



The Organization

The City of Morden is located in south-central Manitoba, approximately 130 km from the provincial capital. The city is nestled between Lake Minnewasta and the rolling Pembina Valley hills to the south and fertile farmlands to the north. Provincial Highway #3 is the main thoroughfare connecting the urban centre to the surrounding region.

Morden is where the grandeur of the past meets the excitement of the future. Following ancient fossil finds in the 1970s, Morden has become a boon to the paleontological significance of Manitoba, and currently houses some of the world's largest ancient marine reptile fossils. Morden area is also the geographical site of the invention of the Red River Ox Cart and part of the historical NWMP Boundary Commission Trail.

There is a cultural mosaic within Morden. This distinction earned Morden a title as a 'Cultural Capital of Canada', with residents from diverse backgrounds arriving from countries around the world, this mosaic continues to grow.

Governed by a mayor and six councilors, the City of Morden is responsible for a wide variety of service deliverables including water, sewer, waste, roads, parks management, community recreation programs, land development, commercial and industrial development, a community-driven immigration initiative, environmental health, and more. The municipal organization provides these programs and services to a growing community of over 9,000 people.

The Legislation

The Province of Manitoba passed the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act* (AMA, the Act) into legislation in December, 2013. The goal of the Act is to make significant progress towards achieving accessibility in the public and private sectors by 2023.

The AMA states its purpose being to prevent and remove barriers that disabled persons encounter. Disabled persons can encounter barriers in employment, accommodation, navigating the built environment, delivering and receiving goods, services and information, or in general activities and undertakings. As such, the Act identifies the following principles that must guide the path to achieving accessibility:

- *Access*
Persons should have barrier-free access to places, events, and other functions that are generally available in the community;
- *Equality*
Persons should have barrier-free access to those things that will give them equality of opportunity and outcome;
- *Universal Design*
Access should be provided in a manner that does not establish or perpetuate differences based on a person's disability;
- *Systemic Responsibility*
The responsibility to prevent and remove barriers rests with the person or organization that is responsible for establishing or perpetuating the barrier.

In achieving accessibility, the AMA does so using accessibility standards, through which the barriers to accessibility will be systematically and practically addressed. The Accessibility Advisory Council (the Council), appointed by the minister and responsible for developing the accessibility standards, have identified the following standards that are focused on five key areas of daily living:

- Customer Service
- Employment Accessibility
- Information and Communications
- Built Environment
- Transportation

The first of the standards to receive regulatory approval is the Customer Service Accessibility Standard, which was put into force by the *Customer Service Standard Regulation* (CSSR) on 1 November, 2015. According to the regulation, public sector organizations like the City of Morden, must comply with the CSSR by 1 November, 2017, with an accessibility plan prepared in 2016.

The Customer Service Accessibility Standard focuses on policy, training and good communication practices and aims to provide barrier-free customer service in public sector organizations. The CSSR defines “accessible customer service” as follows:

“Accessible customer service is provided when all persons who are reasonably expected to seek to obtain, use, or benefit from a good or service have the same opportunity to obtain, use or benefit from the good or service.” (*Section 2, CSSR*)

The CSSR, stipulates that an affected organization “must establish and implement measures, policies, and practices respecting barrier-free access to the goods or services it provides” (*Section 4*) as follows:

- Identify barriers to accessible customer service;
- Seek to remove the existing barriers the organization is responsible for;
- Ensure that there are no fees charged to provide accessible service;
- Where the organization cannot reasonably remove an existing barrier, provide access to the good or service by an alternate means, either on a permanent or a temporary basis;
- Seek to prevent the creation of new barriers.

The CSSR specifically identifies the following factors that an organization must consider when developing its measures, policies, and practices in regards to providing accessible customer service:

1. Communications – making reasonable efforts to communicate in a manner that considers a barrier;
2. Assistive Devices – recognizing that disabled persons may use various assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers, and reasonably accommodating those devices;
3. Support Persons – recognizing that a support person may accompany a disabled person, and reasonably planning for and accommodating such persons;
4. Service Animals – a service animal may accompany a disabled person;

5. Built Environment – by providing barrier-free access through the organization’s built environment, or notification of why it is unavailable, for how long and details of alternate means of making its goods or services available;
6. Accessible Customer Service Feedback – providing an process for receiving and responding to feedback about the accessibility of its goods and services and documenting resulting actions;
7. Documentation – documenting the measures, policies and practices an organization establishes, and providing documentation as requested by a person disabled by a barrier in an accessible form;
8. Compliance – by complying with the measures, policies, and practices that the organization establishes and implements.

