

# ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM ACCESSIBILITY PLAN



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## Introduction

Museums around the world are the heart of civic life, social institutions which provide a platform for education and public discussion about a vast array of subjects. With a collection of six million objects and research and conservation initiatives which span the globe, the ROM offers visitors and students extraordinary experiences in art, culture and nature.

A destination of wonder and discovery, the ROM is a place of exploration which forms a lasting connection with people who walk through our doors or explore online – relevant to all, regardless of age, background, interest, or physical ability.

This opportunity should be available to everyone. The ROM's strategic plan places a high priority on promoting community engagement, universal access and life-long learning. The ROM views access to its research, collections, exhibitions, programs and services as one of its primary and defining responsibilities and is committed to removing the barriers of participation by extending its reach to a greater diversity of visitors.

The ROM is committed to meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), including any future additions or modifications to the legislation. The ROM aims for the highest possible standard of accessibility for all visitors, and strives to produce and foster the creation of outstanding and innovative experiences which exceed visitor expectations. In keeping with this commitment, The ROM's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated prior to each AODA compliance reporting deadline, or every five years, whichever period is shorter. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is next scheduled for review in 2020 and 2023.

With extraordinary support from our donors, sponsors, staff and volunteers, here are some of the ways we have improved access to the Museum:

- Established a Diversity and Inclusion Accessibility Advisory Committee, formerly Accessibility Advisory Committee, to better understand the community's needs and further tailor individualized experiences. Members of this committee consist of representatives from the deaf and hard of hearing, persons with developmental and learning disabilities, Alzheimer's and mental health communities.
- Ongoing development of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that will lead the Museum to identify and address barriers within organizational systems; create policies, practices, procedures, programs and services that meet the diverse needs of those we serve; and attract and retain a talented workforce skilled at working in an inclusive and respectful

manner with one another and with the community.

- Designed galleries with accessibility as a fundamental priority – featuring elements such as tactile reproductions, labelled braille and raised font plinths and digital access to collections.
- The ROM also offers a variety of supplementary resources including videos captioned in English and French, audio guides, complimentary wheelchairs, and large-format floor plans.
- The Museum’s award-winning initiatives enhance the experience of visitors with disabilities through the use of innovative technologies, partnerships, tours, displays, and ground-breaking programs. Among these advancements are: the first-in-Canada tour for the deafblind; an audio-described tour program; ASL-interpreted programs; internationally- award-winning tactile books; and an Alzheimer Tour Program.

Working in partnership with diverse groups and community organizations, we intend to continually improve the ROM’s relationships with our many friends, advocates, supporters and partners. We will use their leadership to improve our activities towards access and further the artistic, cultural and social life of Toronto by offering an experience for all.

### **Recent Awards and Distinctions**

Dedication to accessibility is at the heart of the ROM’s core values and principles. In our efforts to assist in the promotion of a barrier-free Ontario, the ROM has received the following awards:

- 2015 Tourism Industry Association of Ontario - Accessible Tourism Award
- 2014 Canadian Interiors "Best of Canada" award for accessible bathrooms in the Samuel Hall Currelly Gallery
- *Water* Tactile Book selected by The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) for the 2013 and 2011 catalogue of Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities
- 2012 Excellence Canada - Ontario Accessibility Award
- 2012 Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP) Corporate Award
- The City of Toronto Access Equity & Human Rights Awards – 2008 Access Award for Disability Issues

## Section One: Report on Measures Taken

### 1. Accessibility for Customer Service Standard

As a response to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its Standards for Customer Service, the ROM reviewed its policies, practices, services, programs, awareness and infrastructure. In 2009, a gap analysis was compiled, identifying current or future barriers to access. This became an important document to establish goals, set priorities and monitor change.

The main recommendation in the Gap Analysis Report was the enrolment of all operational teams in long-term accessibility planning.

As a result, amendments were made to the *Public Access Policy* and the Management Practice on *Accessibility for ROM Visitors with Disabilities* stating the ROM's commitment to accessibility and to implementation of the AODA. In addition, a set of "[Summary Documents](#)" was developed which communicates to the general public the ROM policies, practices and procedures on providing services to people with disabilities.

