

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 science and civilization.

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 new 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.

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

- Established an 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 Plan 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, large-format floor plans, and sign language podcasts.

- 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. 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 2009 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.

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 include:

As part of the ROM's strategic goal to building on the strengths of our staff and volunteers to effectively adapt to the community's changing needs, in 2013 a half-day seminar was offered on Inclusion Learning and Accessibility Awareness for ROM volunteers who support learning experiences in the Museum. This seminar offered a hands-on and meaningful opportunity to explore inclusion and accessibility and the role of museum volunteers in supporting learning experiences addressing different abilities and learning styles.

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 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 people with disabilities.

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 created the ROM Accessibility Advisory Committee (ROMAAC). Since 2006, the ROMAAC has been assisting the Museum by reviewing and making recommendations on accessibility 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.
- 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 Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Offer captioning in English and French in all videos in galleries and exhibitions.
- Provide audio description for special exhibitions.
- 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 Senior Advisor, Inclusion.

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.

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.

Section Two: Strategies and Actions Planned to 2025

1. 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.

2. Employment

The ROM is currently 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.

3. 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

Contact Us:

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Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request.