2015 Annual Report

Access Advisory Committee

Winnipeg

WHAT DO WE DO...

...we advise City of Winnipeg leaders on accessibility for civic properties, information and services and recommend best practices in Universal Design while building relationships with the community.



Ross Eadie, Councillor

Message from the Chairperson of the Access Advisory Committee

The city has been busy preparing to submit a report to the province on how we intend to achieve the goals set out for the Accessibility Regulations.

What's really exciting is how all the city departments are offering ideas about how we can work towards meeting regulatory standards in five categories: customer service, employment, information and communications, built environment and transportation.

It's encouraging to hear from the Universal Design Coordinator that all departments are involved and very enthusiastic. I have personally seen this, and haven't seen city departments as enthusiastic about making improvements for persons with disabilities – to the benefit of everyone – since the Universal Design Policy and standards were developed.

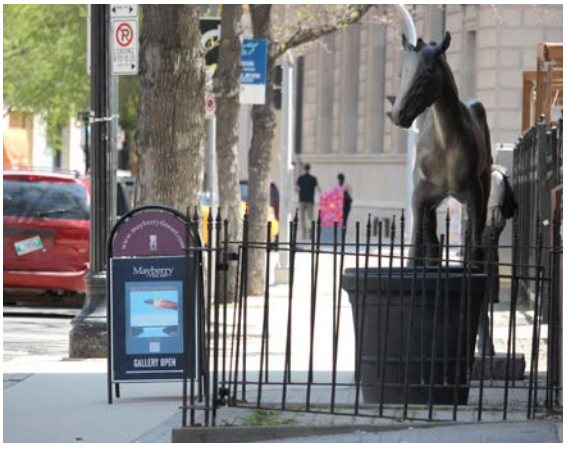
I think the relationships the Access Advisory Committee has built and the chance to educate people around accessibility and universal design have helped create this willingness. The concept isn't new to them, so there is a level of awareness in civic administration. Perhaps most importantly, it also shows that talking about accessibility is part of how we do business.

In preparing the report, we are indicating where new initiatives are needed. These show us where we need to improve. But assessing our accessibility strengths shows us how the Access Advisory Committee has been moving this agenda forward for over two decades.

To further these concepts, the AAC has been working at developing a stronger relationship with the Handi Transit division of Winnipeg Transit. Working with them, we've been talking about the problems with Handi Transit, and looking at how things can be improved.



We've also looked at strengthening our relationship with the Citizen Equity Committee, who advises council on employment equity issues in the City of Winnipeg.



One area we've been advocating strongly for as a committee is to increase the accessibility fund. For the past 10 years, an annual budget has been set for $350,000 to retrofit existing buildings with accessibility features. We would like to see the number up to $500,000 over the next five years. This will help get the city's buildings in better shape so people can utilize the services, presently we are at $425,000.

I want to thank the committee members for their passion and dedication to improving accessibility in our city. The relationships we're building conversation by conversation are having a positive impact, and keep us moving in a strong direction. The ultimate goal is that each person in Winnipeg can live, work and play…without barriers.

Update on accessibility

Customer service standard

In November 2015, the government of Manitoba formally approved the Accessibility Standard as regulation. The customer service standard was the first of five standards to be established. Others include employment, transportation, information and communication and the built environment.

Within the customer service standard is a requirement for the government of Manitoba to be in compliance by November 2016. Crown corporations, municipalities, boards, commissions, or tribunals will have two years and the private sector will have until November 2017 to be in compliance.

“There are timelines associated with every standard we develop,” says John Wyndels, Policy Analyst with the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO), for the Government of Manitoba.

Government, large public sector organizations and municipalities will also need to prepare an accessibility plan by the end of 2016. This includes schools, regional health authorities, colleges, universities, crown corporations and select municipalities.

“We want them to develop an accessibility plan that requires them to look at their policies, programs, services, general practices and figure out systemic barriers that may exist,” he says. “We want to ensure barriers are identified and that there is a proactive process to eliminate them in the future.”

Other public sector organizations that aren’t covered in 2016, will need to have an accessibility plan by 2017.

