning is currently done with current platforms (via Zoom and YouTube).
Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)	\$ 5,000	Not started	Service provider encountered a delay in implementation. Program to proceed in 2024.
John Rhodes Community Centre	\$ 2,000	Complete	Used for cost overrun of pool equipment.
Contingency	\$ 2,000	Complete	Youth water wheelchair purchased for Bellevue splash pad and cost overrun of pool equipment.

### Barrier Removal Reserves:

Uncommitted balance: \$

Committed projects are as follows:

- Pointe Des Chenes accessibility updates - \$29,387
- New City website - \$21,667

Total commitments: \$51,054.00

This summary is reflective of funding at end of 2023, however it is noted that there are two other reports seeking Council's approval at the April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Council meeting.

## **Challenges in implementing the Accessibility Plan include:**

- Infrastructure limitations to implement some projects in the plan (Accessible Pedestrian Signals require infrastructure updates)
- Cost of some upgrades/updates exceed barrier removal funds (John Rhodes accessible viewing area)
- Lack of design options to implement barrier removal projects (John Rhodes space constraints for accessible viewing area)
- Program implementation being delayed (Video Remote Interpreting had a delayed release of this program)

## **Accessibility Advisory Committee Activities in 2023**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee meets monthly' on the second Wednesday of every month, except for July and August.

### **AAC members have participated in annual elections (current positions):**

- Chair, Don McConnell
- Vice-Chair, Derrick Lavallee
- Site Plan Sub-Committee Chair, Derrick Lavallee

### **AAC Members provided positive feedback for the following presentations:**

- Meeting Procedures
- Accessibility Training
- Bondar Marina Boardwalk Extension
- Downtown Patios, Small Street Furniture and Outdoor Displays
- Active Transportation Master Plan
- Civic Centre Lobby updates
- Manzo Splash Pad
- Pointe Des Chenes Accessibility Updates
- Transit Umo App presentation
- Queen Street redevelopment consultations
- Bondar Marina Boardwalk Extension
- Accessibility in the Ontario Building Code
- Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines
- Grow the Sault

### **Site Plan Sub-Committee:**

- The Site Plan Sub-Committee is very active and have reviewed and provided comments on accessibility for Planning Applications that fall under Site Plan Control

- Members are:
  - Derrick Lavallee
  - Don McConnell
  - Carol Magnan

### **Accessibility Advisory Committee Site Reviews:**

- Northern Community Centre
- Downtown patio review for accessibility

### **National AccessAbility Awareness Week, May 28th to June 3, 2023:**

- Proclamation and presentation to Council
- Health and Wellness Fair hosted by the Canadian Council of the Blind
- AccessAbility Awareness virtual events

## **Accessibility Coordinator**

The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for liaising with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and City Departments in the development and implementation of the Corporate Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Coordinator can also provide information and resources for departments and the community regarding accessibility when requested.

### **Design of Public Spaces Standard (DOPS)**

The Accessibility Coordinator has participated in the Design of Public Spaces Standard Standards Development Review Committee. The updated Draft Standard is currently with the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility for their approval to send out for public comment.

### **Autism Strategy/Neurodiversity Services Directory**

Update to the Autism Strategy was completed over the course of the year. This update includes the name change to '**Neurodiversity Services Directory**' to reflect the contents of the document more accurately. The directory includes resources for families who live with neurodiversity.

### **Creation of Disability Statistics Maps for City of Sault Ste. Marie:**

The Accessibility Coordinator, in partnership with the Planning Department and the Innovation Centre, has created maps using Census and other available data to inform planning decisions in the City. The Planning Department houses these maps.

## Other Activities this past year include:

- Consultations on accessibility and barriers encountered:
  - Brain Injury Association of Sault Ste. Marie
  - Canadian Council of the Blind
  - Consultation with Deaf community
  - Thrive Children’s Centre
  - Down Syndrome Society
  - Vision Loss Rehabilitation Ontario
  - Thrive Child Development Centre
  - North-East Home and Community Support Services
  - Autism Ontario

## Future barrier removal plans

According to the [2023 Legislative Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 by Rich Donovan](#):

“The current experience for many people with disabilities in Ontario is poor. This stems from design flaws in services, products, technology, buildings, infrastructure, careers, processes, and human imagination.

The AODA has a 17-year history of under resourcing and failing to put the best minds of our generation to tackle an epic societal challenge: full participation of people with disabilities in our economy and society.”

**“People with disabilities report continued disappointment in the AODA since its inception, and as has been indicated in previous reviews, progress has been painfully slow and uneven.”**

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines barrier removal initiatives as a result of ongoing consultations with the public, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and City Staff.

The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie has an obligation to prevent and remove barriers to full participation of persons with disabilities. The City can and should provide a high level of accessibility to achieve equitable experiences for citizens with and without disabilities.

It’s an overall goal to create a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) that will increase accessibility beyond minimum standards within the Corporation, wherever possible.

### The new accessibility plan will be informed by:

- Information gathered during the consultation process

- Relevant statistics including Disability Statistics Maps
- Active Transportation Master Plan
- Ongoing feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Ongoing feedback from City Staff

### **Future proposed barrier removal projects include:**

- Updated accessibility audit of all public facing City owned and operated facilities and services
- Accessible viewing area at the John Rhodes Community Centre Arena
- Adult change tables in City facilities and Parks (where parks have existing infrastructure)
- Accessible Customer Service Policy Statement Update
- Working with Human Resources to update the Accessible Customer Service Policies
- Explore options to provide City owned sledges for persons with disabilities at outdoor municipal skating rinks
- Explore options to provide a youth water wheelchair at Splash Pads
- Update to the Bellevue Marina accessible kayak dock
- Work with Transit and various City Departments and Facilities to develop new Multi-Year Accessibility Plans where required
- Working with City Departments to ensure that procurement considers accessibility
- Continue to work with relevant City Staff on the creation of a new City website that meets current accessibility standards
- Staff training on Accessible Customer Service and the creation of accessible documents

## **Transit**

People with disabilities rely heavily upon public transit, and changing service levels can have significant impacts on Transit. Furthermore, [Ontario Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) outlines a number of transit specific requirements.

Sault Ste. Marie Transit expects demand for its services will continue to grow in the coming years and in conjunction with growth, will be increasing demand for services. These demands will be driven by both customer expectations and the requirement to comply with existing and emerging legislation.

### **Transit barrier removal projects for 2022 to 2025 include:**

- Transit fleet is 100% accessible and replacement of existing infrastructure is ongoing to ensure all assets are fully accessible with current standards, including but not limited to conventional buses, community buses and Parabuses
- Ongoing replacement of transit bus shelters which include accessibility
- Repairs and ongoing upgrades to current Transit Hubs
- Ongoing consultation with stakeholder groups, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee

- The Parabus application form was updated to be in compliance with accessible formats

### **Transit Consultations:**

- Transit conducts ongoing public outreach including Travel Training
- Open House with the Sault Ste. Marie Brain injury Association
- Vision Loss Rehabilitation Ontario
- Canadian Council of the Blind
- St. Mary's School Special Education
- Bay Street Senior's Centre Information Fair
- Public Open House at the Accessibility Centre
- Presentation at the Bayt Street Senior's Centre
- Consultation with Accessibility Advisory Committee:
  - Umo passes
  - New buses 41 & 42
  - How curbs need to be lined up with the ramps
  - Discussion about conditions for use of Support Person cards

### **Summary**

The Corporation of the City Of Sault Ste. Marie has achieved a high level of accessibility in many areas, however the City strives for a high level of accessibility in all areas.