

Saskatchewan Municipal Board Accessibility Plan 2025-2028

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Introduction

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers for individuals who work at or access government facilities, programs, and services. *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act* came into force on December 3, 2023. The purpose of this Act is to remove and prevent accessibility barriers that persons with disabilities experience.

The Accessible Saskatchewan Act requires the Government of Saskatchewan and designated public sector bodies to create an accessibility plan. As a designated public sector body identified under this legislation the Saskatchewan Municipal Board (SMB) is releasing its three-year accessibility plan.

The SMB is an administrative tribunal established for regulatory and quasi-judicial purposes to deal with issues from local authorities. We hear appeals regarding assessment, planning and development, road maintenance, municipal boundaries, fire prevention, and any other issues referred to by our Minister or through legislation. As an agency that is a part of the Government of Saskatchewan our employees are employees of executive government. The SMB office is managed by a ministry of the provincial government, and our website is hosted on saskatchewan.ca. As such, this accessibility plan has been developed in close consideration of the Government of Saskatchewan's three-year accessibility plan.

Stakeholder and Client Engagement

SMB consulted with our stakeholders and persons with disabilities to inform the actions outlined in this plan. A public survey was conducted between August 8 and September 3, 2025, to seek feedback from SMB stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, about the accessibility barriers they experience while using SMB facilities, programs, and services. The survey was emailed directly to 753 stakeholders with a total of 36 responses. Of these respondents, 5 indicated experiencing accessibility barriers in their interaction with SMB.

Most notably during this engagement, we heard about physical accessibility barriers that people experience related to entrances and parking when accessing the SMB office. We also heard about information and communication barriers related to finding and understanding information about SMB services. People also shared their experiences with technology barriers that hinder their experiences.

In consideration of this feedback and as well as the overarching Provincial Government's Accessibility Plan, SMB has identified three goals and associated actions that will guide the next three years to improve the accessibility of our facilities and services.

Accessibility Barriers

The Accessible Saskatchewan Act defines a barrier as anything that hinders or challenges the full and equal participation in society of persons with disabilities.

There are many types of barriers that persons with disabilities may experience, including physical barriers, information and communications barriers, and attitudinal barriers. As outlined in the Provincial Government's Accessibility Plan, definitions and examples of each barrier type are outlined below to help people understand the experiences of persons with disabilities.

- Physical barriers exist when spaces are designed in ways that prevent or limit mobility or access.
- Information and communications barriers exist when information or material is shared in a way that is not accessible to all people.
- Attitudinal barriers exist when people act or think based on false assumptions.

Achievements to Date

Prior to the formal development and release of this plan, SMB has been acutely aware of accessibility as it relates to appeals and the appeal process. We began work in 2024 to ensure SMB communication and forms are clear and written in plain language; our processes are documented and accessible to stakeholders; and hearing formats are varied including video technology to allow for remote access for appellants and respondents.

The Provincial Auditor in its 2025 Audit Report “Saskatchewan Municipal Board—Audit of Providing Timely and Supported Appeal Decisions about Municipal Disputes” states the importance of accessibility in a fair appeal process. We are pleased to report the auditor recognizes our commitment to a fair and transparent appeal process, concluding SMB meets the goal of providing clear and accessible appeal information. As taken from page 8 of the report:

Good practice indicates accessibility as one of the key elements of a fair appeal process. An accessible appeal process is one that is easily found and understood by individuals in a format and language they understand.

We found the Municipal Board publishes key information about the appeal process on its website. We found the information clear, easily understandable, and contains sufficient detail to understand the appeal process.

While this is a positive reflection of current state of SMB appeal information and processes, we are committed to a continuous review and improvement of all areas of accessibility as reflected in the following goals and actions.

Goal 1 – Improve employee knowledge and awareness of accessibility

Increasing employee awareness about accessibility and understanding the importance of inclusion are key to improving the quality of services provided to all individuals, including persons with disabilities.

Government of Saskatchewan introduced Disability Awareness training in 2018. This training is intended to help provide employees with an understanding of the importance of disability awareness in the workplace, challenge false ideas, and show how to create an inclusive workplace culture.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Ensure all SMB staff have taken Government of Saskatchewan Disability Awareness Training.
 - In the last year, SMB has hired four new staff of which, three are new to Executive Government. SMB will ensure all existing executive government staff have completed this training as well as staff new to Executive Government.
- Over the next three years, offer all SMB staff the opportunity to supplement Disability Awareness Training beginning with the Rick Hansen Foundation Inclusion and Accessibility Training.
 - Currently two of our thirteen staff have completed this training.

Goal 2 – Ensure SMB office and hearing space are accessible

SMB recognizes that an accessible building and hearing room are an important part of improving the accessibility of SMB services.

SMB office and hearing space is managed by the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement (SBP). While SMB has very little control over the space, we can work in coordination with SBP in achieving the Provincial Government's Accessibility Plan Goal to "Make Government Buildings More Accessible".

One specific action of Provincial Government and thus SBP is to "*increase the number of Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification audits completed on government-owned buildings*". These audits will help identify accessibility barriers and actions that can be taken to remove physical barriers in buildings. From the survey we have learned that some stakeholders have experienced physical accessibility barriers with SMB space including the identified need for more accessible parking and drop-off spaces and entrances, as well as the reception counter being too high.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Work with SBP to ensure a Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification audit is completed on SMB office and hearing space.
- Work with SBP to request braille signage.
- Request regular updates from SBP on their work with local authorities regarding on-street accessible parking at government utilized buildings.

Goal 3 – Make online content and communication more accessible

Most of SMB's stakeholders and clients access information through our website. It is becoming increasingly important to make sure that our online content is understandable and accessible. Of the five survey respondents who indicated experiencing accessibility barriers with SMB services we heard that:

- SMB information is hard to understand (e.g. complex language and use of acronyms);
- the print on communication is hard to read (e.g. too small, colors hard to read);
- information is hard to find (e.g. website is confusing); and
- the file transfer application used by SMB is confusing and not user friendly.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Review SMB website, forms and information sheets to ensure the communications include plain language and clear direction. This will make it easier for stakeholders to understand the appeal processes of the various Committees/Boards of SMB.
 - SMB began extensive work in late 2024 to rebuild all application appeal forms and create instruction guides to be more user-friendly and efficient. This work has been identified and was reported on in our 2024 Annual Report. The SMB continues to work on forms and instruction guides in 2025 with intent for completion in 2026.

- Ensure our website content and information sheets use plain language, and clear direction.
- Work with SBP in making improvements to the accessibility of our website.
 - The SMB will work with our government partner to enhance our website to ensure improved readability and accessibility.
- Explore and identify a new file transfer application.
 - As SMB is a user of the Information Technology Division (ITD) of SBP, SMB will once again need to work in coordination with SBP to identify a new file transfer application over the next three years.

Conclusion and Feedback

SMB, as an agency of the Provincial Government, is committed to improving accessibility to our clients and stakeholders. The actions outlined in this plan are intended to improve the accessibility of our services and remove barriers that persons with disabilities experience.

SMB wants to continue to hear from our clients and stakeholders about accessibility barriers that impact your lives. Please contact us directly to share any feedback, questions, or comments you have on our accessibility plan, at info@smb.gov.sk.ca or 306-787-6221.