The primary focus of the DIO is offering supports and education to organizations that have to have the accessibility plan completed in 2016. Bi-monthly training sessions explaining what’s involved and how to prepare the document have been offered to various organizations that have to develop accessibility plans. A website has been launched to further support this goal: www.accessibilitymb.ca.

Once a baseline is established, organizations will be required

legislation

established, employment in the works



to update the plan every two years. This will provide a clear idea of progress being made in eliminating barriers.

Barriers include physical, attitudes, information and communication. Applying an accessibility lens to barriers has been an eye opener for people who attend training and has launched much discussion around accessibility and barriers.

“Just talking about accessibility and how potential barriers can exist, many people acknowledge they never thought about that. These are important conversations, because 70% of disabilities are invisible,” he says. “When you start looking at people who may have mental health issues, developmental disabilities or hearing loss and consider what might impact their ability to be a full participant in society, you become aware of the various barriers.”

Work has already begun with major stakeholders on the development of the second standard: employment.



The Accessibility Council has formed a committee that includes employment and human resources experts to look at how to remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, and how to make accessibility a priority in employment practices.

“The hope is that persons with disabilities will not encounter as many barriers in the recruitment and various cycles that go on in an employment situation,” says Wyndels.

The goal is to prepare a discussion paper by April that will form the public consultation in June. Government will have a chance to respond to recommendations made by the Accessibility Council. The next step will be preparing a report that contains a proposed employment standard to the Minister in early September.

Wyndels notes this is a long-term challenge that will take time, but that they’ve been receiving regular calls from the public about the legislation. “There’s an appetite for it. In working with various organizations, there isn’t a lot of pushback. Most are willing to embrace this and see this as a good step in moving forward to equal access and opportunity, regardless of your ability. By taking a proactive approach, we think we can develop a much more inclusive province.”

Find out more about the Accessibility for Manitobans Act at www.accessibility.mb.ca


2015
Award of Excellence
in Accessible
Architectural Design
Canadian
Museum for
Human Rights

A shift in perspective

Canadian Museum for Human Rights awarded for their commitment to inclusive design

When schematic designs of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights exhibition program were presented to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, the feedback offered was a major turning point not only for the project but the organization.

"We received really amazing critical feedback," says Corey Timpson, Vice President of Exhibitions, Research and Design for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. "While they were very appreciative of the project, and they liked our ambition and stories, they also told us that the ways in which we were telling the stories left a lot to be desired and we weren't doing enough to be inclusive."

The pause to integrate this information resulted in a conversation among the organization's senior leadership that recommended a change in business practice.

"We chose to adopt an inclusive design methodology based on criticism from a very informed audience," says Timpson. "When I think back to that important milestone, the way we responded led us to where we are today."

The creation of a council to advise the organization not only on inclusive exhibitions, but also inclusive design for property, information and services has established the organization as a leader in inclusive design, to the benefit of all.

Accessibility consultant Brian Everton recognized a light switch was turned on in those early conversations. "It's not very often that you have a client who says we see this as an opportunity rather than a responsibility," he says. "They decided to do this and do it right. They took this concept and embedded it throughout their administration."



The council includes a staff representative responsible for inclusive design from each department, including finance, human resources and building services. Each representative is responsible for understanding inclusive design and applying it to their area.

“Now we’ve got a corporate culture that is sensitive and concerned with inclusive design for whatever we’re doing – writing a policy, procuring software or designing and developing something for the public,” says Timpson. “The methodology is very strong and part of our culture.”

Everton agrees. “Inclusive design is part of their culture, which is very evident when you walk in that building,” he says. “It’s still evolving. They are finding new technology, testing how it applies and if it is something that can be used, there’s a let’s do it attitude.”

It’s something the Awards committee appreciated: the attention to details that enhance accessibility and the experience for multiple users, regardless of their abilities. People can move through the museum without barriers, and thought and planning went into ensuring a common experience for every user when they enter the building…as opposed to separate entrance. Wayfinding, signage and texture or colour elements have been introduced for people with challenges seeing.

But each person who visits the museum also has the chance to interact with exhibits and information in ways that work best for them.

