



## ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2016-2018

*PREPARED BY: The City of Thompson Accessibility Working Group*

*This document is available in alternate formats upon request. Please call 204-677-7923 or email [ctaylor@thompson.ca](mailto:ctaylor@thompson.ca)*

## Statement of Commitment

The City of Thompson, through its Vision, Mission Statement, and Core Values is committed to ensuring that all citizens of Thompson have equal access to all our services and facilities regardless of their abilities. We are committed to treating all people in a way which allows them to have a superior quality of life, unlimited opportunities and ensuring we have a community which celebrates the diversity of our people. We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face accessibility barriers by identifying, removing and preventing these barriers and by meeting requirements of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*.

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## A. Background

On December 5, 2013 *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)* was passed. This Act provides the process to identify, prevent and remove barriers for all citizens. Part of the Act mandates that municipalities with a population over 10,000 must have an Accessibility Plan in place by December 31, 2016 and must be updated every two years.

The Acts stipulates that development of 5 accessibility standards will take place over the next few years and as they come into force municipalities, will have to adopt the standards. The five standards are:

1. Customer Service Standard
2. Information and Communication
3. Transportation
4. Employment
5. Built environment

The *Customer Service Accessibility Standard* came into effect November 1, 2015 and municipalities will have until November 1, 2017 to comply with the requirements. The Customer Service Standard requires that Manitoba organizations establish and implement measures, policies and practices that:

- Identify and remove barriers to accessible customer service, or if it cannot be removed, find alternate means to provide the goods or services.
  - Allow assistive devices such as wheelchairs and oxygen.
  - Allow support persons to enter and remain with the customer.
  - Inform the public when accessibility services are not available.
  - Develop a procedure to receive and respond to feedback regarding accessibility.
  - Ensure all employees are trained on the Customer Services Standard.
  - Ensure that Public Events are accessible.
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## **B. Overview**

The City of Thompson is located approximately 739 km north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Thompson is considered the Hub of the North with a very large trading area. While the City of Thompson is mandated to prepare an Accessibility Plan it is extremely important to ensure all citizens and visitors can move about Thompson barrier free.

The City of Thompson created an Accessibility Working Group which as their mandate was to create an Accessibility Plan. The Working Group met on several occasions as a group but have also gone back to their respective departments and worked with the staff to ensure that the plan represents all of the City of Thompson employees.

The first step was to prepare a list of all services the City provides. They also looked at the barriers which one might come across and the accessibility achievements and what can be done to remove the barriers. For consultation, the City prepared a survey, which was available online as well as printed copies were available at the main desk of City Hall and Vale Regional Community Centre (VRCC). The Working Group also met with several groups at City Hall to discuss accessibility barriers. The information was compiled and makes up The City of Thompson's Baseline Report.

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### **C. City of Thompson's Accessibility Working Group**

The following individuals were part of the City of Thompson's Accessibility Working Group;

Carol Taylor	Coordinator
Angela English	Executive Assistant to the Mayor
Tammy Parobec	Executive Assistant to the City Manager
Matt Boscariol	Director of Planning and Community Development
John Maskerine	Director of Public Safety
Mike Bourgon	Deputy Fire Chief
Sonya Wiseman	Public Safety Manager
Wayne Koversky	Director of Public Works
Andrew Hillaby	Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture

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### ***Baseline Report***

#### **A. Overview of Programs and Services**

The City of Thompson provides many programs and services. The following list was compiled by City of Thompson staff and represents the majority of these programs and services.

##### Public Safety

- Fire \*(local and regional)
- Ambulance\* (local and regional)
  - \* Also provides Emergency Services for Thompson Regional Airport
- EMO
- By-law - Property Standards, Taxis, Business Licenses, Animal Control, CSOs
- Fire Hall tours

## Planning and Community Development

- Building Inspectors
- Planning and Development
- Cemetery
- Capital works - all major capital engineering
- Economic Development

## Public Works

- Snow Removal (roads and sidewalks, parking lots)
- Sanding
- Patching
- Water and sewer repairs
- Landfill
- Cemetery
- Traffic Lights
- Garbage and Recycling
- Transit

## Recreation, Parks and Culture

- Norplex Pool
- VRCC - (skating, hockey, room rentals, wellness centre, gym, concession, advertising)
- Outdoor Parks - (pools, rinks, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, trails, skateboard park, tennis/basketball courts)
- Attached to UCN
- Cemetery
- Special Events (Canada Day, Concerts in the Park)

## City Hall (upstairs)

- Meetings
- Communication - (Public Service Announcements)
- Finance - (AR, AP, Utility, Taxes, Reception)
- Mayor and Councillors

