



MUNICIPAL ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**MUNICIPAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN  
(LARGE PRINT VERSION)**

2003

Submitted To: Mayor and Council

Submitted By: Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

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## **Executive Summary**

- 1) This Plan has been prepared for Council under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*.
- 2) The Committee has worked with City staff, local agencies and persons with special needs in the formation of this Plan and its recommendations.
- 3) The Committee's initial assessment of accessibility for the City indicates that although there have been good starts in several areas, more work needs to be done in many parts of the municipal government.
- 4) The key issues identified by the Committee and through stakeholder consultations fall into four areas of concern: mobility, facility/design, communications and practice/procedures.
- 5) The Committee recommends a series of action plans to deal with the concerns or barriers identified, grouped by short, medium and long-term time frames
- 6) The Committee suggests an ongoing role as both a technical advisor and as a communications lead to the special needs community in addition to annual reporting as required under the *ODA*.

7) The Committee recommends several approaches to the communication of the Municipal Accessibility Plan once it has been received and endorsed by Council.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The preparation of a Municipal Accessibility Plan is a requirement for local governments in Ontario under the provisions of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA), of the Province of Ontario. This legislation requires that municipalities over 10,000 persons establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee and have a Municipal Accessibility Plan completed by September 30, 2003. The North Bay Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee ('the Committee') was appointed by City Council in the fall of 2002 and commenced work on the plan document in January 2003.

This Plan contains a series of findings of the Committee following their consultations with individuals and groups with special needs around the

city, along with a series of recommendations for the consideration of Council that will assist in the removal or reduction in barriers to citizens with disabilities. Attached as an Appendix to this document is the parallel plan of the City Transit service, and it should be seen as a component of the City's broader Municipal Accessibility Plan. In making these recommendations, it is the hope of the Committee that Council will see fit to direct the necessary changes in order to allow all citizens to participate as fully as possible in the life of our community and be involved to a greater extent in the activities of our local government.

## **2.0 Background**

The Committee established a work plan for the development and production of its first Municipal Accessibility Plan in January 2003 and this was followed by the collection of initial research by a work group of City of North Bay staff in February. A mailing list of local organizations representing the community of citizens with special needs was prepared and in early April, notices were sent and

advertisements were published for a Community Consultation session. The consultation session occurred in early May and a follow up daytime information center was held in mid-May. The plan was prepared and reviewed by the Committee in June and July.

### **3.0 M.A.A.C. Assessment – Accessibility Quotient for the City of North Bay**

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Culture – Accessibility Directorate has devised a Municipal Accessibility Quotient as an initial assessment tool to see how an individual municipality ranks in the provision of programs and services to persons with special needs.

As part of its initial work, the Committee undertook a collective ‘scoring’ of the City of North Bay so that one perspective on accessibility, from the point of view of the special needs community, could be outlined. The results of that initial scoring are as follows:

*Table 1 – M.A.A.C. Scoring – Municipal Accessibility Quotient (Spring 2003)*

<b>Program or Service Area</b>	<b>Committee Comments</b>	<b>Committee Score</b>
Municipal Contacts & Practices	This area needs improvement	2/8
Land Use Planning	Several areas with good policies but more communication desired	4/5
Infrastructure Design & Maintenance	Concerns about adequate design standards being used, increase levels of winter maintenance	1/6
Housing & Accommodation	Unsure what information is available/promoted to public *	0/3 *
Elections Practices	Accommodations are helpful, but improvements needed	1/2
<b>TOTAL</b>		11/27

\* Subsequent checks determined that there is an up to date inventory of barrier-free accommodation in selected public and non-profit housing projects available and maintained by the local Housing Network.

The Committee suggests that this initial assessment should be taken as a sense of present status rather than a “Pass/Fail” type of assessment. The Committee believes that this assessment has great potential to change and improve quickly with a modest investment of resources, should City Council provide that kind of direction.

#### **4.0 Committee Findings – Key Issues From the Stakeholders**

During the Community Consultation Session, the Committee heard from a number of persons with special needs who raised a number of issues pertaining to what the City does (or does not do) in the provision of its policies, faculties, programs and services. Their concerns fall into four major areas.