“There is a fundamental change in how people view museums and galleries. They don’t just go in and look, but there is an expectation to go in and participate. To allow people to be involved with the content has driven the process,” says Everton. “If we want people to be involved, we need to make sure it works functionally for the broadest population we can.”

Features like volume control, zooming on screens and implementing smart phone technologies that give content descriptions captured the

attention of the Awards committee. So did accessible, universal and non-gendered washrooms…which have been so mindfully designed it means people can enjoy their visit to the museum for longer periods of time.

The capacity to have an experience for a wide variety of users captured the attention of the Awards committee. As Timpson discovered, this is no small effort. Often the solutions that work for one disability create inaccessibility for another.

In doing so, the organization set new benchmarks because no one had gone that far. “It becomes really complicated to navigate what the appropriate solutions are,” says Timpson. “It’s nice to be recognized for our efforts.”

At the Access Awards ceremony, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights project was recognized with the Leadership Award for the Advancement of Accessible Environmental Design (acknowledging the work of Timpson, Natalie Rogers-Foidart and Dave Noseworthy) and the Award of Excellence in Accessible Architectural Design (and design lead Grant Van Iderstine of Architecture 49 was highlighted).

For those considering incorporating inclusive design, Timpson suggests considering it in the design phase. “Otherwise you’ll be compromising further down the road because you didn’t think about it at the outset,” he says. “If we wouldn’t have incorporated that feedback, we could have alienated stakeholder groups and it would have cost far more money in redesign. Frankly it would have been a disaster. Thinking about it at the outset puts us in a position to make things more usable for everyone, irrespective of ability.”

This concept is something Everton is passionate about. His interest in inclusive design was inspired by his aunt, who had polio. “I was raised that my aunt was no different than the rest of us, we just had to give her a hand once in awhile. I watched her struggle with the silliest things and started to wonder why we set up barriers for other people,” he says. “As a designer, I have a responsibility to stop this from happening.”









The Canadian Museum for Human Rights was one project recognized at the Access Awards on October 14th at Club Regent Casino. Eight awards were presented to celebrate excellence in accessible design. For more info about the event and winners, visit www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca/awards.html.

Changes to the Universal Design Standards



It was a historic day when the Universal Design Standards were introduced in 2001. The goal was to establish building standards for City of Winnipeg properties that incorporated universal design principles. It was an integral tool to begin accessibility conversations sooner rather than later, and to design with a wide variety of users in mind, instead of needing to make changes and tweaks after the fact.

This year saw some amendments and update to the standards:

- replacing the standards with the 2015 Accessibility Design Standards,
- introducing a new tool: the Administrative Standard template layout,
- updating the language to include responsibilities under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and Our Winnipeg and
- changing references from Administrative Directive to Administrative Standard.

Read more at winnipeg.ca/ppd/Universal_Design.stm.

Returning to community roots





This year, much discussion has taken place around how to bring the Access Awards back to the community, enhance outreach opportunities and further celebrate achievements in universal design.

To support that train of thought, two significant changes will take place with respect to the 2016 Access Awards. First, while the awards will be announced at a special event at City Hall in the fall, official award presentations will be made at events that are convenient but will also allow further celebration with award winners and their design and project members. The second change is to move away from an Academy Awards type presentation to recognizing projects on their individual merit. This will allow for even further celebration of specific design elements and exemplary progress in universal design.

The AAC will continue to do a media and email blitz while enhancing outreach and education opportunities around universal design to be more intimate and grassroots. These shifts will also allow for networking opportunities and the chance for architects, designers, project owners and students to share inspiration and best practices.

Did you KNOW?

The first accessibility award was presented in 2002.

Back to basics

With an interest in disability law and an experience in working on these issues from a federal level, Doug Gordon was curious about getting involved at the city level on disability issues.

That's why he joined the AAC in 2013. His background has shown him the importance of laws, and he feels strongly that the current accessibility standards need to become bylaws to give them more weight.

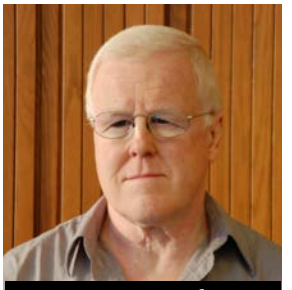
"When you break a standard, it boils down to a weak negotiation. If you break a law, definite action can be taken,' he says. "Having the laws more based on disability rights laws is one of my big pushes."

