



MANITOBA POLICY ON ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, EVENTS, AND SERVICES

Disabilities
ISSUES
OFFICE

Manitoba 



The Government of Manitoba is committed to an inclusive way of thinking and acting ... Through recognition and support, Manitoba strives to provide meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship.

Manitobans with disabilities have the right to goods and services which will give them equality of opportunity and outcome.

Principles 2 and 4 from *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The *Manitoba Policy on Access to Government Publications, Events, and Services* instructs the quality of interaction between government bodies and Manitobans with disabilities when providing information, organizing events (including public meetings), and offering services. The onus is on government to inform the public that access to government may be improved by reasonably accommodating individual needs in a respectful and timely manner. *



This policy is aimed at eliminating barriers faced by Manitobans with disabilities. It addresses the way people with disabilities are treated by government, but does not address program entitlements.

The policy is supported by a procedures document, a resource manual, and training.

BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Manitoba Government released *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*. It outlined a vision for how society should include people with disabilities and presented a series of principles to guide policies and programs.

Full Citizenship also committed the province to updating *Manitoba's Guidelines on Access to Government* (1989). This policy was written prior to the common use of computers, which have fundamentally changed how government provides information to the public. Computers have also revolutionized how persons with disabilities are able to access information.

A policy on access to government is required to respond to the growing number of Manitobans with disabilities who live and participate in their communities. Statistics Canada's 2006 *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey* found that almost 170,000 Manitobans, or 15.7% of the provincial



population, have one or more disabilities that affect their daily lives. In some cases the disabilities are visible, involving the use of a wheelchair or guide dog. In many other cases, the disabilities are invisible, including mental health issues and chronic pain.

Further, it has been found that the likelihood of disability increases with age. As seniors are expected to make up an ever larger part of our community, the number of people with disabilities will increase in coming years.

The equality rights of persons with disabilities are enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Manitoba Human Rights Code*. Failure to reasonably accommodate individual needs in a principled fashion may lead to a formal complaint to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission or a legal proceeding before the courts.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Manitoba Policy on Access to Government Publications, Events, and Services* is to ensure that people with disabilities benefit from equal access to:

1. Public information: in print and on-line
2. Public events: meetings, hearings, and community consultations
3. Customer service



BODIES AFFECTED

The policy applies to the following administrative bodies:

- government departments
- government boards, commissions, corporations and special operating agencies reporting to them
- crown corporations and extra-departmental organizations
- administrative tribunals and other quasi-judicial agencies
- public utilities governed by the public utilities board
- designated health facilities, social services agencies and regional health authorities
- others as may be identified by the Minister responsible for Persons with disabilities

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The bodies affected by this policy must make every reasonable effort to meet the needs of people with disabilities when providing information, conducting events, and serving the public. Information and other accommodations will generally be provided in the most cost-effective format that will reasonably address the communication and related needs of the individual. Charges to individuals requesting an



accommodation will not be higher than those to citizens without disabilities. The cost to meet the objective of this policy is the responsibility of the administrative body concerned.

1. Public Information

- 1.1 producing public information in multiple formats on request to meet various disability related needs
- 1.2 responding in a timely manner to requests for documents in an alternate format
- 1.3 notifying the public that multiple formats are available on request
- 1.4 designing websites and on-line information to be accessible to Manitobans with disabilities
- 1.5 providing the Legislative Library a copy of any new publications, as required by the *Legislative Library Act*, including available multiple formats to help the library respond to public requests

2. Public Events

- 2.1 holding public events in accessible meeting spaces
- 2.2 meeting the physical and communication needs of Manitobans with disabilities on request
- 2.3 publicizing events using methods accessible to people with disabilities



- 2.4 adding to publicity and registration forms that disability supports are available on request

3. Customer Service

- 3.1 meeting the disability-related needs of individuals on request when they seek service from administrative bodies defined in this policy
- 3.2 creating an Accessibility Working Group to develop internal policies and plans to create and maintain access

ACCOUNTABILITY

The implementation of this policy is guided and monitored by the Disabilities Issues Office.

To ensure public accountability, the Disabilities Issues Office produces an annual report for the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities detailing the results of this policy's implementation. The annual report is prepared in collaboration with the affected administrative bodies.

The Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, or the minister's delegate, may identify actions that the administrative bodies covered by this policy should consider to better meet the purpose of this policy.

Approved by Cabinet, December 3, 2008.



* The duty to reasonably accommodate disabilities is limited by undue hardship to the service provider. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission describes reasonable accommodation as an often “simple and inexpensive change to how something is typically done, which takes into account a need a person or group has that is based on a protected characteristic.” The MHRC reviews human rights complaints according to both the process used to identify and explore accommodation options for a special need, as well as any substantive decision on the requested accommodation.

For more information contact:

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Available in alternate formats, upon request.