- (1) Mobility Concerns – The type of accommodations for special needs clients on the conventional transit system (coaches,

shelters, easy to see schedules/bus stops) were identified. Although many persons with disabilities appreciate the Para-Bus service, they would like to see longer hours of service and more vehicles in the fleet. The extension of the Para-Taxi service is also seen as a necessary extension of the present service. The provision of designated Accessible Parking spaces is seen as a good thing, but there are ongoing issues with regard to winter maintenance of these spaces and better-located curb cuts that will accommodate rear and side-loading vehicles. There is a desire to see the City regulate the requirement for Para-Bus pullover spots on private (commercial) sites around the City as well. Winter maintenance of sidewalks to facilitate easy movement of persons who use wheelchairs is identified as another mobility issue.

- (2) Facility/Design Concerns – Entrance ramping to buildings is viewed to be a necessity for persons with mobility challenges. While some City facilities are satisfactory from an accessibility perspective, the City needs to do more work at all of its facilities. Other concerns that have been identified include lighting and visual aids for persons with visual impairments, elevators, contemporary standard accessible washrooms in City buildings, audio signals at intersections with traffic lights, contemporary standard ramps

and curb cuts, turn-style design and mechanics for barrier-free movement and emphasizing accessibility design considerations in all new private residential construction and City-owned leisure facilities and parks.

- (3) Communications Concerns – Needs have been identified around making City documents available in alternate formats (large font, Braille, audio messages/versions, on screen in real time or on the City’s Website), whether these involve notices of Public Meetings, general public information or Council Meeting notes. It appears that the City does not currently use TTY systems for persons who are deaf, deafened or hearing impaired, nor is there a wide usage of international symbols for directional or informational signage.
- (4) Practice/Procedure Concerns – It is felt that special needs sensitivity training is needed for all City staff (although it was noted that certain staff groups such as Transit/Para-Bus operators are already well trained in this regard). There is a perception that the City needs to review its employment recruitment strategies to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunity for employment opportunities. The City should continue its efforts to comply with all applicable Human Rights and related legislation and perhaps become a ‘model’ employer of

persons with special needs. Accommodations for persons with disabilities should also be a consideration in the contract services the City uses (such as door pick up of garbage/Blue Box for persons with special needs).

## **5.0 Recommendations – Action Plans to Deal with Concerns/Barriers Identified**

The Committee has prepared a series of recommended actions for the consideration of Council, based upon their own experience as well as the information gathered from the Community Consultation Session and follow up Information Centre. It is understood that these recommendations need to be costed, aspects of implementation need to be examined and program improvements have to be brought forward in the annual Capital and Operating Budget processes. The Committee has separated its recommendations into Short, Medium and Long Term time frames in order to convey a sense of relative urgency of changes to Council. The Committee also recognizes that certain of these recommendations will be easier to implement (and at lower cost) than others, and these aspects may also influence which of the recommendations gets implemented first.

*Table 2 – Short Term (1 – 6 Months)  
Recommendations*

<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern or Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
Accessible Parking	Mobility	Increase enforcement
<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern or Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
Traffic Safety	Mobility	Run awareness campaign – pedestrians with disabilities
Para Bus Stops	Mobility	Increase number of stops in all commercial areas, designate spots Downtown and improve signage
Para Bus Service	Mobility	Investigate Sunday service
Roads Winter Maint.	Mobility	Train Operators re: snow removal for intersections
Sidewalks Winter Maint.	Mobility	Improve level of service at

		intersections for persons who use wheelchairs
Council/Committee Meetings	Communications	Hold occasional meetings outside of City Hall to accommodate persons with special needs
Signage – Bus Stops	Communications	Attach visual strips on poles/attach route maps/information
Staff Training	Practice/Procedure	Sensitivity training on serving persons with special needs
<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern or Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
Accessible Housing Registry	Facility/Design	Promote development of a consolidated registry of landlords with accessible units
Accessible Parking Spaces	Communications	Better signage, asphalt painting
Accessible Parking	Mobility, Facility/Design	Increase number of spaces, provide curb cuts

		(downtown)
CNB building entrances	Facility/Design	Install yellow visual strip markers on ramps/steps
Fire Prevention - signage	Practice/Procedure/Communications	Have NBFD provide signage identifying residences with occupants with disabilities
CNB Staff	Communications	Have a main contact person/department for accessibility issues for CNB facilities and services
Municipal Accessibility Plan	Communications	Distribute Plan to business organizations, tourism operators, etc.