One of the first steps is more education. Most people aren't really aware about disability laws. "I think education is important. It amazes me there is so little education and knowledge about disability rights when some of these laws have been around for 30 or 40 years and are some of the highest laws in our country… they're quasi-constitutional," he says. "Why is it taking so long for people to become educated? This is definitely a lack of acknowledgement resulting in little or no motivation."

He hopes this will be part of the conversations as a result of the province's accessibility standards, particularly with respect to employment.



Currently, 18 – 20% of persons with disabilities are employed.


Doug Gordon

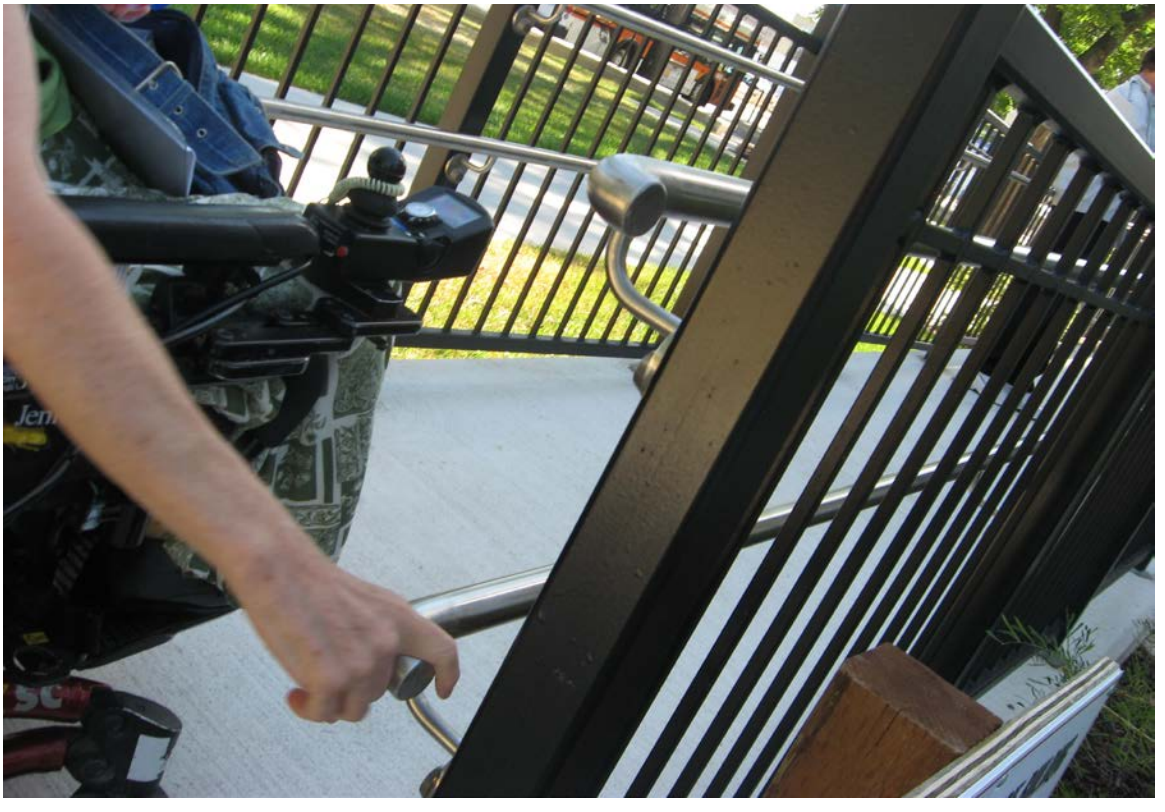
Research done in 1971, for example, notes that employment for persons with disabilities was at 18%. That means for every 100 people with disabilities who were able to work, only 18 were working.

The numbers haven't changed much. Currently, 18 – 20% of persons with disabilities are employed.

"There's no motivation in a lot of cases for society to change for persons with disabilities. It's such a slow process, especially when it comes to employment," he says.

