



*THE RURAL MUNICIPALITY
OF ST. FRANCOIS XAVIER*

Municipal Accessibility Plan

**Creating a Barrier Free Community
Municipal Accessibility Plan
January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025**

This document is available in an accessible format on request.

R.M. of St. Francois Xavier

1060 Highway 26

St. Francois Xavier, MB

R4L 1A5

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Executive Summary

According to Statistics Canada, one in six Manitobans has a disability. This number will grow as our population ages. Barriers to accessibility affect persons with disabilities, their family and friends, and their communities. An accessibility barrier is anything that limits or prevents a person from receiving information, goods and services, from accessing a space or from participating in an activity.

Barriers may be:

- Attitudinal
- Informational or communication-related
- Technological and Systemic (policies and practices)
- Structural (physical or architectural)

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act provides an opportunity for us to examine our existing practices and processes, celebrate our achievements to date, and identify priorities for eliminating barriers in the future.

More than 15 per cent of Manitobans face barriers that keep them from doing things that others take for granted. These barriers are very costly to persons with disabilities, to their family and friends and to their communities. Nearly every Manitoban has a disability, knows someone with a disability, or will have a disability in the coming years.

On December 5, 2013, The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) was passed to provide a clear, proactive process to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility.

Interpretation

The purpose of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act recognizes that physical, attitudinal and systemic barriers prevent Manitobans with disabilities from going places, using services and getting information. Barriers can be in such areas as building design, information services and hiring practices. The main goal of accessibility legislation is to remove barriers by working with the public and private sectors to make long-range plans that ensure accessibility for everyone.

Removing barriers will be good for our province. These barriers often come from a lack of planning and not understanding how they affect the daily life of many people.

By focusing on the proactive identification and removal of barriers, accessibility legislation will move us towards a more inclusive society for all Manitobans.

Contact

For any further information, clarification, suggestions, or recommendations please contact the Municipal Office by using the following methods:

Phone: 204-864-2092
Fax: 204-864-2390
Email: info@rm-stfrancois.mb.ca
Mail/person: 1060 Hwy. 26
St. Francois Xavier, MB
R4L 1A5

Statement of Commitment:

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier is committed to providing service to individuals of all abilities, while allowing them to maintain their dignity and independence. We will respect the needs of those who face accessibility barriers and strive to meet the requirements of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*, CSSM c A1.7. We will also strive to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers.

We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so, for both residents and visitors, by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting requirements of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Overview of Programs and Services:

Formed through the authority of the Province of Manitoba, the Municipality of St. Francois Xavier is responsible for the delivery of local services, facilities, safety, and infrastructure for residents within its boundaries including:

- Water and sewer
- Roads
- Garbage and recycling
- Parks and recreation
- Fire protection and emergency measures services
- Collection of municipal and school taxes

Municipal Facilities and Services

- Municipal Office: is located on Highway 26 and is open to the public for general business. The Office has a sloped front walkway, hand railings and automatic door openers for safer access to the front door.
- Volunteer Fire Department: is located on Highway 26 and houses necessary fire equipment. This facility is not open to the public.
- Public Works Shop: is located on Highway 26 this garage and workshop is used to house and fix municipal equipment. This facility is not open to the public.
- Waste Transfer Station: located at the corner of Rosser Road and Two Mile Road, used for the disposal of waste and recycling. This facility is accessed by vehicle and attendants are available to assist in lifting and disposing of waste.
- Water Reservoir: located on Caron Road North is used for the storage and delivery of potable water. The facility is not open to the public.
- Fibre Building: Located on Caron Road North hosts the RM of St. Francois Xavier Broadband Network's Infrastructure. The facility is not open to the Public.
- Cuthbert Grant Park: is located at the corner of Highway 26 and McCaughan Road and offers a playground, walking path to the picnic shelter with picnic tables and an accessible port-a-potty.
- Medicine Rock Park: is located at the corner of Highway 26 and Caron Drive and is a historical park with the building not open to the public.

Accessibility Achievements

- We received a Trails Manitoba grant to improve the connectivity of our sidewalks and gravel paths to improve the safety of all our citizens, including those who use wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Future plans to include accessible signs and benches to our trail network.
- Upon request large print notices and forms are provided.
- Email communication with residents and the public is available to assist with those that have hearing impairments.
- The RM will install and replace signs with accessibility in mind.
- We upgraded our website to provide additional resources for residents and more communication channels for individuals with disabilities.