- City Manager
  - EOC - Emergency Operating Centre
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## **B. Accessibility Achievements**

While the Working Group was looking at the programs and services and the accessibility barriers we also looked at the City's accessibility achievements, the things the City of Thompson is currently doing well in this area. The City of Thompson and outside agencies identified the following accessibility achievements:

- Vale Regional Community Centre (VRCC)
  - Has been built with current building standards including, large signage, elevator, wheel chair accessible area in the C.A. Nesbitt Arena, push buttons, accessible counter, automatic lights.
  - Some of the stairs have painted yellow strips.
  - Multi-Purpose room has acoustic tiles.
- Norplex Pool
  - Installed push button access.
  - Has a ramp to access viewing area.
  - Have a lift at the Pool.
- City Hall
  - Has an elevator making both the basement and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor accessible, large door openings, open areas.
  - Return to Work program, which provides accommodations for people injured on the job.
- By-Law (Community Safety Officer, Licence Inspector, By-Law Inspector, Animal Control)

- o CSOs have had training on helping people dealing with special needs and have a plan on what to do when they come across people in wheelchairs who need transportation. They have also received training in the Venerable Persons Act (VPA).
  - Fire & Emergency Services
    - o When advised, have emergency preplans in place for dealing with special circumstances.
    - o Work very close with Juniper Centre - just a phone call away.
  - Infrastructure and Asset Management
    - o When sidewalks are replaced, we ensure that the accessible ramps are installed at crossings.
  - Public Works
    - o Transit buses have the ability to lower a ramp, allowing access for people with mobility issues to board.
    - o Have a policy that, when the criteria are met, will clear the driveways of elderly people.
    - o During snow removal, Public Works will send the loader behind the grader to ensure that the driveways are clear to allow entry and exit.
    - o Have been able to adapt to barriers with employees by communicating through texting.
    - o Multi-Use pathways allow for different types of usage (strollers, bikes, wheel chairs and assistive devices (scooters, wheelchairs, walkers)).
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### C. Accessibility Barriers

While everyone usually thinks of barriers as not being able to access areas of a building barriers come in many forms such as:

**Attitudinal** - When people think and act based on false assumptions, for example, assuming that someone who cannot speak is not able to understand what you are saying.

**Information and communication barriers** - When information is only provided only one way which not everyone can access. For example, in print format only people who have a difficult time seeing do not have access to format which works for them.

**Technological barriers** - Using only one format for service delivery. For example, using only the website for surveys, when not everyone has access to a computer.

**Systemic barriers** - policies practices or procedures which result in some people being excluded. For example, a hiring practice which exclude people with disabilities.

**Physical and Architectural barriers** - When the space around you makes it difficult for you to do something. For example, bathroom sinks too high for someone in a wheelchair to use.

The City of Thompson and outside agencies identified many barriers to accessibility. Some of these barriers will cost large dollars to rectify while some will cost very little and can be accomplished in a short timeframe. While the list can be overwhelming it is important to remember that not all of it needs to be done at once but that it provides us with a direction to follow. The following are the barriers which were identified:

#### Vale Regional Community Centre

- o While there is wheelchair seating, it is not mixed in with regular seating so you cannot sit with your friends or family. It is also difficult to see.
- o Curling Club lounge not accessible.
- o Curling Club ice is not accessible.

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- o Curling Club washrooms not accessible (*need signage advising people where the accessible washrooms are located*).
- o There should be more automatic doors for gym and arena.
- o Arena ice is accessible, but the bench is not, and therefore not accessible for sledge hockey.
- o Signage for dressing room is on the doors, but not walls.
- o VRCC does not have flashing lights to indicate a fire.
- o Play area is not accessible for a child with limitations.
- o Automatic doors need to be in working order or turned on.
- o Need to ensure that if the elevator or automatic doors are not working, we post it in the building and on our website.
- o Benches are located only at the east end of the walking track, they should be located at other areas as well.
- o If you do not read, there is nothing to show you where to go. There should be a, “You are here” sign which includes pictures, ie. A picture of weights for the fitness area, skates for the arena, etc.
- **Norplex Pool**
  - o Pool, sauna, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, waterslide, change room and observation deck are not accessible. Family room is designated as accessible but does not meet criteria.
  - o Ramps are too steep.
  - o Chair lift at the pool does not always get plugged in to charge.
  - o No Plan B for chair lift if not working.
  - o Cashier desk at the pool is really high.
  - o Door into the change rooms is not a push button and not 36 inches.
- **Thompson Public Library**
  - o Basement is not accessible.
  - o Library washroom doors are not 36” and therefore not accessible.