One element Doug is proud of contributing to with the AAC is the makeover of the Access Awards. He feels making the awards a major event has helped provide more recognition for architects that have achieved higher accessibility in their planning.

He hopes they can continue to work with architects and designers to not only consider accessibility, but to also have them nominate their projects for consideration.



Contributing to the

Ken Shachtay believes shifting perceptions of persons with disabilities is an area that needs further attention.

It's something Ken has experienced first-hand. Over the years, navigating multiple sclerosis, Ken has seen how differently people treated him when he needed a cane, then a walker, then a scooter…and now a wheelchair.

"In a scooter, people seemed to think I had 50% intelligence. Once I was in the wheelchair, that was gone out the window. My experience has been that people figure you're not fully with it," he says. "It's because of a lack of education. Until you actually converse with the individual in the chair, you've got preconceived notions."

Integrating persons with disabilities for children early on in the education system – as early as nursery school, he says – would



be helpful to changing those preconceived notions.

"Younger people would benefit from seeing it's common place to have somebody who is disabled, and that they are fully functional," he says.

Often adults can be a more difficult group to educate, because of biases and inaccurate beliefs. "I would say in the back of their mind, their first impression of a person in a wheelchair is, 'Should I talk to them? Will I have a meaningful conversation?'" he says.

conversation

Having meaningful conversations, and getting accurate information first-hand is one reason Ken is so involved in the disability community. He works with the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Independent Living Resource Centre, Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities and also contributes to conversations on self-managed homecare.

The work keeps him busy, but on top of that, he was an AAC member from 2004 – 2010, took a break and returned in 2013. He is currently on the policy, management and education sub-committees.

"There is still work to be done,' he says. "To me it's like voting. If you don't vote, you don't have a say. If I don't advocate or help the cause, I really shouldn't complain."

A source of pride during his first term with the AAC is the yellow tactile domes at curb cuts in the city.

Visible elements like this are easier for the public to see. Ken would like citizens of Winnipeg to take a more active role in seeing and reporting accessibility barriers – including the ones they can't see.

"The concept that a select few can only oversee this work is not reality," he says.

His hope for his current term? "I'd like to see Winnipeg to be all inclusive, fully accessible," he says. "What the AAC is strongly pushing for are things that benefit everybody, making things more comfortable for whatever you need."

Did you KNOW?

The 2016 Accessibility Program earmarks $425,000 a year to upgrade civic properties with accessibility features.

Interested in joining the conversation?

Visit www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca to contact us.

Budget

Financial Report 2015

Revenues

Council Funding	$ 66,880.00

Expenditures

Meeting Costs	$ 5,814.80
Administrative Support	$ 42,030.83
Administrative Supplies	$ 3,413.92
Awards	$ 9,957.83
Website	$ 1,250.00
Communication	$ 1,700.00
Special Projects	$ 1,630.00
Total	**$ 65,797.38**
2014 Surplus/Balance	$ 1,082.62





2014 Access Advisory Committee

Ross Eadie, **Chair**
Devi Sharma, **Councillor**
Albert Johson
Larry Baillie
Louis Gaudry
Doug Gordon
Judy Herscovitch
Elizabeth Mitchell
Ken Shachtay
Debbie Van Ettinger
Gail MacAulay
Barbara Mah
Colleen Watters
Chris Sobkowicz,
Committee Coordinator
Judy Redmond,
Universal Design Coordinator
Rochelle Viray,
City Clerks Department
Andrea Bodie, **Annual Report**



This edition of the Access Advisory Committee Annual Report is dedicated to Andrea Bodie who passed away on May 13, 2016.

Your words have been magic and your passion for an accessible Winnipeg was profound.

Up ahead...

Providing recommendations around the awareness of universal design and accessibility is a key role of the AAC.

Building on what works, we'll continue to develop existing resources – provide a current and informative website, established relationships with key stakeholders in the community – share expertise and further understanding of accessibility issues with the ongoing development of the **Accessibility for Manitobans Act**, and finally working within the City of Winnipeg in providing inclusive and accessible programs, facilities, and services for the whole community.