Actions

- Staff and council will continue to receive customer service standard training. They assist the public, when necessary, in filling out applications and/or forms as well as providing verbal information of written materials distributed to the public. Accessibility will continue to inform day-to-day decision making of municipal employees.
- Accessible employment training sessions will be provided for all staff and council members with human resource responsibilities in 2024/25.
- A review of the plan and items identified for improvement will be addressed during annual budget preparations to achieve goals for removing accessibility barriers. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually as required.
- New or replacement signage will include accessible features including, braille or raised pictograms, high contrast colours and large print where practical.
- Accessibility policies will be reviewed and updated to include the new accessibility standard for information and communications by May 1, 2025.
- Web content will be upgraded to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA guidelines by May 1, 2025.
- An accessibility upgrade to the customer service counter at the RM office will be included in the 2024 budget.
- Staff and council will work with local community organizations to identify and remove accessibility barriers for their members.

Barriers

The Municipality is aware that barriers to accessible customer service still exist and has identified a plan to address these concerns:

Attitudinal Barriers – To be addressed through training for both municipal employees and council and codified in a council procedures and code of conduct Bylaw and our employee agreement which contains respectful workplace language.

Physical / Architectural Barriers – A review of all municipally owned/operated facilities has taken place. Where possible steps are being taken to address physical barriers within these facilities. In addition, a municipal facility standards checklist has been introduced as a guide to the minimum standard required when identifying a location to host any Municipal gathering.

Systemic Barriers – The policies being implemented by the municipality are done to ensure that activities, events and services provided by the municipality are offered in an accessible manner. In addition, the Municipality is an equal opportunity employer with hiring practices that are open to people of all abilities.

Review of Current Activities to Identify Barriers

Reviewing current activities to identify barriers is on-going and incorporated into municipal day-to-day operations with the goal of creating policies and procedures which actively prevent the creation of new barriers and the identification and removal of existing barriers.

Making St. Francois Xavier Accessible to the Public

1. Communication:

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier will communicate with people disabled by barriers in ways that consider the nature of the barrier. This may include the following:

- Easy to read fonts and plain language
- Paper and pen available
- All Publications will include “This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.”
- An accessible website with alt tags, links that are distinguished from regular text, and appropriate text size

St. Francois Xavier will work with individuals to determine the barrier and what method of communication works for them.

1.1 Signage on Municipally Owned Facilities:

St. Francois Xavier will initiate a protocol to adopt the following sign guidelines when replacing signage at any municipally owned facility:

Accessible Sign Guidelines

Signs typically have three functions.

1. Informative, advising about availability of a facility or service
2. Directional, directing individuals to a specific facility
3. Locational, identifying the place where the facility is provided

General

Accessible signs should be provided for any features of a building that would normally be given a print sign. The most accessible sign is one which contains Braille, raised print, and raised pictograms. All three should be included on the same sign.

Readability by Sight:

- Use a sans serif typeface; Suitable typefaces are Arial, and Helvetica
- Avoid using italics, underlining, and block capitals
- Lettering should be in initial upper case
- Ensure the background contrasts with the print. Clear combinations include black text on a white background, white on black, yellow on black or black on yellow.
- Do not print information over pictures or patterns
- The size of the text should be related to the distance at which the information will be viewed. Letters should have a minimum height of .6". If signs will be viewed from more than 10' away, the text should have a height of .2" for each 3' of viewing distance. For example, if a sign is to be viewed from 15' away, text should have a height of 1.2"

Readability by Touch:

- Letters should be raised from the surface by at least .05

Pictograms:

- Use internationally recognized symbols

Braille and High-Tactile signs should be provided in the following places:

- Washrooms
- Elevators
- Numbers on stair landing handrails to allow identification of floors
- Emergency doors and exits
- Emergency evacuation instructions
- Cautionary signage
- Floor and building directories

Placement

- Signs should be at a consistent height and location around the building
- Ensure tactile signs can be reached easily without obstruction
- Place signs logically as close as possible to the object they are indicating
- Signs should be placed at a height of 55" from the floor to the bottom of the sign. This is considered optimum viewing height for people standing up and in wheelchairs.
- For playgrounds or facilities where the main population is likely to be children, the signs can be 36 - 40" from the floor to the bottom of the sign.
- Avoid suspended signs; they are difficult to locate and too high to be read by a low-vision person.
- Avoid protruding or sandwich boards, they are a safety hazard