- City Hall
  - Reception desks are not accessible.
  - Push button access is only available at the side door where the ramp is located.
  - Ramp is very close to a set of stairs which do not have a railing to stop people from going over.
  - Offices are crowded with no room to maneuver.
  - Not promoting alternative formats in print or on our website.
  - Women's washroom is considered accessible but there are two double doors which are heavy to open for access.
  - Elevator room door does not have push button access and the room is being used for storage.
  - By-Laws need to be updated to include current accessible standards.
  - Accessing Council meetings is difficult for hard of hearing, no interpreters but with technology they can be.
  - Not currently using accessibility checklist for meeting rooms.
  - Chamber doesn't have a loop system.
  - Disability Awareness training and (VPA) training should be provided for all staff.
  - If you are a non-reader or new to the English language it is difficult to find anything. The City should develop a map with pictures of teeth for a dentist, knife and fork for restaurant. Areas where they are named after fish, birds, minerals, and trees could have a picture associated with them.
  
- Fire Department
  - Emergency Pre-plan is only available if they have been notified of special circumstances.
  - Need to promote the Emergency pre-plan more so Fire and Emergency Services has a complete list of people with special needs.
  - When conducting tours, getting onto the apparatus floor is difficult.

- Need to think about employment of people in wheelchairs.
  
- **Public Works**
  - Ability to provide driveway clearing is based on availability of equipment.
  - Reception counter height is too high.
  - They do not promote alternate formats to receive information.
  - Handi-van is not currently working, and when it is, it does not operate weekends and evenings. As well it seems to be exclusively for the Juniper Centre.
  - When City buses are out of order, the Greyhound coach buses are not accessible.
  - Transit buses do not stop at City Hall and the Provincial Building making it difficult for people to attend those facilities.
  - Transit hours are limited to 6:00 pm on weekdays and are not operational on Sundays.
  - Sidewalks are in disrepair and have some barriers that are not ideal for a comfortable pedestrian experience.
  - Uneven sidewalks and snow clearing not always completed in a timely manner.
  - Lighting on the paths and arena stairways.
  - City natural pathways, example by the Juniper Centre, are not wheelchair accessible (very steep).
  - Handi-Taxi drivers do not strap in the passengers, and are not properly trained. Verified with owner of the taxi's that employees have received training and he is willing to provide them with additional training.
  - If the Handi- taxis are down for repairs, on the weekends there is no alternate method of transportation for people
  - Require better hours for Handi-taxi - Hours verified as Sunday to Thursday until 11:00 pm and Friday and Saturday 24 hours.
  - Crosswalks signs - new ones are very small.
  - Crossing lights do not have audiology features.
  - Additional disability training required.
  
- **Parks**
  - Rotary Park pathways difficult, should be pea gravel or grass.

- By-laws and Policies
    - Theatre is not wheelchair accessible nor does it have closed captioning.
    - Landlords which are building or renovating need to ensure there is more than one wheelchair route out of the building - this would be under the Provincial regulations.
    - When having meetings ensure, that people know that accommodations will be provided if notified 2 weeks in advance, therefore we will need to give lots of notice for meeting.
    - The City of Thompson should meet with external stakeholder groups including the hospital and SDML institutions, to work collaboratively to produce accessibility issues and solutions.
    - When big renovations occur we do not currently consult with Occupational Therapy, Juniper Centre or Society for Manitoban's with Disabilities (SMD) to ensure that we are meeting the needs of everyone.
    - Taxi By-law requires more emphasis on ensuring the accessibility needs meet the requirements for every individuals using the taxi services.
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## **D. Policies**

The following policies have been identified by the Accessibility Working Group as an important step in our plan to ensure we comply with the Customer Service Accessibility Standard. Further policies will come forward as we review our plan and as more standards are provided.

- The City of Thompson will continually review all policies, programs, services and new initiatives to ensure accessibility.
- The City of Thompson will make information available in an accessible format or provide communication supports to people that consider a person's specific needs.
- The City of Thompson will ensure that all major capital projects will be planned incorporating the City of Thompson's Statement of Commitment within the Accessibility Plan.

- The City of Thompson will not charge fees for a support person when they are accompanying a person with a disability and they are not partaking in municipal services or activities, but solely present to provide support to a customer with a disability.
- The City of Thompson will welcome all persons and their service animals into all areas where the public is allowed.
- The City of Thompson will permit people with disabilities to use their personal assistive devices while in the City’s facilities.