The ROM has also taken the following steps to ensure the provision of accessible customer service to visitors with disabilities:

- Visitors are allowed to use their own personal assistive devices to access the ROM's programs and services.
- Assistive devices available onsite have been identified and staff members have been trained on how to use them.
- Service animals are welcome in those areas of the ROM that are open to visitors.
- The Admission Policy for persons with disabilities permits free admission of a support person.
- Disruption notices are posted in the galleries or the website when facilities or services relied on by visitors with disabilities are temporarily not available.
- An accessible process for visitors to provide feedback is in place. Visitors can provide feedback via telephone, TTY, mail, social media, fax, or in person.

#### 1.1. Accessibility Training

Formal accessibility awareness training was undertaken by Christine Karcza Consulting at the Museum during 2009, 2010 and 2015. ROM front line staff and volunteers from all departments, senior management and the Board of Trustees participated in accessibility awareness training sessions. The 2015 training focused on the IASR and the OHRC as it pertains

to persons with disabilities. In 2017, a training on the elements of the IASR and AODA was provided for all paid staff. Additionally, training on Bill 132 The Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act was provided for all paid staff. Volunteers will be trained in 2018.

Currently, new staff and volunteers are trained in ways that best suit their duties. Different modules or sessions have been implemented in response to the training needs of each team within the ROM. The training requirements under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are embedded in the ROM Employee Orientation Practice under the New Employees/Volunteer Orientation checklist for Managers and Supervisors. Most staff and volunteers take the online *Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service* training provided by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

In addition, the ROM provides training to employees and volunteers on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities as per the ROM *Abuse, Harassment & Discrimination* Policy and its Management Practice on *Workplace Abuse, Harassment & Discrimination*.

Other training opportunities that the ROM has been involved in include:

- In 2013 a half-day seminar was offered on Inclusion Learning and Accessibility Awareness for ROM volunteers who support learning experiences in the Museum.
- In June of 2015, the ROM hosted half-day education session on Accessibility and Inclusion for the Ministry of Transportation, Accessibility Team.
- In 2017, an online Respect in the Workplace course was made available at no charge to ROM staff.

## **2. Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)**

### **2.1. Emergency Plan Information**

The ROM Security team is charged with the responsibility for the physical safety and security of the Museum's physical assets, such as the building and its contents, as well as for the safety and security of the staff, volunteers and visitors. The ROM has implemented a comprehensive emergency response plan and the Museum is committed to providing visitors with publicly available emergency information in an accessible format upon request.

## **2.2. Procurement**

The ROM considers many things when making a purchasing decision, including quality, cost and environmental impact. Adding accessibility to that list makes the Museum more welcoming and inclusive to all, visitors, staff and volunteers.

The ROM reviewed its procurement documents and templates and developed a set of *Guidelines for Accessibility Language for Procurement Documents* that ensure that accessibility requirements are embedded in the ROM procurement process. When procuring goods, services and facilities, the ROM incorporates accessibility design criteria and features. When applicable, procurement documents specify the desired accessibility criteria to be met and provide guidelines for the evaluation of proposals with respect to those criteria. When it is impractical for the Museum to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring specific goods, services or facilities, the Manager Procurement and Administration provides a written explanation, upon request.

In addition, the ROM has developed a set of Accessibility Standards for Self-Service Kiosks or Interactive Devices that consider the needs of persons with a disability.

## **3. Information and Communications**

### **3.1. Feedback Process at the ROM**

The ROM offers a feedback process which takes into account communication preferences and the diverse needs of our visitors. For information about how to provide feedback at the ROM please review our [Feedback Process at the ROM](#) or visit the [Contact Us](#) page on our website.

As part of the Museum's commitment to engaging persons with disabilities in developing recommendations and strategies to address barriers, the ROM Diversity and Inclusion Committee, formerly the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Since 2006, this committee has been assisting the Museum by reviewing and making recommendations on accessibility and inclusive practices for future and current exhibitions, programs, and services.

