

4. Past Initiatives with Accessibility in the City of Mississauga

A corporate review of past initiatives with respect to accessibility was undertaken. Each Department was asked to reveal past initiatives with the removal or prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities with our by-laws, policies, practices, programs, services, and facilities in the last several years. The intent of this list is not to provide detailed descriptions, but rather a listing for quick reference. Evaluation of these items will be ongoing. See Appendix E for the list generated.

All Departments have been systematically making accessibility improvements. There have been changes to by-laws, upgrades to facilities, policies implemented, and programs and services have been expanded. The following is a summary of some of the more significant improvements:

- Community Services assessed all City owned facilities for accessibility resulting in the Corporate Accessibility Audit (2001). The audit identified projects required to facilitate access to the entire site. For example, the approach from the street, from parking, access to and from the building, use of facilities by staff and customers. Physical accessibility improvements are requested annually as part of budget planning.
- Five recreation facilities (4 of our older community centres and Meadowvale 4 Rinks) are undergoing comprehensive renovations with accessibility being a primary design objective.
- An increase in participation in both segregated and integrated recreation programs has occurred.
- By-law changes included a change to the Disabled Persons Parking By-law which increased the set fine from \$100 to \$350 for those illegally parking their vehicle in a designated disabled person parking space.
- Planning and Building developed a Design Reference Note for barrier-free parking standards and building access. Through the site plan process, Planning and Building will review the location of disabled parking spaces and signage and the access to the building for institutional, commercial, industrial, and multi-family residential development applicants.

City of Mississauga Accessibility Plan

- Mississauga Transit developed an Accessibility Plan in 2001. They started out with 89 low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses at the beginning of 2001 and increased this to 113 by the end of that year. With the total fleet being 303 buses, approximately one-third are currently wheelchair accessible. By the end of 2003, forty-four (44) accessible buses (raising the total to 157) will be added. Eventually, all buses in the fleet will be accessible.
- A partnership with Peel Transhelp was formed. This resulted in two benefits: assistance with Sensitivity/Disability Awareness training, and the ability to allow customers to transfer between Mississauga Transit and Peel Transhelp at no charge.

While it is understood that continued corporate-wide improvements with respect to accessibility are required, clearly, the City has made some positive inroads into the removal of barriers, particularly in the physical sense.

Under the ODA, not only are municipalities required to develop Accessibility Plans, but school boards, hospitals, colleges, universities and public transportation providers are also obligated to develop their own plans. Staff from Trillium Health Centre participated in the education/training sessions we offered to prepare for our plan. Other municipalities have found that working together with key agencies and organizations in the community makes for a streamlined, consistent approach to accessibility planning. We hope to continue to strengthen our relationships with these agencies in subsequent Accessibility Plans.