

TOWN OF HANOVER

MULTI-YEAR

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2013 – 2018



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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the Province.



Under the ODA, all municipalities have a legal obligation to prepare multi-year accessibility plan. This document has been revised to now represent a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In addition, the plan was recently updated to reflect the Ontario Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation requirements. By incorporating the information pertaining to the Integrated Accessibility Standards into this plan, it will address the current and future requirements of the ODA.

In 2011, Department Heads within the Town of Hanover were asked to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. The Department Heads identified a number of barriers and we will continue to improve and/or eliminate these barriers. The most significant findings were that while many facilities can accommodate wheelchair accessibility, certain renovations or alterations will be required to become fully accessible. Over the next few years, it is recommended that focus be placed on these facilities which deny access or use on a day-to-day basis.

Currently, the Town is committing itself through continual improvements of access to municipal facilities, within budget limitations, and has upgraded the Municipal Website to be compliant to WCAG 2 Level AA requirements.

The Town is in full compliance for the Customer Service Accessibility Standard that became effective January 1, 2010. We will continue to focus on providing policy, training support and continue to improve services and programs to meet these regulations.

With this plan, the Town will present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for persons with disabilities.



2. Statement of Commitment of Creating an Accessible Community

The Town of Hanover is enriched with a population of varying talents, abilities and experiences. The Town values the contributions of all residents and visitors and believes that these contributions have enhanced our community spirit.

The Town of Hanover is committed to building an inclusive society and providing an accessible environment in which all individuals have access to our programs and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. The Town of Hanover supports the needs of persons as set out in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the goals of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. The Town of Hanover will establish policies, practices, and procedures which are consistent with the accessibility standards established under the AODA, including accessible customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation and the built environment, and that is consistent with the four core principles as outlined in the AODA:

Dignity – Service is provided in a way that allows persons with disabilities to maintain self respect and the respect of others

Full Inclusion (Independence) – all people are allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others

Integration - Services is provided in a way that all persons with disabilities can benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable persons with disabilities to access goods or services.

Equal Opportunity - Service is provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods and services equal to that given to others.

The Town of Hanover will continue to prevent barriers by designing inclusively and supporting positive approaches that address attitudes which undervalue and restrict the potential of persons with disabilities. In working towards its goals under this statement, the Town of Hanover is committed to meeting the requirements of existing legislation and to its own policies and goals related to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities and becoming a barrier-free community. The Town of Hanover shall use every effort to ensure that we meet the needs of people with disabilities, in a timely manner, through the implementation of this policy.

3. The Ontario Human Rights Code

Section 10(1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code defines “disability” as follows: “because of disability” means for the reason that the person has or has had, or is believed to have or have had,

- a. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, with limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. A mental disorder, or
- e. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*



4. Accessibility Standards Overview

The *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is a law passed by the Ontario legislature that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them. The standards are made into laws called regulations, and they provide the details to help meet the goal of the AODA. The AODA is the foundation on which the standards are built. The purpose of developing and implementing accessibility standards is to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The five standards are:

- Customer Service
- Employment
- The Built Environment
- Information & Communications
- Transportation



i) Customer Service (Regulation 429/07)

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into force on January 1, 2008. The standard applies to all organizations in Ontario that provide goods and services to the public or to other businesses that have one or more employees.

As a public sector organization, the Town of Hanover complied with the following Accessibility Standards by January 1, 2010:

1. Established policies, practices and procedures on providing goods and services to people with disabilities.
2. Training staff on how to serve people with disabilities.
3. Allowing persons with disabilities to bring their support person or service animal with them.
4. Communicating with a person in a way that respects their disability, with integrity and allows for integration.

ii) Integrated Accessibility (Regulation 191/11)

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 191/11, entitled, "Integrated Accessibility Standards" (Regulation), came into force on July 1, 2011. This Regulation establishes accessibility standards for **Information and Communication, Employment, and Transportation**.

Some of the requirements are: developing policies to ensure that our communication is accessible to people with disabilities; ensuring we are able to provide information in a format that considers an individual's disability; ensuring that our website is compliant with applicable standards; and developing policies on ensuring potential employees with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations during the recruitment phase.