### **3.2. Accessible Website**

In 2012, the ROM developed and launched a new website with access as one of the core objectives. During the planning process, the web project team worked with the Canadian Helen Keller Centre to better understand how assistive technologies work and experience some of the

frustrations visitors encounter when using these tools. This experience clearly illustrated the principles of online access for staff and helped ensure that these principles were incorporated as the site was built.

The web project team used the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to establish and implement content, design and technical standards for the new website, achieving the following:

- The ROM website meets WCAG 2.0 Level A standards, making the website fully accessible to visitors using screen readers.
- Text-based content is written to be readable and understandable and the Museum continues to evaluate and update archival content with this objective.
- The new website further allows the ROM to communicate with a broader audience through the use of images, video and audio. This strategy targets visitors with lower literacy levels.
- All images posted to the site include alternative text which provides visual descriptions of the content contained in the graphic. Visitors with vision loss using screen readers can use alternative text to access the information contained within the graphic.
- The web structure was developed so that visitors using screen readers can navigate the content sequentially. This was a change made at the programmatic level. Further, all colour used in the site design was tested for contrast, ensuring visitors with colour blindness and low vision could view content.

### **3.3. Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

The ROM took the following steps to make sure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request by January 1, 2015:

#### **Programs and Events**

- Provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation upon request with at least three weeks' advance notice for all lectures and learning programs.
- Added ASL interpretation to select ROM Speaks presentations as part of special exhibition planning.
- Reviewed speakers' contracts to add language that describes the ROM's commitment to comply with the IASR and explains the speaker's responsibilities and the expectation that the speaker will support the ROM's commitment.
- Offer assistive listening devices for all ROM Lectures and Adults Programs.
- Make available audio recording of lectures, upon request.
- Inform visitors on the website about the availability of communication supports for all

special ticketed programming or programs that require pre-booking.

### **Exhibition and Gallery Content:**

- Woven accessibility considerations through all stages when planning exhibits and galleries.
- Engage persons with disabilities in developing recommendations and strategies to identify and address barriers through the ROM Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
- Offer captioning in English and French in all videos in galleries and exhibitions.
- Provide descriptive audio tours for select special exhibitions.
- Integrate technology elements where practical to bolster gallery and exhibition access.
- Provide tactile opportunities in galleries and exhibitions with the implementation of touchables and increased opportunities for discovery learning throughout the Museum.
- Provide tactile books featuring braille, raised line graphics and large print for selected galleries and exhibitions.
- Make available ASL video and audio podcasts highlighting Museum research and collections.
- Offer a variety of programs that makes information accessible for visitors with different needs and abilities, within available resources.
- Upon request, accessible formats and communications supports are arranged in coordination with the Inclusion Advisor.

### **Visitor Relations & Audience:**

- Provide training to new staff and volunteers on how to interact and communicate with visitors in a manner that takes into account their disability.
- Communicate to visitors the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.
- Provide an Ubi-Duo system, an assistive communication technology, at the admissions desk allowing real time, face-to-face communication between a visitor who is deaf and our staff members.
- Offer an induction loop system in the admission desk, to remove barriers of communication between our staff and visitors who wear hearing aids.
- Provide large print visitor guides and floor plans which are available online through the Museum website, on the accessibility page. These guides are also available at the Museum through the admissions desk.
- Provide a 'mobility-friendly' floor plan available online through the Museum website, on the accessibility page.
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## 4. Employment

The ROM believes in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to fair and accessible employment practices and meeting the standards set forth by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The ROM has a long history of modeling the spirit of Ontario's Human Rights Code and has developed and implemented policies that support accommodation and ensure a discrimination- and harassment-free environment.

The ROM took the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, the Museum accommodates persons with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes:

- Include ROM's statement of commitment to fair and accessible employment practices in all job postings. This statement outlines that, upon request, accommodations are provided for candidates with disabilities.
- Notify job applicants who are invited to an interview or are at another stage in the selection process that accommodations are available upon request.
- Reviewed the written offer of employment template notifying successful candidates about the availability of accommodations for ROM employees with disabilities.
- Human Resources management practices are being reviewed, documenting accessibility practices during the recruitment, selection and orientation processes.

