



MARKHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

# MPL Accessibility Plan 2023-2027



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## Statement of Commitment

Markham Public Library's vision is to be the place where Markham's diverse communities come together to imagine, create, learn and grow. To this end, Markham Public Library is committed to providing service in a way that respects the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities, fosters inclusion, and strives to identify, prevent and remove barriers to access and participation.

Markham Public Library commits to meeting its responsibilities under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* in the following ways:

- communicating information through a variety of channels to account for the different needs of our customers
- creating a welcoming and respectful environment in all our spaces, physical or virtual
- designing and maintaining public spaces that can be navigated inclusively
- delivering content in a variety of formats
- delivering programs and services that accommodate the needs of library users with disabilities
- championing community services and resources that foster inclusion and barrier-free access
- providing the appropriate accommodations for staff and volunteers to undertake their responsibilities
- ensuring all MPL staff and volunteers are trained appropriately on the AODA and ISAR acts to provide accessible customer service to the community
- maintaining feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement in the area of accessibility



## Accessibility Planning Supports Markham Public Library's Vision, Mission, and Strategy.

Markham Public Library is guided by its Vision, Mission, and Strategy. Markham Public Library's vision sees the library as the place where all of Markham communities come together to imagine, create, learn and grow. Markham Public Library's mission ensures that we provide everyone in the community the opportunity for success and that resources, staff, programs and spaces enrich the lives of everyone in Markham.

In its current strategic plan, MPL has identified 3 strategic goals:

- Reading to Transform
- Limitless Learning
- Social Cohesion

Underscoring these goals is a commitment to equity, access and inclusion. MPL articulates this commitment in its *Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Action Plan*. This document outlines MPL's work to eliminate systemic barriers to participation in Library services and to address social and economic marginalization. This includes opportunities to ensure that the rights of community members living with disabilities are protected in the design planning and delivery of library services.

Accessibility planning at Markham Public Library meets the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and helps Markham Public Library to develop services that align with its strategic direction. All community members benefit when the services developed ~~that~~ are inclusive, accessible, and barrier-free.



## Ontario's Accessibility Laws Requiring Accessibility Plans

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) became law in 2005. The AODA sets out accessibility requirements that an organization must meet in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces. These are called standards. The Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces Standards were all combined under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

One of the IASR requirements is that all public sector organizations, as well as private and nonprofit organizations with 50 or more employees must develop statements of commitment to accessibility and make them publicly available, create written accessibility policies and make them publicly available, create written multi-year accessibility plans, update them at least once every five years and post them on their websites. Each year the organization must report on the progress implementing the plan.

MPL fulfils its commitment under this legislation by posting this plan on its website, on a dedicated page highlighting the library's accessible services and collections. This page is where MPL will also report progress on the implementation of this plan on an annual basis.

## Access and Disability in Markham

In Canada, an estimated 22.3% of the adult population report living with a disability (Statistics Canada). As Canadians age they are more likely to experience a disability. The average age of onset of a disability is early forties, and there is a direct correlation between age and both incident and severity of disability. The age distribution of Canadians with disabilities include 13% of youth aged 15-24, 20% of working-age adults aged 25-64, and 38% of adults over the age of 65. Pain, mobility, and flexibility limitations are the most commonly experienced disabilities, reportedly impacting 14.5% of Canadians. After mobility limitations, the most commonly reported disabilities include mental illness, lack of dexterity, hearing or vision impairments, cognitive decline, and learning disabilities.

Within the City of Markham alone, the population of adults living with disabilities is 75,486, including a range of disabilities as listed below (some of which appear concurrently in the same individual).

	Percentage (Markham)	Population (Markham)
<b>Total Disability in Markham (15 yrs. +)</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>75,486</b>
<b>Disability Type</b>		
Pain-related	65%	49,083
Flexibility	44.8%	33,850
Mobility	43.0%	32,496
Mental health-related	32.3%	24,372
Seeing	24.2%	18,279
Hearing	21.5%	16,248
Dexterity	20.6%	15,571
Learning	17.5%	13,202
Memory	17.0%	12,863
Developmental	4.9%	3,724
Unknown	2.7%	2,031

Amongst working aged people, the presence of a disability is also strongly correlated with employment and financial security; for instance, only 23.1% of individuals living in poverty with a disability were employed, compared to 48.4% of individuals for whom no disability was present. Economically marginalized individuals with disabilities are also 14% more likely than their counterparts without disabilities to have less than high school education (Council of Canadians with Disabilities).



Disability also impacts youth and families with 3.7% percent of Canadian children under the age of 15 reported to have one or more disability. Of the total 58,873 children under the age of 15 in the City of Markham, 2,178 live with a reported disability, and this estimate is likely to be conservative given the lack of consistent diagnosis of some disabilities. Families with children with disability (19.1%) are also more likely to fall below the poverty threshold than families with children without a disability (13%).