The Integrated Standards will be implemented in phases according to the compliance deadlines for each facet of the standards.

iii) Built Environment – Physical & Architectural (*still in progress*)

A. Customer Service

Please refer to Town of Hanover Accessible Customer Service Policy dated March 8, 2010.

Service Animals Welcome



B. Information and Communications

Information and communications are a large part of the Town of Hanover’s daily business. It is because of this that it so important to ensure that information and communications are created and presented in a way that considers accessibility.



The Town will follow universal design principles and best practices when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies and products. This includes websites and print communications materials as well as face-to-face interactions.

The Town is committed to ensuring that information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities. The Town will make reasonable efforts based upon the needs of the community and upon request within the constraints of being a small rural/urban Town. For the purposes of this policy reasonable efforts by the Town shall be based on the frequency of indications for needs of service, the availability of the service requested, the relative cost compared to the overall Municipal budget, best practices recognized by similar rural municipalities and Provincial regulation.

The Town will achieve this by:

1. Achieving compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to ensure the Municipal website is accessible to people with disabilities.
2. Developing resource materials for creating accessible documents for common software programs such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
3. Ensuring that emergency information, procedures, plans and public safety information is available in alternate formats, when requested.
4. Developing a training strategy to ensure that staff has the knowledge, tools and technical advice to create accessible materials.
5. Ensuring documents are available in an alternate format, upon request.
6. Review and update the Municipal Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every five (5) years.



Accessible Information

Progress

1. Redesign of Town Website in accordance with WCAG 2.0 requirements.
2. Emergency Preparedness pamphlets compiled for a variety of disabilities.
3. Accessible Customer Service Policy Completed and training of all staff, volunteers and committee members has been completed.
4. Format request form developed and posted on website.
5. Feedback request form developed and posted on website.

Future Activities

1. Reviewing current processes to receive feedback from the public.
2. Reviewing current processes on how public can request an alternate format.
3. Update of Purchasing By-law with regards to accessibility criteria.
4. Update to purchasing procedure to ensure that third party contractors are familiar with the Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requirements and sign off accordingly.
5. Training under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation by 2014.

**C. Employment Standard**

The Town of Hanover is committed to ensuring that the process of finding, getting and keeping a job is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce. The Town will make reasonable efforts based upon the needs of the community and upon request within the constraints of being a small rural Town. For the purposes of this policy, reasonable efforts by the Town shall be based on the frequency of expressions for the need for service, the availability of the service requested, the relative cost compared to the overall municipal budget, best practices recognized by similar rural municipalities and Provincial regulation.

The Town will achieve this by:

1. Understanding employer obligations to provide employment accommodations.
2. Identifying and removing barriers in the workplace.
3. Enhancing workplace emergency responses through individualized emergency response information and assistance as required.
4. Revising individual work plans and developing a guide, tools and templates to remove barriers from the recruitment process.

**Progress**

1. Attended training to assist staff with the development of an Employee (individual) accommodation plan.
2. Have installed a visible fire alarm system for employees and patrons with auditory impairment at the P & H Centre (Arena/Aquatic Facility).
3. Attended webinars to keep up to date on Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations.
4. Have resources available for templates to accommodate the Employment Standard.

Future Activities

1. Train relevant staff on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.
2. Ensure job advertisements specify that accommodation is available for job applicants with disabilities, if applicable.
3. Keep employees up to date on changes to policies.

D. Transportation Standard

The majority of the Transportation Standard does not apply to the Town of Hanover, however, certain conditions that apply to the operation of taxicabs have been addressed.

The Town will achieve this by:

1. Ensuring that taxi cab owner/operators are aware of their legislative requirements
2. Ensuring that Taxi owners/operators do not charge passengers with a disability a higher fare or an additional fee for storage of assistive devices
3. Ensuring that all taxicabs display vehicle identification on the rear bumper and available to all passengers in an accessible format

Progress:

1. The taxicab bylaw is being updated to include the requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).
2. The Town is revising the application package for taxi cab licenses to include the requirements under AODA (Section 80)
3. Taxi cabs owners/operators are required to post their fares in a large format and to make them available upon request in an alternate format
4. Taxicabs display bumper stickers with the relevant vehicle identification.