There is a further expectation an organization will provide training regarding accessible customer service to its own staff who provide or deliver the organization’s goods and services directly to the public, or to any organization in Manitoba who provides the organization’s goods and services on behalf of the organization. The organization must also provide training about accessible customer service to any person participating in or responsible for developing or implementing the organization’s measures, policies, and practices.

The CSSR’s final direction is that an organization must take reasonable measures to ensure public events (a public meeting, hearing and a consultation process) are held in an accessible meeting space, and that notice is given in an accessible manner where the public event is the requirement of an enactment.

As per the AMA and CSSR, the following is the City of Morden’s accessibility plan, which will describe how the City will comply with accessibility legislation by 1 November, 2017.

The Plan

The City provides a wide range of services and programs to the public, our customers. We recognize that our customers are of varying ability, and may experience barriers to accessing and participating in the City’s services and programs.

As a public-sector organization, the City of Morden must meet the requirements of the Act and Regulations. The first compliance date for public-sector organizations is the provision of accessible customer service, according to the CSSR, by 1 November, 2017.

As the Regulation requires, the City has prepared the following Accessibility Plan (the Plan) so that the City may comply with the *Customer Service Standard Regulation* by 1 November, 2017. The Plan will identify the City’s goal, the steps the City will take to identify barriers to accessible customer service, the steps the City will take to remove barriers, and how the City will monitor its progress and compliance with this and forthcoming standards.

The Goal

The City’s goal is to provide its services and programs in an accessible manner, such that all those who seek to obtain, use, or benefit from City’s services and programs may do so with the same opportunity.

The City's first accessibility target is compliance with the *Customer Service Standard Regulation*. By 1 November, 2017, the City will have:

1. Identified the programs and services that the City provides to the public;
2. Assessed current barriers to accessible customer service;
3. Consulted with the community regarding accessibility of the City's programs and services;
4. Identified reasonable measures, policies, and practices necessary to provide accessible customer service;
5. Prepared an implementation plan and implemented reasonable measures, policies, and practices necessary to provide accessible customer;
6. Prepared a training plan and trained all staff and those who act on the City's behalf provide programs and services to the public in an accessible manner;
7. Documented all steps and measures that the City has taken;
8. Drafted a compliance plan to continually monitor and assess the City's progress and compliance with accessibility legislation, regulations and standards as they may arise.

Responsibility

The City's corporate services department, Finance and Technology, will hold responsibility for the Plan and lead the implementation of the Plan. It will be the mandate of the director to determine the need for and structure of any committees that may be valuable for identifying barriers, providing input to solutions, implementation, and ongoing compliance.

Services Review & Consultation

The City offers several services and programs to its customers, delivering those services in several formats and media. As such it will be necessary to understand the nature of delivery of the City's services and programs to reliably identify the potential barriers that may exist in how the organization delivers those programs and services.

A consultation process will be integral to understanding and assessing the accessibility of the delivery of our services, and further to assessing the effectiveness of any measures, policies, and practices that we identify to remove and prevent barriers. The consultation process will comply with that required by the CSSR.

We expect that the following format or some variation of it will be useful to identify barriers, solutions, and implementation strategies for each of the organization's programs and services. We expect that the barriers to accessible customer service will likely include many, if not all, of the types of barriers identified in the AMA:

Program/Service	Description & Delivery/Access	Barriers Identified	Proposed Solutions	Implementation Strategy	Proposed Implementation

The City will also assess current by-laws, policies, and procedures for barriers, and identify any new by-laws, policies, and procedures necessary for the organization to implement the Plan. Our by-laws, policies, and procedures are the formal means by which the City structures the delivery of its services to its customers, and will be how we ingrain accessible customer service and subsequent standards into the organization's structure.

Implementation & Compliance

The programs and services review will include an assessment of possible solutions and implementation strategies to removing accessibility barriers. Actions taken may also be subject to consultation, which we expect may include a process to identify stakeholders as may be necessary.

The implementation of the Plan will include staff training. We expect that training will be necessary to address misconceptions, perceptions, and behaviours towards persons with disabilities, educate on the various forms of disability, and teach staff how to provide services in an accessible way. This will be particularly important as we make changes to measures, policies, and practices. Staff training will be how we ingrain accessible customer service and subsequent standards into the organization's culture.

The final step of the City's Plan is developing the means to monitor our progress in complying with the terms of the legislation. Through the compliance monitoring process we will be able to demonstrate the City's progress and success towards improving the accessibility of our programs and services to all our customers.