

City of St. John's Accessibility Review Report

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City of St. John's

May 2019

Introduction

InclusionNL and the City of St. John's have developed a solid partnership for the past number years. During this time we have worked together to increase accessible practices in the HR Dept commencing with recreational summer staff. We have participated in critiquing and providing reports on many of the available services to determine if barriers current exist for residents with disabilities, have provided supports to their special events, and sit on the inclusive working group keeping an eye on accessibility throughout city services.

This report details updates on services previously critiqued for accessibility, articulation of city representatives participating in Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day in October 2018, and a review of new services (Southlands Community Centre, Tourism Centre, Blue Zone Parking in Bowring Park) recently completed.

For the purpose of this review, staff with various types of accessibility needs, reviewed services available to residents to determine if barriers exist or if they were able to gain access to the information they were seeking. Coinciding with these reviews a secondary assessment was completed of stjohns.ca to determine the accessibility level from its original review.

Update to Initial Reviews

Since the initial review of services in 2017, a number of improvements in services reducing barriers for residents with disabilities exist based on recommendations received.

Access Centre – City Hall

Great improvements exist with the Access Centre at City Hall. There is a new reception desk available which creates more efficient access to the receptionist and their intake process. The computer stations available to access online services are now easily accessible in the front reception office as well.

Humane Services

Improvements have been made to the main entrance of Humane Services, with the walkway getting the much needed upgrades. Human Services have also updated their practices so that anybody wanting to see adoptable animals must make an appointment so that doors are kept locked for animal safe-keeping.



Mundy Pond Park – Dog Run

Upgrades are expected with the various dog runs throughout the city during 2019. Photos below were taken on May 17 of a resident using a power chair gaining access to the dog run at Mundy Pond Park with help from another.



Information, Resources, and Websites

City of St. John's Inclusion Services has a wide collection of information and resources available to citizens that highlight various accessibility and inclusive features of many of their facilities. These resources are available in print, on their website and available in alternate formats upon request.

The City of St. John's website has a number of accessibility features currently available for the site. Users can increase font sizes available on each page, have access to a site map if they experience glitches in their navigation, and provide contact information and encourage users to contact if problems are experienced.

In their Accessibility statement published on their website, they have a commitment to ensure their website meets WCAG 2.0 Level A compliance. InclusionNL recommends that city staff continue in their commitment to website accessibility and consider raising their accessibility level in alignment with Canadian standards of WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

The InclusionNL Manager would welcome an opportunity to meet with city web/app designers to review accessibility issues present in the City mobile apps, the City Engage portal and the website which compromises their current commitment articulated in their Accessibility statement. Website accessibility features such as skipping navigational menus and photos including descriptive text alternatives are recommended to help support increased accessibility for citizens with different type of disabilities.

Since my initial review of the website in 2017, the site has grown to more than double in size with accessibility issues still existing.

January 16, 2017			May 20, 2019		
Issue Report			Issue Report		
Site quality report for http://www.stjohns.ca/ produced on January 16, 2017.			Site quality report for http://www.stjohns.ca/ produced on May 20, 2019.		
Category	Results		Category	Results	
Overall Quality	<div><div></div></div>	1946 pages with quality issues	Overall Quality	<div><div></div></div>	5435 pages with quality issues
Errors	<div><div></div></div>	460 pages with broken links or other errors	Errors	<div><div></div></div>	1038 pages with broken links or other errors
Accessibility	<div><div></div></div>	1929 pages with accessibility problems	Accessibility	<div><div></div></div>	5358 pages with accessibility problems
Compatibility	<div><div></div></div>	31 pages with browser specific issues	Compatibility	<div><div></div></div>	44 pages with browser specific issues
Privacy	<div><div></div></div>	12 pages with compliance or legal issues	Search	<div><div></div></div>	1640 pages with search engine issues
Search	<div><div></div></div>	932 pages with search engine issues	Standards	<div><div></div></div>	3427 pages have W3C standards issues
Standards	<div><div></div></div>	1385 pages have W3C standards issues	Usability	<div><div></div></div>	3489 pages with usability issues
Usability	<div><div></div></div>	1402 pages with usability issues			
Totals	5715 pages and images checked		Totals	13772 pages and images checked	

Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day

Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day took place in October 2018 with a great response and large representation of mentors from the staff and council of the City of St. John's. Mentors included:

- Maggie Burton – Counsellor at Large
- Sarah Hardiman – Fieldworker 1 Officer
- Katie Cromwell – Outdoor Fieldworker
- Patrick Pendergast – Parking Enforce
- Christine Whelan – HRIS Coordinator