Future Activities

1. To provide taxicab operator with a standard sticker with the relevant vehicle identification to allow for a uniform format throughout the Town of Hanover.

E. Built Environment (*still in process*)

The Accessible Built Environment Standard will be the fifth and final standard. This standard has been released in draft form and there is no set date as to when it may be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This standard is intended to help remove barriers in buildings and outdoor spaces for persons with disabilities. The standard will only apply to new construction and extensive renovation. A number of drafts of the Built Standard have been reviewed and commented on by other public agencies. Changes will be reflected in two pieces

of legislative components including the Ontario Building Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.



The focus is to be on built public open spaces and streetscape elements as well as building elements in a range of occupancies. Occupancies may include, but are not limited to, business and industrial occupancies, multi-residential occupancies, hotels, motels, assembly occupancies such as theatres, recreational facilities, interior and exterior transportation infrastructure (boarding platforms, facilities, bus stops, etc.). In accordance with these Terms of Reference and the Act, the proposed accessibility standard will set out the policies, practices or other requirements for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to the built environment for persons with a range of disabilities.

The Town of Hanover is committed to enhanced accessibility into, out of and around our facilities and believes that all staff and visitors will be able to move freely in all Municipal spaces, both indoors and outdoors.

The Town will achieve this by:

1. All renovation and construction projects moving forward will comply with the Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS), if applicable.
2. Any new Site Plan Control and Subdivision Plans must be reviewed to ensure barrier-free requirements are identified.

Progress:

1. Accessible playground equipment at the Hanover Town Park.
2. Many buildings have already been updated and renovated to include accessible features, such as automatic door openers, accessible washrooms and elevators.
3. Renovations of other facilities are in progress to ensure that all residents and visitors are able to enjoy all that the Town of Hanover has to offer.

Future Activities

1. All municipal building exterior steps and forward edges should be highly coloured contrasted for easy visibility
2. All municipal buildings that have accessible entrances should be marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.
3. The Town will add more accessible parking spaces that are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.



Aim

“To promote, encourage, and provide an accessible community which ensures equality for all in the Town of Hanover”.

5. Description of the Town of Hanover

The Town of Hanover is located in southwestern Ontario and is situated in the southwesterly portion of Grey County. Hanover is bordered on the west by the Municipality of Brockton, on the south east and north by the Municipality of West Grey.

This Town was created as a village in 1904 and has since evolved to the progressive Town of Hanover. The Town of Hanover has a population of 7400 with 3177 households and is the regional hub of southern Grey and Bruce Counties.

The Town of Hanover Municipal Office and Council Chambers is located at 341 10th Street, Hanover and all municipal administration processes are conducted at this location eg. public information, planning, zoning, building permits, financial administration and tax collection.

Maintenance and construction of a system of roads owned by the Town are also a major function of the Town.

The Hanover Fire Department is owned and operated by the Town of Hanover and provides services to parts of the Municipality of Brockton and Municipality of West Grey too.

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department provides services and operational functions related to arena, pool, civic facilities, parks, athletic fields, trails, special events, culture, programs for various ages, administration and heritage services. The P & H Centre (Arena and indoor pool) is the largest recreation facility that the Town operations.

Library services are provided by the Hanover Public Library and are governed by the Library Board with major funding from the Town of Hanover. Policing is provided by the Hanover Police Services and is governed by the Police Services Board.

Water and Sewer services are provided to Hanover residences and businesses.

The Town houses one or more of the following amenities:

- Municipal Administration/Library/Theatre/Firehall Building (Civic Centre)
- OLG Slots Facility/Racetrack
- Hanover Hospital
- Medical Clinic
- Three (3) elementary, one (1) secondary school
- Arena/Community Centre/Aquatic Facility (P & H Centre)
- Municipal Airport – Joint Board with Municipality of Brockton and Municipality of West Grey
- Senior Citizens/Nursing Home
- Various municipal parks and walking trail system
- Ambulance Station
- Town Cemetery
- Ball Diamonds and athletic fields

5. Council Commitment to Accessibility Planning



The Council of the Town of Hanover is committed to:

- Providing quality service to members of the community with disabilities.
- The continual improvement of access to all municipally owned facilities, premises and services, to better meet the needs of those with disabilities
- The re-examination of its regulations and policies to ensure the objectives of the plan are being met.
- Building strong relationships with persons with disabilities in order to ensure that existing barriers can be identified and removed and future barriers are prevented.

