



SAULT STE. MARIE

Accessibility Status Report – Year-End 2024

Documents are available in accessible formats upon request.

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Approved by Sault Ste. Marie City Council March 17, 2025

Background

In compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie must submit an Annual Accessibility Status Report. This report outlines the ongoing efforts to remove barriers and improve accessibility within the Corporation. It reflects our continued commitment to the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in our community.

The AODA mandates that large organizations, like the City, establish, review, and update their accessibility plans in consultation with individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, organizations with an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) must also consult with the committee.

This report highlights barrier removal activities undertaken in 2024, demonstrating our dedication to meeting both the legislative requirements of the AODA and additional non-legislative enhancements aimed at fostering a more inclusive community.

2024 Accessibility Plan – Budget and Outcomes

The following accessibility projects were part of the 2024 budget:

- **Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR)** - \$20,000: Annual contribution to the VPR. *Complete.*
- **Curb Cut Removal** - \$10,000: Annual contribution for the remediation of identified curbs to improve curb cuts. *Complete.*
- **Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)** - \$10,000: Installation of APS with a trial using new technology in APS. *Complete.*
- **Parks Accessibility** - \$10,000: Installation of two accessible swings and two musical instruments at Parkland and Westwood Parks. *Complete.*
- **Accessible Outdoor Seating** - \$10,000: Installed at Parkland, Westwood Parks, and the Manzo Splashpad. *Complete.*
- **Captioning City Council Meetings** - \$6,000: Captioning services provided via Zoom. *Complete (No additional action required).*
- **Canadian Hearing Society - Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)** - \$5,000: Purchase of VRI equipment and contract for a one-year trial. In progress; approved by Council February 3, 2025.
- **John Rhodes Community Centre** - \$2,000:
 - Bariatric backboard - \$1,000. *Complete.*

- Splash pad youth water wheelchair - \$1,050. *Complete.*
- **Contingency for Barrier Removal** - \$12,000:
 - Sledge repairs - \$2,700. *Complete.*
 - Adult change table for Downtown Plaza - \$7,500. *In progress.*

AODA Compliance Audit – November 4, 2024

On November 4, 2024, the Accessibility Coordinator received an AODA Compliance Audit requested by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. The audit covered the following areas:

- Accessibility Policies
- Accessibility Plans
- Training
- Accessibility Feedback
- Emergency procedures and public safety information
- Accessibility of off-street parking including access aisles and signage
- Service counters
- Fixed queuing guides
- Waiting areas

With the support from Human Resources and Facilities staff, the audit results were submitted on November 22, 2024.

The audit revealed two non-compliance issues:

- **The Accessible Customer Service Policies** require an update. Formal Accessibility Policies must be completed to guide staff effectively.
- **Training requirements** - The Accessibility Coordinator is collaborating with staff liaisons to implement training requirements for volunteers and third-party contractors to ensure compliance.

Non-Legislative Projects from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

Throughout the year, the AAC recommended approval for the following accessibility initiatives:

- **Challenger Baseball Program** – \$6,000 from barrier removal reserves to purchase an adult change table for the proposed barrier-free improvements at Sinclair Field. The accessibility project is ongoing, with grant applications submitted.
- **Bellevue Park Kayak Dock** – \$5,500 barrier removal reserves for accessibility updates for the kayak dock. The grant application to the Trans Canada Trail was successful, and the project is complete.
- **Barrier-Free Seating Platform (Bleachers)** – \$8,000 from barrier removal reserves for accessible bleachers at the John Rhodes Community Centre. Application to the Green and Inclusive Communities Fund was submitted. Awaiting grant update.
- **Manzo Park Playground Updates** – \$5,000 from the 2026 barrier removal budget. Application to the Enabling Accessibility Grant was submitted in partnership with Community Services Department. Awaiting grant update.

Other Non-Legislative Activities

Emergency Preparedness Workshop for the Deaf Community:

It is essential to remember that English is not the first language for people who are Deaf; American Sign Language (ASL) is their first language.

- Through discussions with Canadian Hearing Services, it was identified that during emergencies such as COVID-19, individuals who are Deaf faced significant challenges accessing critical information. To address this, the Accessibility Coordinator, along with the Canadian Hearing Services and Emergency Management teams, explored the communication barriers that arose during that time. This collaboration led to the facilitation of an emergency preparedness workshop series for the Deaf community, presented by Lauren Perry, Emergency Management Coordinator, and Aaron Gravelle, Public Educator with the Fire Department.
- Due to the increased awareness of the challenges faced by the Deaf community during COVID-19, the City has committed to improving emergency communications. Moving forward, American Sign Language (ASL) will be incorporated into both live and recorded emergency broadcasts to ensure all residents receive timely accessible information.

Accessibility Awareness Activities and Training:

- **AccessAbility Awareness Week (May 29, 2024):** Held in the Civic Centre lobby, featuring various access awareness activities for staff.

- **Challenging Intersections Review (September 17, 2024):** AAC members and City staff conducted a walk-through of intersections to better understand how their design impacts accessibility.
- **Public Accessible Spaces Simplified (PASS) Training (December 12, 2024):** The Accessibility Coordinator led a training session for engineering and building staff, emphasizing the importance of connecting accessibility features in the built environment.

Other Accessibility/Barrier Removal Activities

- **October 30, 2024:** Accessibility and Transit Open House.
- **December 19, 2024:** Accessibility and Transit consultation with the Canadian Council of the Blind.
- **Updated Accessible Customer Service Policy:** A formal policy is under development to provide guidance for staff.
- **Respect Video (August 2024):** A video created to raise awareness about respect and inclusion at all City Facilities.
- **Autism Strategy:** Updated the name to **Autism Neurodiversity Services** to better reflect the content, along with an annual review to ensure all information is accurate.
- **Neurodiversity Programming:** Introduced a trial activity program during the summer, including arts, crafts, and games, designed for individuals with neurodiverse needs at the Northern Community Centre (NCC).
- **Private Swimming Lessons for reasons of Disability:** Ongoing private swimming lessons for individuals with disabilities who cannot participate in group lessons due to the nature of their disability.
- **Pointe Des Chenes Accessibility Updates:** Installation of accessible parking, accessible paths of travel to the water, accessible washrooms and changerooms with door openers, Beach/water wheelchair, and accessible picnic tables.

Looking Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

The City is working on a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which will provide a comprehensive framework for achieving further accessibility goals through new processes and initiatives. This will guide our efforts in fostering an inclusive environment for all citizens.

Acknowledgements

The Accessibility Coordinator extends gratitude to all departments and staff whose time, dedication, and efforts have contributed to the success of the initiatives outlined in this report. Special thanks go to:

- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Clerk's Department
- Human Resources
- Legal Department
- Community Services Department
- Planning and Engineering
- Public Works
- Facilities Staff (Pool and Arenas)

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