New Blue Zone Parking – Bowring Park – West Entrance

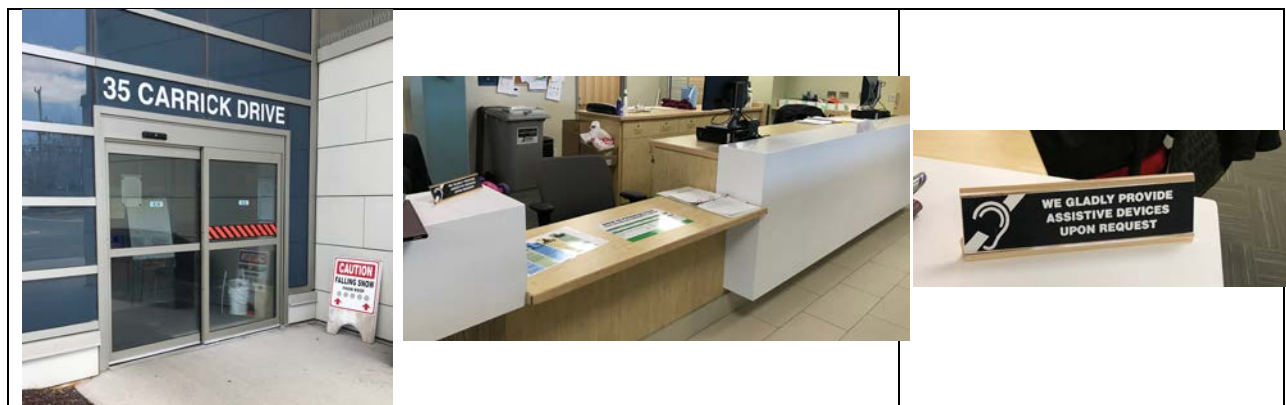
Signs are required in the west parking lot informing patrons of the location of the blue zone parking spaces on Waterford Heights North.



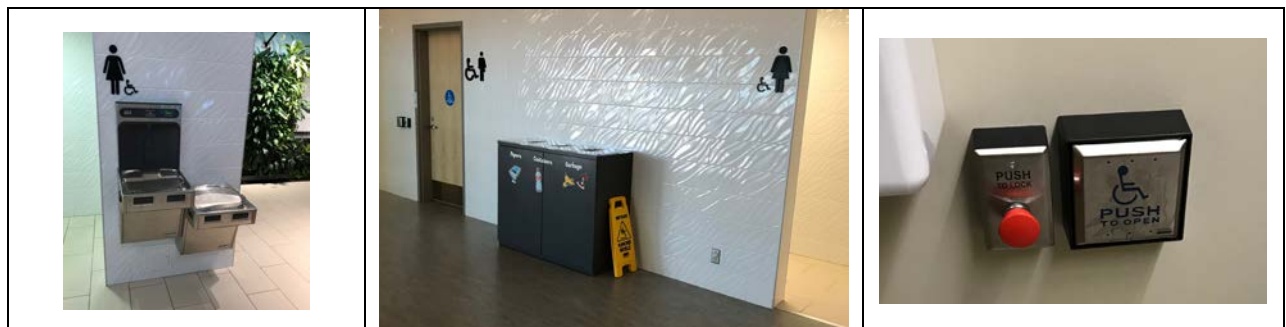
Recreational Facilities

Paul Reynolds Community Centre

An accessibility review was completed by two of our InclusionNL staff. Both staff members using different types of mobility supports, one a power chair, the other a walker. Both felt their experiences were barrier free. When asked about the assistive listening devices to determine if they were similar to a headset amplifier or for those using hearing aids, the staff person were unable to locate them for us to look at the devices.



Many inside doors were equipped with automated buttons and the Centre has a fully automated large elevator that takes participants to the second floor area. The centre has a variety of washrooms, some equipped with accessible showers and automated buttons & locks on washroom doors.



The pool was closed for upgrades but noticed many varieties of wheelchairs (regular size and larger sizes) in the pool area, the diverse ways to enter the pool and the chairlift that will submerge in the pool for ease of entrance as well.



Southlands Community Centre

Located on 40 Teakwood Drive in Southlands, this community centre boasts many accessibility features. Their main entrance has automated buttons for easy access, the reception counter has a section that is lowered for those using mobility supports, there are accessible units in each of the gendered washrooms, and a separate gender neutral washroom as well.