The Council of the Town of Hanover has authorized the adoption of a Multi Year Accessibility Plan that will enable the Council to meet these commitments.

Recent Barrier – Removal Initiatives

During the past two years, the Town 's web site was updated and entirely redesigned to meet the WCAG guidelines and to allow for full accessibility. Council minutes, agendas, upcoming news, policies, and other pertinent information are conveyed on the website and electronic format. The Town also communicates regularly within the local newspapers and through its Facebook page and twitter account.

The Municipal Elections have used the alternative method of Vote by Mail. This is particularly helpful to residents that find transportation difficult, as well as providing an opportunity for those requiring assistance to do so in a private manner.

Various facilities over the past two (2) years have received automatic doors and/or hardware to allow for easier access to Municipal facilities.



The following items are addressed in the Accessibility Plan:

- Continuance of the policy of site plan review taking into account provisions for handicapped parking and accessibility.
- Renovations/updates to existing businesses will continue to be encouraged to consider accessibility.
- Special events using portable washrooms will be encouraged to provide an adequate supply of handicapped accessible portable washrooms as well as handicapped designated parking.
- The Hanover Highlights will continue the use of symbols/icons where possible to draw attention to certain articles and to illustrate points.
- Plain language signage will be encouraged.
- Sidewalk replacement will provide improved accessibility at intersections i.e. Ramping instead of a step.
- Improved enforcement of the by-law restricting bicycles/skateboards on certain sidewalks
- Inventory of sidewalks and a plan for replacement will improve barrier free accessibilities.
- Review of building plans by the Building Department ensures that requirements for barrier-free access are complied with.

Informal Site Audit of Municipally Owned Buildings

The Town of Hanover in conjunction with the County of Grey Accessibility Plan reviewed the municipally owned buildings to assess any barriers that may exist and were appended to the County Plan as Appendix “D”. Solutions to removing those barriers in order to comply with the current legislation under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the Building Code were identified and these findings will be appended to future revisions of the Multi Year Accessibility Plan.



Barrier Identification

In order to identify barriers, the following methodology was used:

Methodology	Description	Status
Tour of Facilities	A checklist was completed for each site stating barriers, types of barriers and the strategy for removal	Most sites were well identified and assessed.

Barrier/Disabilities Definition

Barrier

A “barrier” is anything that stops a person with a disability from fully taking part in society based of that disability. Some barriers include:

- Physical barriers, for example a step at the entrance to a store;
- Architectural barriers, for example no elevators in a building of more than one floor
- Information or communications barriers, for example a publication that is not available in large print
- Attitudinal barriers, for example assuming people with a disability can’t perform a certain task when in fact they can
- Technological barriers such as traffic lights that change too quickly before a person with a disability has time to get through the intersection; and
- Barriers created by policies or practices, for instance not offering different ways to complete a test as part of job hiring

Disability

The following is the same definition as used in the Ontario Human Rights Code. A “disability” is:

Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and includes, but is not limited to:

- diabetes mellitus
- epilepsy
- a brain injury
- any degree of paralysis
- amputation
- lack of physical co-ordination
- blindness or visual impediment
- deafness or hearing impediment

- muteness or speech impediment; or
- physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal, or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

A condition of mental impairment or developmental disability;

A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken languages; A mental disorder; or an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Disability Barriers

People with disabilities face unnecessary barriers almost everywhere: at home, at work, at school, in parks, in recreational facilities, in the streets, in theatres, in stores and in restaurants – and even in municipalities.



A “barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice. Barriers prevent people with disabilities from going to school and to work.