*Table 3 – Medium Term (7 – 12 months)  
Recommendations*

<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern or Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
International symbols	Communications	Investigate the use of international signage system for all CNB facilities
Ramp/Curb Cut signs	Mobility	Place signs/enforce
Para Bus Service	Mobility	Sell Para-Bus Passes
Public Library	Facility/Design	Make turn-styles easier for persons who use wheelchairs to use, modify elevator for users with larger wheelchairs/scooters
City Staff	Communications	Collect samples of other Accessibility Plans and incorporate best practices in CNB Plan
City Staff	Facility/Design	Promote accessibility issues in Building Code administration and with other local

		public agencies
City Staff	Facility/Design	Design all CNB buildings alterations for accessibility
<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern or Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
Loading Zones – Para Bus	Mobility	Create more spaces on public and private lands
Council Meetings  Council – Bylaws/Policies	Communications/ Practice & Procedure  Practice/Procedure	Make available in alternate formats  Commence a review of key Bylaws (Traffic, Parking, Waste Collection) that may affect persons with disabilities
9-1-1 Dispatch	Communications/ Practice & Procedure	Make available in alternate formats
Washrooms – CNB Arenas & facilities	Mobility, Facility/Design	Install automatic doors, make washrooms gender-free for persons requiring assistance
Council & City	Communications	Develop a Public

Staff		Education Program
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*Table 4 – Long Term (13 – 48 months)  
Recommendations*

<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern/Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
Solid Waste Collection	Mobility & Practice/Procedure	Investigate/cost door service for persons with disabilities with Contractor
ParaBus/ParaTaxi Service	Mobility	Integrate during peak periods
ParaTaxi Service	Mobility	Increase level of service
<b><i>CNB Facility, Program or Service</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Concern/Barrier</i></b>	<b><i>Recommended Solution</i></b>
Traffic Signals	Communications & Facility/Design	Install audible signals on all traffic lights
Sidewalks & trails	Mobility	Develop 'scooter routes' around city

Sidewalks	Mobility	Provide sidewalks on 1 side of all CNB streets
Parks/Picnic Sites	Facility/Design	Make all sites accessible
City Hall	Facility/Design	Complete building accessibility improvements
Human Resources	Practice/Procedure	Develop an Accommodations Policy for hiring persons with disabilities
City Transit	Mobility	Commence conversion of conventional fleet, more Para Buses
Council Meetings	Practice/Procedure	Live captioning Council Meetings
Roads/Sidewalks	Mobility	Continue improvements to ramps, curb cuts, accessible parking spaces, signage
Parking Spaces - Downtown	Mobility	Create side-loading parking

		spots-Main St./Parking Garage
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## **6.0 Monitoring and Review of Recommendations**

It is the Committee's understanding that once Council has received this report and recommendations, the role of the Advisory Committee changes. The Committee recommends that Council use the Committee in an advisory role as the implementation of the Plan's recommendations is carried out, both as a technical advisor to the City staff and as a liaison to the special needs community. In future, the Committee will annually monitor and report on the progress of the Plan in terms of identification and removal of barriers and measures taken towards completion of recommended solutions.

## **7.0 Communication of the Municipal Accessibility Plan**

It is recommended that the City of North Bay use several alternative formats for communication of this Plan: Larger font of the print version and putting a copy of the Council-approved Plan on the City's Website. Over time, the City could explore the conversion of this Plan into other formats. A useful stakeholder mailing list was developed as part of the Committee's research work, and copies should also be distributed to the organizations and individuals on that list, along with making copies available for the general public at City hall. The Committee commends the City for the appointment of a representative from Council as well as a representative from the City staff to assist the Committee in its work. It is hoped that this kind of liaison will be maintained over the years to come as the Committee continues to provide advice to Council and the community on special needs concerns.

## **Appendices**

(**Note:** Appendices to this Plan are available in print only at this time. They can be obtained by contacting Jeff Celentano with the City of North Bay at (705) 474-0626 or by email (jeff.celentano@cityofnorthbay.ca))

- 1) Summary Notes – Community Consultation Session – May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003
- 2) City of North Bay Transit Accessibility Plan
- 3) List of Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee Members