The ROM has taken the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and a return-to-work practice for employees that have been absent due to a disability:

- As required, individual workplace emergency response plans are developed for employees with disabilities.
- The process to develop an individual workplace emergency response plan has been embedded into the ROM hiring and orientation process for new staff.
- The ROM is committed to assisting each employee to realize her/his full potential as a productive and contributing employee. As a result, the ROM has in place a comprehensive accommodations process for employees with disabilities.
- The ROM is committed to providing accommodations to meet the needs of its employees with permanent or temporary disabilities and the ROM offers a Disability Management & Accommodation Program where all the necessary steps are identified to support employees returning to work after a disability -related leave of absence.

- Training modules and information sessions are being offered by the Human Resources Department to inform managers of the expectations for compliance with the Employment Standard.

## **5. Design of Public Spaces**

### **5.1. Preventative and Emergency Maintenance**

#### **Preventative Maintenance**

ROM staff complete regular checks of significant and critical infrastructure to ensure that systems are working at optimal conditions. Inspection and operational testing of accessible elements is completed every day prior to the museum opening by the ROM Security team. Any problems or concerns are reported to the Facilities team for immediate action, or for further examination (ex. bringing in a subject matter expert to assist in diagnosis and determination of next steps).

The ROM has standing maintenance agreements with outside contractors for its critical accessible elements, such as elevators, and depends on those routine maintenance checks to keep systems in good running order.

#### **Emergency Maintenance**

The ROM Facilities team maintains a list of critical infrastructure projects and prioritizes those for allocation of annual capital repair and rehabilitation funding from the province.

Should a system fail and require immediate repair for which funds are not available, Facilities will communicate with the province (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport) for funding in one of two ways; either re-allocation of existing capital funds or by a request for emergency funding above and beyond current funding.

### **5.2. Temporary Disruptions**

In order to provide a safe and accessible environment, the ROM is committed to letting visitors know about services and features that are available to them. In the event of a service disruption at the ROM, we will immediately address the issue by:

- Notifying visitors through the Museum website.
- Updating the switchboard with notifications of the disruption
- Posting notifications regarding the disruption within the Museum.
- Ensuring notifications are appropriately located and visible to Museum visitors.
- Explaining the nature of the disruption and why the service is unavailable.
- Anticipating the duration of the disruption, and communicating this information to Museum visitors.
- Providing alternate facilities or services for the duration of the disruption.

## Section Two: Strategies and Actions Planned to 2025

### 1. Accessibility for Customer Service Standard

Activities projected for 2016 include a focus on strengthening internal practices to renew the ROM's commitment to being a leader in accessibility. In order to assess progress and current practices, and to establish a pathway to goals for 2021 and 2025, the ROM will conduct an inclusion audit.

#### 1.1. Accessibility Training

The ROM will prepare to move into its next phase of leadership, expanding its focus to intersectional inclusion. The ROM Diversity and Inclusion Committee has completed an assessment of its members skill sets and will participate in formalized professional development training based on identified gaps to build capacity and broaden the inclusion lens of the committee.

### 2. Information and Communications

- The ROM is committed to making its website and contents comply with W3C WCAG 2.0, Level AA by January 2021. The ROM will put in place the following initiatives to increase accessibility of its website and publicly available information.
- Train ROM website administrators through social media workshops to progressively change all English and French PDFs posted on the ROM website to text-only versions.
- E-learning training will be provided to the design team on how to make accessible PDF's.
- For documents that are too complex to convert to text-only PDF's while still conveying the same meaning, or when it is not efficient to design two separate documents, an accessible PDF will be considered from the onset.

### 3. Employment

The ROM is reviewing its performance management, career development and redeployment practices and will ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account as part of these processes.

### 4. Design of Public Spaces

The ROM will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces, including:

- Provide at a minimum one service counter that accommodates a mobility aid for each type of service provided; the accessible service counter must be clearly identified with signage.
- Ensure fixed queuing guides are cane detectable and their design allows the passage and rotation of mobility aids and mobility assistive devices.
- Ensure waiting areas; where seating is fixed to the floor, a minimum of 3% of the new seating must be accessible

### **Summary of Revisions:**

2013	Original version
January 2016	Updated information
December 2017	Updated information

### **Contact Us:**

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

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