Contrast

- Ensure that the sign contrasts with its background so it can be located more easily by low-vision people. For example, on a light-colored wall, use a sign with a dark background and light print.
- Avoid placing signs on backgrounds which contain a lot of visual clutter
- Ensure the sign is in an area with good lighting
- Use non-reflective surfaces and ensure there is no glare

Layout

- All text and Braille on a sign should be left-aligned and set horizontally
- Where print and Braille appear on the same sign, place Braille at least one inch below the print.

Braille Signage

- Dots should have a domed or rounded shape
- The spherical radius of each dot should be .76 - .80mm
- The base diameter of each dot should be 1.2 - 1.6mm
- Each dot should have a height of .4 - .9mm
- Spacing within the same cell should be 2.29 - 2.54mm
- Spacing between adjacent cells should be 6 - 7.6mm

2. Assistive devices

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods, services or facilities. In cases where the assistive device presents significant and unavoidable health or safety concerns, other measures will be used to ensure the person with a disability can access our goods, services or facilities.

3. Support persons

A person with a disability is welcomed to be accompanied by a support person. St. Francois Xavier will accommodate the support person with the provision of free access to a facility or event. Staff is reminded however, that the person with the disability, not the support person is the customer.

4. Service animals

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier welcomes people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

When it is not easy to identify that an animal is a service animal and if appropriate, staff may ask:

- Is the animal assisting you with a disability?
- What assistance has the dog or other animal been trained to provide related to the disability?

[(A service animal can often be identified through visual indicators, such as its harness or vest, or through the assistance it is providing. In some cases, a person's disability may prevent the individual from maintaining physical control of the animal. Then, the person is expected to maintain control of the animal through voice, signal or other means.)]

If service animals are prohibited by another law, we will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities:

- Explain why the animal is excluded
- Discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities

5. Maintain Barrier Free Access

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier will maintain barrier-free access by:

- Keeping hallways, waiting and meeting rooms clear of clutter such as boxes
- Keeping entrance ways cleared of snow and ice
- Ensuring the placement of standing signage is not a tripping hazard
- Having space for mobility devices in waiting room

6. Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of services or facilities for customers disabled by barriers, the Municipality of St. Francois Xavier will promptly post notices and, when possible, announce the disruption.

A clearly posted notice or announcement will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

7. Feedback Process

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns. Customers will be notified how to provide feedback in the following ways:

- website
- phone
- visit reception desk

All feedback, including complaints, will be handled in the following manner:

- Feedback will be directed to the CAO
- Customers can expect to hear back in 10 business days. We will make sure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

8. Training

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier will provide accessible customer service training to:

- All employees and volunteers
- Anyone involved in developing our policies
- Anyone providing goods, services, or facilities to customers on our behalf

All staff will be trained on accessible customer service within three months after being hired.

Training will include:

- The purpose of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the requirements of the customer service standard
- Explaining all policies relating to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service
- How to interact and communicate with people disabled by barriers
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our goods, services or facilities
- Staff will also be informed and or trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service policies

9. Accessible Public Events

The Municipality of St. Francois Xavier will make public events accessible by:

- Announcing events in a manner that is accessible
- Holding event(s) in accessible meeting places
- Inviting requests for relevant disability accommodations

Communication of Plan

This plan will be available to the public through the municipal website, as well as hard copies being available in the municipal office upon request.

If a copy of the plan should be requested in Braille, every attempt will be made by staff and Council to contact CNIB for translation.

If there are any questions or concerns about the understanding of the plan for those with certain disabilities, a staff member will assist them in answering their questions and providing further explanations where necessary.

Appendix A Accessible Customer Service Plan

Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

The RM of St. Francois Xavier is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

Assistive devices

We will ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices we have on site or that we provide that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that consider their disability.

Service animals

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

Support persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, the RM of St. Francois Xavier will notify customers promptly.

This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Services/Facilities include

All municipal buildings and facilities open to the public.

