

# Section N: ACCESSIBILITY OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS



## FEEDBACK

[We value your feedback! Please click this feedback link to leave your suggestions/comments on the 2023-2024 Special Education Plan.](#)

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### ***Purpose of the Standard***

*To provide the ministry with further details of the board's multi-year plan, which was previously submitted to the Ministry of Education for improving accessibility for students with physical and sensory disabilities, and to provide the public with this information*

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The TDSB is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment which actively promotes and supports human rights and accessibility for persons with disabilities. We are committed to actively removing barriers, whether visible or invisible, so that all members of our community can fully participate in TDSB activities.

The TDSB has a variety of [resources](#) and [policies and procedures](#) in place for staff, students and community members that ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians and Disabilities Act.

The TDSB's [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025](#) outlines how the Board is ensuring compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians and Disabilities Act and moving towards a more inclusive environment.

The TDSB's Major Capital and Renewal Projects Status Update for improving accessibility to its school buildings, grounds, and administration offices, including resources dedicated to providing barrier-free access, is publicly posted. Summaries of the Board's progress in implementing the capital expenditure plan are outlined in the semi-annual capital reports. Members of the public can obtain a copy of the January 2023 semi-annual capital report update [here](#). The next Major Capital and Renewal Projects Status Update report will be provided to the Board in Fall 2023 and will be publicly posted to this [web portal](#).

The TDSB supports accessibility through:

- [Customer Service](#)
- [Information and Communications](#)
- [Employment](#)

- [Transportation](#)
- [Design of Public Spaces](#)

## School Buildings

While all new TDSB schools are designed to meet or exceed current accessibility standards, most of our older schools were not built with accessibility in mind. Currently, the TDSB has 160 buildings that are accessible, 78 that are somewhat accessible, and 332 that are not accessible.

## New Schools and Additions

All new schools and additions must meet the accessibility requirements of the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The Ministry provides the funding to meet these requirements and, as a result, all new TDSB schools and additions are accessible.

## Upgrading Existing Schools

There are two challenges when it comes to making existing schools accessible:

- The amount of funding needed, and
- The kind of funding the TDSB receives

The first challenge is the magnitude of funds needed. An investment of at least \$1 billion would be required to make all existing schools accessible. The second challenge is the nature of the funding that the TDSB receives from the Ministry of Education.

The TDSB receives School Condition Improvement (SCI) funding to address urgent and high priorities in the Board's \$4 billion repair backlog. Investing this money can help improve accessibility. For example, replacing deteriorated parking lots provides opportunities to increase the number and location of accessible parking spaces, and allow for barrier free paths of travel to school buildings.

But there are significant limitations in what can be achieved with SCI. If a space or a building component is not listed in the Repair Backlog, then it is not eligible for SCI funding. For example, if a ramp or elevator does not currently exist, even though they may be needed, school boards cannot use SCI to install them.

To address this challenge, the TDSB is requesting permission from the Ministry of Education to use \$10 million annually from Proceeds of Disposition (POD), which is the money generated from the sale of surplus school properties. Permission to use POD would enable the TDSB to make strategic investments into improving accessibility.

## **Prioritizing Investments: Creating Accessible K-12 Pathways at the Catchment Level**

Given the wide gap between the \$1 billion plus needed to make all schools accessible, and the \$10 million annually that may be available, prioritizing investments is particularly important. To this end, staff have examined the number of existing Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K to 12) accessible pathways in the TDSB's 78 catchment areas. A K-12 accessible pathway means that a child with special needs can start in Kindergarten and move through the grades to the end of high school within accessible schools, and in the company of their peers.

The goal would be to ensure that there is at least one accessible K-12 pathway in all catchment areas. Currently, 14 of the TDSB's 78 catchment areas have at least one K-12 accessible pathway; 64 areas do not have any.

At \$10 million a year in PoD funding, staff estimate that it will take at least 11 years to create at least one K-12 accessible pathway in all 78 catchment areas.

### **Next Steps**

In 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a report called "Making Schools More Accessible". Staff are currently preparing a follow up report that will go to the Board in the Fall of 2023. The report will detail the plan for creating at least one K-12 accessible pathway in all catchment areas.

## **Designated Accessible Elementary and Secondary School Sites**

The TDSB has selected schools throughout the district that are deemed "Designated Sites". These sites are accessible for students with physical disabilities who require barrier-free access to a school environment to meet their mobility and safety needs. Students may be placed at a designated site by the recommendation of the family once a current medical or Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy (OT/PT) report outlining needs is submitted to the school principal. The school principal will collaborate with the school superintendent and the Special Education and Inclusion team to respond to the requested needs in a timely manner.

## **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Advisory Committee**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Advisory Committee is a group of diverse individuals and departments who advise and provide recommendations to the Accessibility Coordinator on matters related to accessibility for people with disabilities. The committee meets quarterly and is guided by the [TDSB's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#). The committee's role is to help ensure that

policies, programs and services are inclusive and accessible to all members of the TDSB community, and to identify and address any barriers to accessibility that may exist. This includes reviewing and providing feedback on accessibility standards, developing accessibility plans, and promoting awareness and understanding of accessibility issues.

## Accessibility Coordinator

The Board has an Accessibility Coordinator who has the responsibility to address consistency and integration of practices across the TDSB and to provide leadership in all matters related to implementation and compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and related regulations. Currently reporting to the Associate Director of Organizational Transformation and Accountability, the Accessibility Coordinator provides system leadership to ensure awareness of and compliance with AODA legislation, Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR) and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Providing subject matter expertise, the Accessibility Coordinator also acts as a system advocate for all aspects related to AODA. Additional responsibilities include, but are not limited to, research and analysis of best practices in accessibility standards, developing, reviewing and updating policies and procedures in accordance with AODA legislation and best practices, as well as fostering equity and inclusion in the development and implementation of programs and services.

## Reports

- Information on accessibility and the TDSB built environment, which includes interior and exterior features of schools, is outlined in the report called "[Making School Buildings and Sites More Accessible](#)".
- Accessibility profiles of individual schools are also available on the left hand sidebar of school homepages, available at <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Find-your/School>.
- TDSB's [AODA Self-Certified Accessibility Report - November 2021](#)
- 2021 [Accessibility Compliance Report - Accessibility Directorate of Ontario](#)
- A web page has been set up on the TDSB public website that identifies TDSB's top capital priorities. The business cases describing each capital priority are also included on the [Capital Priorities site](#).