Types of Barriers

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A door knob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with limited upper-body mobility and strength
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter
Informational	Typefaces that are too small to be read by a person with low vision
Communicational	A professor who talks loudly when addressing a deaf student
Attitudinal	A recreational swimming program which discourages people with developmental disabilities from participating
Technological	Information on a municipal web site, which cannot be accessed a person who is blind who has reading software for a computer.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

Barriers to be Addressed

The more substantial will require more time and/or funding resolution. These items will be assessed during each annual budget review and prioritized accordingly. It will be the goal to resolve all identified items, recognizing other barriers could be identified and added, in an effective and financially responsible manner, taking into consideration additional capital costs for certain barriers.



Progress on previous initiatives for barrier prevention or removal

BARRIER	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
CUSTOMER SERVICE	Ongoing	
Potential barriers in delivering goods and services to customers	Continue to deliver Accessible Customer Service training to all new employees and volunteers	All Departments
	Review and update policies regularly to ensure high quality, accessible customer service	All Departments
	Reviewing customer feedback and taking appropriate action	All Departments
INFORMATION/ COMMUNICATIONS		
Potential barriers in information sharing	Introduce staff to the use of plain language in their writing	All Departments
	Improvements to the size of labels and fonts	All Departments
	Ensure that emergency procedures, plans or public safety information is available in an accessible format	Clerks and Fire Departments
	Accessible documents training	All Departments
Feedback	Ensure that receiving and responding to feedback is made available in an accessible format upon request or with appropriate communication supports	All Departments
Accessible Formats and Communication Supports	Provide information and communicate in an accessible manner about goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities, upon request	All Departments
Website	Ensure the website is accessible to people with disabilities by conforming to standards for website accessibility	Clerks Department
EMPLOYMENT	Ongoing	
Potential barriers in existing Policies, Procedures, and Practices	Regularly review Policies, Procedures and Practices to ensure accessibility	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
	Ensuring that potential employees with disabilities be provided with the appropriate accommodations during all aspects of the recruitment phase	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services

BARRIER	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
Recruitment General	Notify internal and external job applicants that accommodations for disabilities will be provided upon request	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Recruitment, Assessment or Selection Process	Notify job applicants who have been invited to participate in the recruitment, assessment or selection process that accommodations for disabilities are available on request	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Notice to Successful Applicants	Notify successful applicants of the policy for accommodating employees with disabilities when offering employment	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Informing Employees of Supports	Inform new and existing employees of policies supporting employees with disabilities, and provide employment-related accommodations for disabilities	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees	Consult with employees who have disabilities in order to provide them with accessible formats and communications	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Documented Individual Accommodation Plans	Develop written individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Return to Work Process	Have in place a documented process for supporting employees who return to work after being away for reasons related to their disabilities	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Performance Management	Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities during the performance management process	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
Career Development and Advancement	Provide career development and advancement opportunities that take into account the accessibility needs of employees who have disabilities	Human Resources – CAO & Director of Corporate Services
BUILT ENVIRONMENT	Ongoing	
Inaccessible facilities	Conduct accessibility audits of Municipal owned or rented facilities to provide advice on how barriers might be eliminated	All Departments
GENERAL		
Procurement	Incorporate accessibility criteria and features into procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities	All Departments
Policies	Establish policies on how Hanover will meet its obligations under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation	Clerks Department

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan	Develop a multi-year accessibility plan	Clerks Department
Training	Provide training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities	Clerks Department/Human Resources – CAO, Director of Corporate Services

Review and Monitoring of the Process

Council is committed to following through with this plan. This plan will be reviewed at least once every five (5) years or more frequently, if necessary. The Establishment of an Accessibility Working Group would be a priority in 2013 to ensure that the barriers outlined in this plan are addressed. This Working Group as well as the public will have the opportunity of reviewing and monitoring the progress of identifying and the direction by which the Town is removing all barriers identified under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Communication of the Plan

This plan will be available on the web site www.hanover.ca as well as at the Town of Hanover Municipal Office. Every attempt will be made to make the plan available to those with disabilities for their perusal and review. The Town of Hanover wants to work together with the members of the community to remove barriers that still exist within the community.