**E. Actions**

The Working Group has carefully looked at the barriers, achievements, and the Customer Service Accessibility standard and have identified the following actions which should be completed in the 2016-2018 years. The emphasis is on ensuring we comply with the Customer Service Standard by the November 1, 2017 deadline.

<b>Action 1 - Establish Accessibility Working Group</b>	
<p><b>Initiatives/Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint a Co-coordinator</li> <li>• Create an Accessibility Plan Working Group</li> <li>• Working Group to prepare a list of all programs and services provided by the City of Thompson</li> <li>• Working Group to list the accessibility barriers</li> <li>• Working Group to list the accessibility achievements</li> <li>• Working Group to prepare an accessibility</li> </ul>	<p><b>Expected Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is expected that the Accessibility Plan will be completed by December 31, 2016 and passed by resolution through Council on January 16, 2017</li> <li>• The City of Thompson’s Accessibility Plan will be posted on the City’s website and will be available in alternate formats</li> </ul>

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<p>survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Group to consult with individuals and outside agencies dealing with accessibility issues, include the information received in the baseline report</li> <li>• Working Group to prepare a baseline report</li> <li>• Prepare the Accessibility Plan before December 31, 2016</li> <li>• Working Group to provide a resolution to Council to pass the recommended policies</li> <li>• Make the plan public</li> </ul>	
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**Action 2 - Communication**

<b>Initiatives/Actions</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Group to research types of accommodations provided (locally and other) and to have costs available for budgeting purposes</li> <li>• Working Group to develop a process for responding to requests for accessible supports and services</li> </ul> <p>Working Group to develop procedures and template for planned or unexpected disruption of services or facilities for customers with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all departments send out documents in size 14 font</li> <li>• Ensure all documents contain the “Active</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once the processes, procedures and templates are completed they will be provided to all managers and employees to implement</li> <li>• Current website needs updating. The requirements for a new website will include accessibility</li> </ul>

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<p>offer “</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Group to prepare template and procedures for meeting and event planning</li> <li>• Working Group to prepare procedure and template for alternate format request</li> <li>• Working Group to develop a process to receive and respond to accessible service feedback, it is to include actions to take</li> <li>• Update website to improve accessibility</li> </ul>	
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**Action 3 - Staff Awareness and Training**

<b>Initiatives/Actions</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Group to work with HR to ensure that all current staff are trained in the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Human Rights Code (Manitoba)</li> <li>• Working Group to ensure that Accessible Customer Service and Human Rights Code (Manitoba) training is completed with all new employees as part of the HR orientation</li> <li>• Working Group to ensure that the City of Thompson is fully compliant with the Accessible Customer Service Standard by November 1, 2017</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is expected that the City of Thompson will have all current employees trained and a process in place to ensure that all new employees receive Accessible Customer Service and Human Rights training by November 1, 2017</li> </ul>

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<b>Action 4 - Make the Plan Public</b>	
<b>Initiatives/Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working Group to forward the draft plan to the outside organizations before it goes to Council for approval by resolution</li><li>• Once approved by resolution the Working Group will have the plan posted and alternate formats available</li></ul>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expect the plan will be posted on the City of Thompson’s website by January 17, 2017</li></ul>
<b>Action 5 – Review and Update</b>	
<b>Initiatives/Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working group will meet in 2018 to ensure the City of Thompson’s plan is updated and include any new accessibility standards</li><li>• Working group will include consultation with outside agencies and individual on any reviews and updates</li></ul>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City of Thompson will review the plan every 2 years and include outside agencies and individuals and make any changes required</li></ul>

**Action 6 – Long Term Goals**

**Initiatives/Actions**

- The Working Group will identify in conjunction with the Departments the barriers which will have a zero or low cost impact to the budget and will start to remove or find alternate solutions to these barriers.
- The Working Group will prioritize the barriers identified with a significant budget impact and will work towards having them removed or finding alternate solutions.

**Expected Outcomes**

- It is expected that by the end of 2017 the working group will have all zero or low cost barriers removed or have solutions to address these barriers and develop a strategy to address accessibility barriers with significant costs.

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**F. Conclusion**

The City of Thompson through its Vision, Mission Statement and Core values believe that all citizens and visitors of Thompson should have equal access to our services, programs and facilities regardless of abilities to maintain a quality of life where they work, live or play. The City will continue to work towards identifying, removing and preventing barriers.

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**City Manager's signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**REFERENCES:**

The City of Thompson has used the following documents to prepare the Accessibility Plan

*The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) C.C.S.M. c. A17*

The Customer Service Accessibility Standard

Human Rights Code of the Province of Manitoba

Guide for Public Sector Organizations – How to Create your Accessibility Plan