The notice will be made publicly available at the following locations:

- 1) Municipal Office, 1060 Highway 26, St. Francois Xavier, MB R4L 1A5
- 2) Municipal Website: www.rm-stfrancois.mb.ca
- 3) The affected municipal building and/or facility

Training

The RM of St. Francois Xavier will provide accessible customer service training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf.

Training will also be provided to people involved in the development of policies, plans, practices and procedures related to the provision of our goods and services.

Individuals in the following positions will be trained after being hired:

Chief Administrative Officer
Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Administrative Assistant / Office Assistant
Public Works Supervisor / Equipment Operator/Utility Operator
Waste Transfer Station Attendant
Fire Chief

Training will include:

- An overview of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the requirements of the customer service standard
- The R.M. of St. Francois Xavier's plan related to the customer service standard
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use the equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the RM of St. Francois Xavier's goods and services

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service plan.

Feedback process

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way the RM of St. Francois Xavier provides goods and services to people with disabilities can deliver comment in the following way(s):

In person, by mail, or by email at:

Municipal Office
1060 Highway 26
St. Francois Xavier, MB R4L 1A5
Phone : 204-864-2092
Fax : 204-864-2390
Email : info@rm-stfrancois.mb.ca

All feedback, including complaints, will be handled in the following manner:

Feedback and complaints will be responded to by the Chief Administrative Officer or designate within ten (10) business days.

Notice of availability

The R.M. of St. Francois Xavier will notify the public that our documents related to accessible customer service, are available upon request by posting a notice at the following location:

Municipal Office
1060 Highway 26
St. Francois Xavier, MB

Notice will also be posted on the municipal website at: www.rm-stfrancois.mb.ca

Modifications to this or other policies

Any policy, practice or procedure of the RM of St. Francois Xavier that does not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

This document is available in an alternate format on request.

Appendix B

Employee Accessibility Plan

Making Hiring Accessible

Making employment within the R.M. of St. Francois Xavier accessible to all applicants is very important, there are a number of approaches that can be taken in order to encourage those with disabilities to feel more comfortable when applying for a position and to accommodate special needs. In order to let applicants with disabilities know that accommodations can be made during the selection process the following steps can be taken:

- Post information on our website and/or include it in the job postings
- Call applicants directly or speak to them in person, and
- Write them a letter or send an email

If it is requested by a prospective candidate for accommodations, the R.M. of St. Francois Xavier will make the necessary arrangements.

Employee Supports

The RM of St. Francois Xavier will inform employees of the policies used to support employees with disabilities, including policies on the provision of job accommodations that consider an employee's accessibility needs. The Municipality will provide updated information to all employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that consider an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

The Municipality will ensure that there are one on one meetings with any managers who will train or supervise any employees with disabilities as well as have staff meetings with any employees involved in day-to-day activities with any employees with disabilities.

If any employee is unsure of support procedures, extra training or information will be available in order to ensure safe practices and a safe work environment for employees with disabilities. All employees will have access to the RM's Accessibility Plan and any updates that become available, as well as new hires being informed of the plan and policies in a timely manner.

Making information accessible to employees

Through consultation with employees to determine the appropriate accessible format or communication support the municipality will arrange for accessible formats and communication support as needed in order to perform the requirements of their role.

Steps taken:

- All employees are automatically notified of any policy change.

Planned action:

- The RM will inform all employees of accessibility policies, as soon as practical, and include in all offer letters to new employees.
- All employees will be updated on any policy change affecting accommodation
- Any accessibility formats and/or communication supports will be included in an employee's individual accommodation plan.
- If any employee requests an accessible format or communication support, necessary accommodations will be provided.

Helping employees with disabilities stay safe

In order to ensure that all employees are properly trained in workplace safety requirements, accommodations will be made specific to each individual with a disability to ensure they fully understand and can partake in any workplace safety training. Supervisors will also be made aware to assist any employees with disabilities if they require further information or accommodation to safely perform their work.

To assist in safe emergency response practices for those with disabilities, the RM will:

- Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary, and the employer is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.
- Provide the workplace emergency response information to the person designated by the employer to help.
- Provide the information required as soon as practicable after the employer becomes aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.
- Review the individualized workplace emergency response information:
 - a) When the employee moves to a different location in the organization.
 - b) When the employee's overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed; and
 - c) When the employer reviews its general emergency response policies.