Staff will make every effort to accommodate any specific request to receive this Plan in any other format, including Braille, with the assistance of the Canadian Institute for the Blind.

Contact Information:

Bert “Elaine” Lennox, Manager of Aquatics & Programs
 Mike Dunlop, CAO/Clerk.
 Christine Walker, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer

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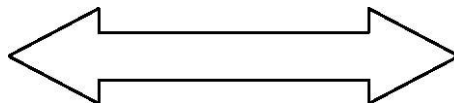


Appendix 1 ABOUT DISABILITY

The Disability Continuum

There is no universally accepted meaning for the word “disability”. Most definitions, however, can be placed on a continuum. At one end of the spectrum, disability is explained in terms of medical conditions (medical model). At the opposite end, disability is explained in terms of the social and physical contexts in which it occurs (environmental model).

**Design Flaw in the
Environment**



**Health Problem
in Individual**

The medical model focuses on deficiencies, symptoms and treatments. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) 1976 definition for disability, for example, is “any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.” Medical model definitions promote the idea that disability is a deviation of the norm.

Many people with disabilities are troubled by definitions that regard disability as abnormal, preferring instead to portray disability as commonplace, natural, and in fact, inevitable. As people age, they experience gradual declines in visual acuity, auditory sensitivity, range of motion, bodily strength and mental powers. Significant functional limitations affect almost half of people between the ages of 55 and 79, and over 70% of people over 80. Beyond middle age, disability is the norm.

The environmental model explains disability in relation to social and physical contexts. In this view, the environment, not an individual’s medical condition, causes disability. For example, during an electrical blackout, a person who is completely blind can effortlessly navigate around the home, hammer nails, and, if a Braille user, read a novel. A sighted person would be unable to perform these tasks easily, if at all. In this example, the environment disables the sighted person.

The environmental model emphasizes that people with disabilities are capable human beings, and that it is barriers, not medical conditions, that are disabling. Disability results when people design a world for their way of living only, without taking into account the natural – and foreseeable – variability among human beings. In other words, disability is a consequence of design flaws in the built and human environments.

All barriers are human-made. If design problems cause barriers, then disabilities can be eliminated – or minimized – by modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our intuitions about the proper way to do things. If systematic barriers cause disabilities, the disabilities can be eliminated by modifications to policies, plans and processes. If attitudes cause barriers, then disability awareness, respect and an understanding of positive interaction with people with disabilities will remove barriers.

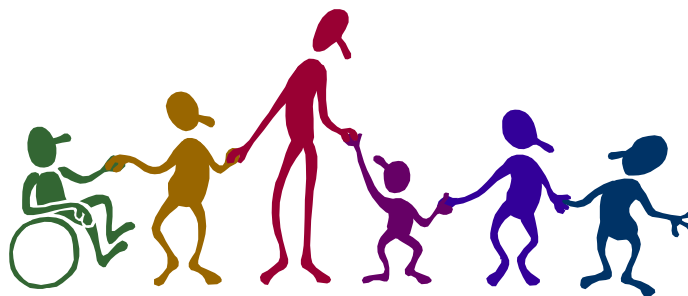
Specialized medical knowledge may be needed to treat diseases and symptoms, but not to address barriers. Barriers, not medical conditions, prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in life. A person’s disability may make it physically or cognitively hard to perform everyday tasks such as operating a keyboard, reading a sign, differentiating colours, distinguishing sounds, climbing stairs, grasping small items, remembering words, or doing arithmetic.

Definition of Disability

The definition of disability that appears in the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* is the same as that which is used in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

For the purposes of this document, the term “disability” are taken from the provincial statutes mentioned above and are defined as follows:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) A mental disorder; or
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.
- f) A person’s disability may make it physically or cognitively hard to perform everyday tasks such as operating a keyboard, reading a sign, differentiating colours, distinguishing sounds, climbing stairs, grasping small items, remembering words, or doing arithmetic.



“Accessibility is that which enables people to achieve their full potential. It is inclusion. Accessibility is a human right and accessibility is right.”

The Honourable David C. Onley
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Alternate formats are available upon request