## Markham Public Library and Accessibility

MPL’s commitment to Accessible service is highlighted in this multi-year plan, *Accessible Customer Service Policy* and the following strategies:

- *MPL’s IDEA Action Plan*: this plan identifies opportunities to address systemic barriers to equity, including social and economic barriers facing people with disabilities. This plan also highlights opportunities to enhance collections such as Cognitive Care kits and sensory toys to support neurodivergent customers, provide robust training to staff on Accessible Service well in excess of the minimum standard established by the AODA, and offer programming in partnership with community partners to support individuals with disabilities.
- *The Branch Experience Strategy*: MPL recognizes the importance of inclusive and welcoming spaces. This project outlines the use of Universal Design as a guiding principle for space use planning. This will include providing size inclusive seating options, equipment to support neurodiversity in the community, amongst other service considerations.
- *The MPL Brain Project*: this program identifies opportunities for MPL to specifically support customers with disabilities related to mental health, neurodiversity and cognitive degeneration. The project seeks to support these individuals through access to specialized collections and programs, but also to work in the area of stigma reduction through education and awareness.

Through these projects and MPL’s ongoing work in the area of accessibility, the library provides the following services:

Service	Use
<i>Equipment</i>	
VictorReader Stratus	Plays DAISY format audio and MP3 CDs
Magnifier	Can be used to magnify material in branch
Kurzweil 3000 Software/ scanner	Provides low vision customers the opportunity to have text read to them
<i>Collections</i>	
Large print keyboard	Large typeface on the keys for greater visibility
Cognitive Care Kits	Lendable collection of equipment designed to support individuals with dementia and their caregivers.
BrowseAloud	Using the Kurzweil 3000, BrowseAloud makes websites more accessible and reader-friendly for those who require online reading support Collections Description Large Print Books with large print
Large Print books	Available at all locations
AudioBook CDs Books on disc	Books can listened to on a CD player – available at all locations
Playaways	MP3 Players preloaded with audio books
Toys	A collection of toys to enhance learning through play including toys designed for children with disabilities, learning differences
Centre for Equitable Library Access	This partnership-based service offers library access to individuals with print and vision impairments.
<i>Services</i>	
One on one tutorials	In person or virtual individual tutorials are customized to the learning needs and outcomes of each participant.





Service	Use
TextTTY	Provides hearing impaired customers with the opportunity to communicate with MPL staff from their homes
askMPL	Live chat service offering information services via text or email to facilitate communication through written communication
Work Experience Program	A volunteer opportunity specifically designed to provide work experience to youth with a disability



Multiyear Accessibility Plan

Deliverable	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Policies &amp; Governance</b>					
Apply universal design principles and an IDEA lens to the implementation & evaluation of library policies					X
Review process for tracking training on the Accessibility Policy as required under s. 7(5) of the IASR to include the names of individuals trained and the date of training.	X				
<b>Communications</b>					
Refresh MPL’s Accessibility page on the website to enhance content and provide access to relevant information including this multi-year accessibility plan.	X				
Actively seek feedback on the accessibility of products and services from people with disabilities.			X		
Increase promotion of accessible services, collections and technology offered by the library, including CELA		X			
<b>Collections &amp; Services</b>					
Co-create equitable service experiences with community members living with disabilities (e.g., host an open house for the makerspaces for individuals with a variety of [dis]abilities, run by individuals with a variety [dis]abilities)			X		
Launch sensory supportive toys and equipment, as a lending collection and for in-branch use			X		
Investigate accessible technology options for public service				X	
<b>Programs &amp; Community Engagement</b>					
Expand access to community information, local resources and social services supporting individuals with disabilities.		X			
Launch the MPL Brain Project with a focus on programming and services to individuals with cognitive disabilities and degeneration.	X				
Expand services for individuals with disabilities, particularly with mobility impairments, by providing service delivery outside the branches.			X		
Expand programming aimed at developing the life skills of youth and children with disabilities.				X	
Increase accessible programming capacities including the range of supportive options in library programs, programs in alternative formats, etc			X		
Build IDEA best practices in the programs to make them more inclusive and accessible (e.g., Closed Captioning in virtual programs)	X				
<b>Spaces &amp; Design</b>					
Complete a space use study of the branches to identify opportunities to improve service inclusion for individuals with disabilities		X			
Facilitate IDEA based focus groups and apply principles of universal design to create safe, diverse and inclusive library spaces.				X	



<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>
Review furniture standards for staff and public spaces and provide recommendations to support ergonomics, accessibility and body inclusion.			X		
Develop accessible wayfinding to support self-service for individuals with disabilities					X
<b>Recruitment, Personnel &amp; Workforce Management</b>					
Review recruitment and onboarding practices and documents with IDEA lens.				X	
Continue providing learning opportunities to staff on accessible service, anti-ablest awareness, and universal design principles.		X			
Create documented procedures to encourage the employment of qualified individuals with a wide range of abilities.					X
Expand work placement and volunteer opportunities for individuals with disabilities					X
Provide position-specific accessibility training for personnel overseeing functions identified in the IASR	X				