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# SCPL Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2023-2027

November 1, 2023

# Message from the CEO

The St. Catharines Public Library (SCPL/the Library) is committed to providing equitable access to library services that meets the changing needs of all its customers and employees. The SCPL develops and supports a service and work environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accordance with the four core principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for all individuals.

## Introduction

SCPL provides spaces, resources, and experiences for all citizens to learn, grow, and connect. Our vision is a community enriched by life-long opportunities for learning and connection.

SCPL strives to meet the needs of its employees and customers with disabilities and SCPL is working hard to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

SCPL is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This accessibility plan outlines the steps we are taking to meet those requirements and to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

Our plan shows how we will play our role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians. The plan is reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years.

In alignment with our 2018 to 2022 Accessibility Plan the Library has been working at reducing the barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities identified by the Government of Ontario. These barriers are attitudinal, organizational or systemic, architectural or physical, information or communications, and technological.

The SCPL Accessibility Policy was reviewed and updated in 2021 with next review scheduled for 2025 (every four years).

## Section 1. Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

### Customer Service

SCPL is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities and endeavors to make our collections, equipment, services and locations accessible to everyone.

- We offer a wide range of materials in alternate formats for customers with visual impairments, physical disabilities, and learning disabilities. Our collection includes materials in large print, eBooks, audiobooks, and DVDs with close captioning or described video.
- A variety of assistive technology and equipment are available to customers including adjustable desks, dome magnifier, large screen monitors, large print keyboards, large trackball mice, and magnifying programs for visually impaired users.
- Memory kits containing an assortment of activities, games, puzzles, cards and other items intended to help support and maintain the skills and abilities for people living with cognitive impairment issues were launched in 2019.
- Decodable book collection expanded and sensory kits made available at all branches.
- Visiting Library is a free service that brings the pleasure of reading to individuals living in St. Catharines who are unable to come to the Library themselves.
- Two-way radio/call button introduced.
- Fine Freedom implemented for all to help remove barriers and increase access.

### Information and Communications

SCPL is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities.

- Accessibility policy, plan, training and information posted on website provide details on Library's efforts to provide equitable access to library services that meets the changing needs of all its customers and employees.
- Feedback related to accessibility issues are investigated and responses are provided in a timely manner.
- SCPL is committed to providing accessible on-line services to our customers. The SCPL website was upgraded in 2021 and the website content regularly to ensure that our standards comply with the standards set-out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 as per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

### Employment

SCPL is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

- Employee accommodation policy introduced in 2022 with review scheduled in 2026 (every four years).

- Job postings include statements to inform candidates that accommodation needs under the Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act are provided through all stages of the recruitment process.

### **Procurement**

SCPL is committed to fair and accessible procurement practices.

- The City of St. Catharines Accessibility Advisory Committee provides ongoing support and is available as a procurement resource. The Committee provides updates and includes the SCPL in dialogue as applicable.

### **Self-service kiosks**

SCPL is committed to incorporating accessibility features/considering accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

- Port Plus allows member access to our Port Dalhousie Branch during open, unstaffed hours. Registered members can browse, borrow and return items, use computers and access Wi-Fi. Staff at other branches provide remote support via a dedicated video/phone link.
- Self-serve kiosks are available in all branches.
- Books to Go Kiosk, Holds to Go Locker at Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre

### **Training**

SCPL is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities.

- AODA Customer Service Standards Training was introduced in 2022 for all staff who interact with the public or third parties. New employees are trained as soon as practicable after being hired.
- Training records are maintained with dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

### **Maintenance**

SCPL is committed to maintain accessible public spaces.

- Regularly inspect, monitor and restore spaces and areas of all Library branches.
- Procedures are in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces. In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities, notices of the disruption are provided in advance (i.e. elevators, accessible washrooms). The notice includes information about the reason for disruption and the

anticipated duration as well as a description of alternative facilities or services. In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice is provided as soon as possible.

- Contract services for specific maintenance including snow clearing, salting, ramps, and unloading with ongoing contracts to look after weather-related accessible services.

### **Design of Public Spaces**

SCPL will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces.

- Ramps have been installed at the Port Dalhousie Branch and a new ramp was installed at the Merritt Branch.
- Push buttons have been replaced with wave sensor touch free buttons at main entrances at the Central Branch.
- Elevator modernization project specifications included requirements for barrier-free accessibility including meeting all the requirements of Appendix E of the CAN/CSA-B44 Safety Code for Elevators.
- 2020 Central Branch Infrastructure Space Plan included a third party feasibility study to assist in identifying and developing the best design strategies to create more functional spaces and assist with the advancement of the Library's delivery model to improve visitor experience. The plan included reconfigurations to the existing layout of the stacks to improve wayfinding & accessibility.

## **Section 2. Strategies and Actions**

### **Customer Service**

SCPL is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others. This includes continuing to maintain, update and expand:

- Library materials in alternate formats for customers with visual impairments, physical disabilities, and learning disabilities. (Ongoing)
- Assistive technology and equipment for customers including adjustable desks, dome magnifier, large screen monitors, large print keyboards, large trackball mice and magnifying programs for visually impaired users. (Ongoing)

### **Information and Communications**

SCPL is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. This includes continuing to:

- Post accessibility policy, plan, training and information on websites. (Ongoing)
- Investigate and respond to feedback related to accessibility issues in a timely manner.

- Provide accessible on-line services to our customers. (Ongoing)
- Review website content regularly to ensure that our standards comply with the standards set-out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 as per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. (Ongoing)
- Review and update accessibility signage. (Ongoing)

### **Employment**

SCPL is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. This includes:

- Maintaining, reviewing and updating the employee accommodation policy. (Ongoing)
- Accommodating candidates' needs under the Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act through all stages of the recruitment process. (Ongoing)

### **Procurement**

SCPL is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. This includes:

- Maintaining support of the City of St. Catharines Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure procurement processes and practices advance accessibility and inclusion. (Ongoing)
- Incorporating accessibility criteria in procurement proposals and contracts related to the acquisition of goods, services, products and facilities. (2027)

### **Self-service Kiosks**

SCPL is committed to incorporating accessibility features/considering accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks. This includes:

- Continuing to offer and update, as applicable, self-serve kiosks and locker. (Ongoing)

### **Training**

SCPL is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities. This includes continuing to:

- Provide training to new employees as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to the policies. (Ongoing)
- Development of an accommodation quick-guide for frontline staff pertaining to accessibility standards and procedures. (2024)

### **Maintenance**

SCPL is committed to maintain accessible public spaces. This includes continuing to:

- Regularly inspect, monitor and restore spaces and areas of all Library branches.
- Ensure procedures are in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces. In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities, notices of the disruption are provided in advance (i.e. elevators, accessible washrooms). The notice includes information about the reason for disruption and the anticipated duration as well as a description of alternative facilities or services. In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice is provided as soon as possible.
- Contract services for specific maintenance including snow clearing, salting, ramps, and unloading with ongoing contracts to look after weather-related accessible services.

### **Design of Public Spaces**

SCPL will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces. This includes:

- Port Dalhousie Branch accessibility upgrades. (2026)
- Central Branch renovation with space and utilities configured to meet accessibility laws and enhance customer experience. (2027)

### **For More Information**

For more information on this accessibility plan, or for standard and accessible formats of this document, please contact:

info@myscpl.ca  
(905) 688-6103

Our accessibility plan is publicly posted at <https://www.myscpl.ca/accessibility>