We're on Track..

The AAC completed a strategic plan for 2016 and has accomplished much of what we set out to do.

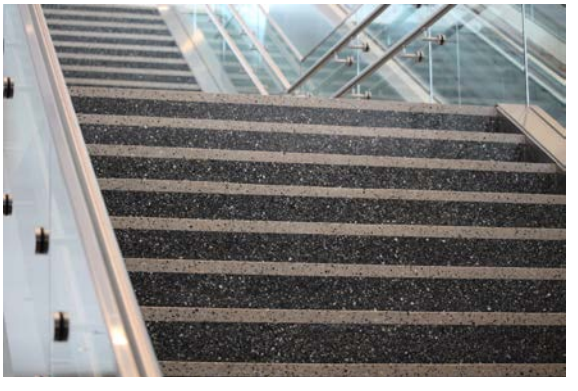
Raising Awareness through Education

Education is an integral part of the work the committee does. With each conversation, each email, each meeting, each presentation, and each trade show display, there is an opportunity to continue a deeper conversation around accessibility and universal design. The AAC is committed to continuing to help all the City of Winnipeg departments further understand the importance of accessible information, property and services for a variety of users, that ultimately benefits everyone. The AAC continues to lobby for a mandatory course for key City of Winnipeg personnel to raise awareness around the use of the Universal Design Policy and Administrative Directives.

Building a strong relationship with the Province of Manitoba

The AAC plays an active and integral role in supporting and providing feedback in helping the Province of Manitoba develop the details and standards in the five key targeted streams of service for the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. In 2015 we played an active role in developing the Customer Standards adopted by the Province of Manitoba in November 2015. The AAC will continue to work in consort with all the stakeholder associations, municipalities, educational institutions, regional health authorities, and the Province of Manitoba in building a made in Manitoba model of accessibility for all Manitobans through the remaining Key Targeted Streams.







Development

Innovation and creativity are required as the committee finds new ways to do things that reduces administrative costs and environmental impact. A user-friendly website (www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca), email campaigns that make the most of an established network of contacts and stakeholders, discussing how to use social media in ways that help the AAC educate and communicate with a broader audience are elements that help facilitate these goals.

Input on Major City of Winnipeg Projects

The AAC participated in providing input on many projects that made the headlines, as well as ones that didn't. We will continue to work with our planners and project design teams in the many departments as a valuable resource in assuring accessible design as a critical part of any of the City of Winnipeg projects.



Coordinator's Comments

From the desk of
Chris Sobkowicz

I wish to express my gratitude to the Mayor and Council for the continuous support that enables the Access Advisory Committee to carry out its responsibilities. I am also thankful for the administrative support the AAC gets from the City Clerk's office and all the department representatives throughout the City of Winnipeg.

Given the ongoing nature of accessibility work, this collective approach speaks volumes about the civic culture and commitment to accessibility for all. We truly have a dedicated staff who engaged their individual departments in collaborating to accomplish our accessibility vision for the future.

I would like to recognize the Province of Manitoba for its commitment to Accessibility Legislation, and the opportunities for the AAC to work in consort with them in rolling out the new standards in the five key areas.

Every year, the AAC takes the opportunity to recognize those architects, landscape architects, designers, planners, and owners who have shown their commitment to Universal Design principles in their projects through the Access Awards. My thanks to the Professional Design Community for their understanding that Universal Design makes life more equitable, safe, comfortable and affordable for everyone, including people with disabilities. It becomes easier for the AAC, when we are all on board at the design stage of any project.

Lastly…I would like to extend my thanks and sincere appreciation to the volunteer members of the City of Winnipeg Access Advisory Committee. These passionate people have dedicated their time to the citizens of Winnipeg in identifying the barriers to active civic participation. They have spent countless hours in developing a comprehensive strategy to achieve a fully inclusive and accessible community for everyone.



Contact Us

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This annual report is available in French, in Braille, and electronically on our website at www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca. Please contact us to receive your copy in alternate formatting.

This report is specially designed to be accessed by a wide variety of users.



ONE DAY...

we're all going to be touched
by the benefits of
ACCESSIBLE DESIGN...