

St. Thomas More College Accessibility Plan

Introduction

An accessible environment is the collective sense of being able to participate fully in the workplace and in workplace processes because of having access needs met. As such, St. Thomas More (STM) College is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers for individuals who work at STM and/or access facilities, programs, and services. As part of this commitment, STM is complying with *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act*, which came into force on December 3, 2023. The Act requires STM to publicly post an accessibility plan to remove and prevent accessibility barriers for people with disabilities.

St. Thomas More College consulted with several stakeholders during the development of its strategic plan which included fostering accessibility as part of the strategic objective of creating a Holistic Community. STM collected comments and ideas from this working group and interested stakeholders to come up with concrete actions to enhance accessibility to the faculty, staff, students and the public.

Accessibility barriers

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

There are many types of barriers that people with disabilities may experience, including physical barriers, information and communications barriers, and attitudinal barriers. Definitions and examples of each barrier type are outlined below to better understand the experiences of people with disabilities.

Physical barriers

Physical barriers exist when spaces are designed in ways that prevent or limit mobility or access.

For example:

- Hosting public events at STM that are only accessible by stairs,
- Parking lots with no curb cuts that make it difficult to access sidewalks,

- Washrooms that lack accessible stalls or automatic door openers.

Information and communications barriers

Information and communications barriers exist when information or material is shared in a way that is not accessible to all people.

For example:

- Using small print that is hard to read,
- Websites and documents that are not accessible for screen readers,
- Videos that do not have closed captioning.

Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers exist when people act or think based on false assumptions.

For example:

- Not including people with disabilities in decisions that impact them,
- Making assumptions about a person's ability to communicate or do things for themselves,
- Assuming that all people with disabilities require the same accommodation instead of asking how you can support them.

Accessibility goals and actions

St. Thomas More College has taken steps to improve the accessibility of its facilities, programs, and services. However, we recognize that progress will be ongoing as we aim to become a more inclusive community. This plan outlines the actions that STM will prioritize over the next three years to remove accessibility barriers that people with disabilities experience. STM will work with the University of Saskatchewan to complete the actions outlined in this plan and will raise awareness about accessibility throughout the University of Saskatchewan campus. Specifically, STM will work on the following four goals to ensure enhanced accessibility at the College.

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 people with disabilities.

Achievements to Date

STM has initiated the following to address improving employee knowledge and awareness of accessibility:

- Include accessibility as one of the components of the Holistic Community strategic initiatives in the 2025-30 College strategic plan.
- Recognize that an employee may require accommodation due to a characteristic identified in the Human Rights Code and involve the employee in the accommodation process, working collaboratively to find a solution.

Actions for 2025-28

- Develop new accessibility-focused training for St. Thomas More College employees to increase accessibility awareness and promote a more inclusive and accepting work environment. This includes unconscious bias training at STM. This training will expand on information contained in existing disability awareness training and will help employees identify and remove accessibility barriers; more confidently interact with people with disabilities; and create more inclusive spaces for all.
- Explore opportunities for additional specialized training for STM employees related to the services that the College provides.

Goal 2 - Make the STM building more accessible

St. Thomas More College recognizes that an accessible building is an important part of improving the accessibility of STM programs and services.

Achievements to date

In the last eleven years, STM has retrofitted its facility in the following ways to make the building more accessible:

- A five-floor elevator was installed in 2014 that accesses all five floors of the building,

- Automatic door openers were installed on approximately 30% of the College's public doors including washroom doors,
- Allowances for wheelchair access to classrooms were made available through new classroom furniture and space provided for more wheelchair accessibility and,
- Created a dedicated visitor parking space next to the building to accommodate people with disabilities.

Actions for 2025-28

- Increase the number of automatic door openers to at least two washrooms on each floor,
- Install automatic door openers on office doors as required,
- Install automatic door openers in all public spaces in STM where they are required,
- Include accessibility requirements in the construction and design of new College spaces. This will ensure that accessibility is always a factor in the design of new STM spaces and will promote a more consistent user experience.
- Develop strategies to increase braille signage and make accessibility improvements to washrooms and reception areas in STM and,
- To install sound-assisted fire and other emergency alarms.

Goal 3 – Improve the accessibility of STM courses

St. Thomas More College is taking steps to remove accessibility barriers that limit access to STM courses.

Achievements to date

STM has initiated the following accessibility initiatives to assist people with disabilities to access STM courses:

- Increased the number of web-based courses offered for people with disabilities or those who cannot physically be present in an in-person course,
- Created dedicated space inside classrooms for wheelchairs or other equipment necessary to assist people with disabilities and,
- Increased the size of visual projections in classrooms and provided elevated classroom chairs and tables for enhanced viewing angles.

Actions for 2025-28

- Install more braille and sound-assisted tools inside classroom audio visual systems,
- Install closed captioning in more course presentations in classrooms, and
- Increase the number of web-based course offerings over the next 5 years.

Goal 4 - Support a diverse and inclusive STM workforce

The St. Thomas More College recognizes the importance of fostering an inclusive environment for all employees.

Achievements to date

- STM has begun the process of drafting a new equity, diversification and inclusion action plan for all employees and students.
- STM Human Resources directly supports managers and supervisors who require expert advice and guidance on providing medical and accessibility accommodation. The centralization of this support ensures timely and direct consultation with managers to build capacity and ensure consistent accommodation practices, processes, and information.

Actions for 2025-28

- Complete, approve and communicate the new EDI action plan for STM, and
- Review the current process for STM employees to self-declare a disability to identify opportunities for improvement. Improving understanding of employee diversity in the context of recruitment, retention, and career advancement helps STM to better support employees with disabilities and create a more engaged and productive workforce.

Conclusion

STM is committed to improving accessibility in Saskatchewan and will review and update this plan every three years. The actions outlined in this plan are intended to improve the accessibility of STM services and remove barriers that people with disabilities experience. As we move forward in our accessibility journey, we want to continue to hear from

members of our community about accessibility barriers that impact the lives of people with disabilities.

Contact us

Please contact Human Resources at St. Thomas More College to share any feedback, questions, or comments you have on our accessibility plan, or to request an alternate format of this document.

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