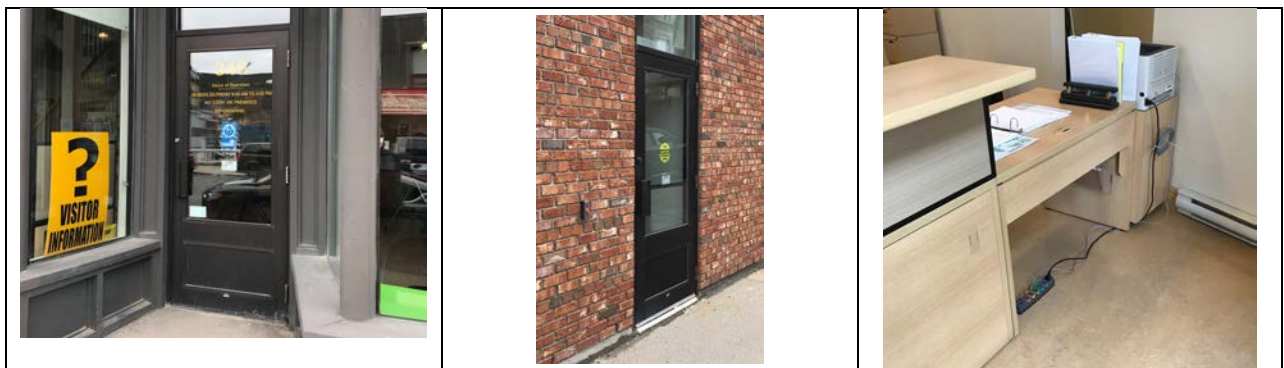


Tourism St. John's – Water Street Location

A staff of InclusionNL visited the Tourism Centre on Water St. to get information about accessibility features available in the downtown area of St. John's. This staff member uses mobility supports and was seeking basic information to help with her downtown experience.

The person left with a few guides of restaurants and maps of the area but none of them articulated accessibility information or locations of blue zone parking spots.

The person requested information about retail/restaurants with accessible entrances (Rocket Bakery & Fresh Foods, The Salt House, Starbucks, and Atlantic Place etc.) but was unable to get this information from the service agent.



Recommendations

As The City of St. John's municipality moves forward to build their disability confidence and increase inclusion and accessibility in their daily practices, listed below are a series of recommendations to help support this work. InclusionNL looks forward to our continued partnership on this initiative to advance inclusion within the city infrastructure for St. John's citizens with disabilities.

- It is recommended that the City continue to partner with InclusionNL to complete tasks outlined in the accessibility reports completed, and through continued partnerships with InclusionNL. This includes:
 - Provide expertise to increase accessibility in communications, publications, and printed resources provided to the public.
 - Provide expertise to increase accessibility with the stjohns.ca website
 - Provide professional development Inclusion Awareness training to managers, departmental staff, and volunteers
 - Provide expertise, knowledge and resources to increase accessibility in the built environment.
 - Provide recognition for the work completed in increase accessibility and inclusion; and building disability confidence through continued partnerships with key stakeholders and InclusionNL.
 - Develop an Accessibility Guide for YYT downtown and make available at the Downtown Tourist Centre.

- InclusionNL recommends that the City consider increasing the accessibility levels of their website to meet standards outlined in WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- InclusionNL recommends the City continue in their strong commitments to inclusion, diversity, and accessibility through the exemplary leadership of the Inclusion Services team. The City of St John's Inclusion Services has the most comprehensive inclusive services available within the province and are viewed as leaders with other municipalities.
- InclusionNL recommends that a plan of action is developed to undertake a comprehensive review of available accessibility within City Community Services. This is to begin preparation for new accessibility legislation which has been mandated by the provincial and federal governments and is scheduled to commence in 2019.
- InclusionNL recommends the City continue in their commitments to ensure inclusion and accessibility through the work of the multi stakeholder Inclusion Advisory Committee, the Inclusive Organization Working Group, and the Special Events Working Group
- InclusionNL recommends the City share information with citizens through the City Guide about their work in increasing their disability confidence and provide updates about how accessibility and inclusion increases in policy development and daily best practices.

THawk

Appendix

1. Tourism Centre Experience – Water St.

I was responsible to gaining information about accessibility in downtown St. John's for tourists with disabilities visiting from cruise ships etc. I headed to the Tourism Centre on Water Street to find out more.

When I approached the building, it was clearly marked on the front entrance that their accessible entrance was to the side of the building which also included an automated button. When I went inside, I noticed that a part of the counter was lowered for easier access and the service agent came out from behind the counter to greet and talk with me. Our exchange included me asking a number of accessibility related questions in an attempt to gain more information. My questions included:

Question: Do you have any information and resources related to accessibility?

Response: First, the employee said to ask Wendy, but Wendy was not in and I was going to take Wendy's card so I could contact her, but then the employee stated that I would be better to contact the Downtown Development Commission. The employee also provided me with a restaurant guide to contact the creator about accessible restaurants.

Question: Do you know of any places or services in the downtown area are accessible, such as stores and restaurants?

Response: The employee never listed any options, but they handed me the restaurant guide.

Question: Do you have any resources or maps that highlight blue zone parking in the downtown area?

Response: The employee said that the city of St. John's does not handle parking. The employee looked at a map of downtown St. John's with me to see if blue zone spots were indicated on it. There were not blue zone parking spots on the map. Again, the employee told me that I should contact the Downtown Development Commission.

I left with a few resources for further research on my own, but with no immediate information about accessibility features available. This left me frustrated and no further ahead.

***"Safely Build Your Disability Confidence
with InclusionNL"***

**Empower, The Disability Resource Centre
InclusionNL: Employer Support Services
4 Escasoni Place
St. John's, NL, A1A 3R6**



Contact InclusionNL Today!

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