



January 29, 2026

Accessibility Compliance Office
630-240 Graham Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0J7
Via email: accessibilitycompliance@gov.mb.ca

Re: Proposed Orders and Penalties Regulation

To Whom it May Concern,

On behalf of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), representing Manitoba's 137 municipalities, I am writing to provide some comments regarding the proposed *Orders and Penalties Regulation* under the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act* (AMA) as part of the ongoing public consultations.

Consistent with our previous submissions, the AMM reiterates its long-standing support for a barrier-free Manitoba that is accessible and inclusive for all. Municipalities play a critical role in identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers, and any regulatory changes should reflect their capacities and resources to ensure effective implementation.

Accordingly, the following comments provide a municipal perspective on the proposed regulation, with an emphasis on prioritizing education and capacity-building alongside any potential enforcement measures.

Education, Capacity-Building and Municipal Considerations

A key concern raised in previous AMM submissions remains relevant today. For over a decade, the AMM has repeatedly voiced concerns over the lack of provincial funding to municipalities to support the effective implementation of accessibility standards. We welcomed the fifth intake under the \$20 million Manitoba Accessibility Fund (MAF), which provides grants of up to \$50,000 to municipalities and other organizations to eliminate accessibility barriers. However, the broad eligibility criteria of the MAF can make it challenging for municipalities to secure sufficient funding to achieve full compliance with all standards.

Achieving 100% accessibility is a noble goal that all Manitobans should aspire to, although reaching this objective will require substantial investment well beyond what is currently available through the MAF, potentially in the hundreds of millions of dollars to adequately support public sector organizations. The AMM notes that, as highlighted by the Minister during the November 2024 Accessibility Advisory Council meeting, the Province indicated it does not currently have the resources to fully fund this level of compliance and acknowledged that fiscal constraints due to the deficit necessitate prioritizing certain areas over others. These realities underscore the importance of focusing on education, capacity-building, and incremental implementation when introducing new regulatory measures.



Municipalities face significant operational and fiscal pressures that can make implementing accessibility standards challenging. They are the only order of government that cannot legally run deficits, which limits flexibility in responding to new regulatory requirements. Economic challenges, including ongoing tariffs, rising construction costs, and the need to maintain and upgrade aging infrastructure, place additional demands on municipal budgets. At the same time, municipalities are working to improve public services to reflect evolving resident needs, balancing competing priorities with limited resources.

Enforcement and Use of Administrative Penalties

These financial and operational constraints also affect how municipalities can respond to enforcement measures under the AMA. The AMM recognizes that the Province has hired Accessibility Compliance Officers; however, questions remain regarding how enforcement will be applied consistently across Manitoba. Municipalities cannot manage enforcement locally, as staff are already tasked with extensive responsibilities. Ensuring consistent application of standards requires clear guidance, training, and resource support from the provincial government.

Should administrative penalties be administered, the AMM recommends that any funds collected be directed back to the municipality responsible, to support implementation of accessibility improvements. Redirecting penalties in this way would help address current fiscal pressures that often delay or prevent accessibility upgrades. Without such reinvestment, requiring municipalities to pay while simultaneously funding improvements at the provincial level could be counterproductive and hinder progress toward accessibility outcomes.

Alignment of Accessibility Plans with Municipal Election Cycles

Municipal capacity considerations also apply to planning timelines, which must account for council turnover. The AMM appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the five-year review of the AMA. We previously recommended to the independent reviewer that accessibility plans be aligned with the municipal election cycle, and we were pleased to see this reflected in the review.

Municipal turnover makes this alignment particularly important. The four-year municipal election cycle typically results in approximately up to 50% turnover of elected officials, along with changes among CAOs. Newly elected councils often need time to become familiar with provincial legislation and forthcoming regulatory changes. Aligning accessibility plans with the election cycle allows councils the full term to understand the issues, update or develop plans, and pursue long-term outcomes.

To ensure this change is effective, the AMM suggests a transitional or grace period, with the four-year cycle fully aligning beginning in 2030 and beyond. This approach ensures newly elected councils have the time and understanding necessary to implement plans successfully, rather than facing immediate compliance pressures without sufficient experience. While enforcement mechanisms can play a role in accountability, the focus should remain on



education and capacity-building to support municipalities in achieving meaningful accessibility improvements.

Discussions through the Accessibility Advisory Council

Finally, the AMM values its appointment to the Accessibility Advisory Council, which provides an important opportunity to ensure municipal perspectives are reflected as the Province moves forward with accessibility standards. As the Province explores forthcoming changes under the AMA, it is vital that this role continue to be respected so that local feedback and insights can be consistently incorporated.

During Council discussions, participants raised questions about proposals to require accessibility considerations in procurement practices. It was recognized that implementing such requirements universally would be challenging for municipalities, and the Province has similarly acknowledged that this approach would not be feasible at this time. This highlights the importance of ensuring regulatory expectations remain practical, achievable, and supported by education and capacity-building measures.

The AMM also notes that AAC discussions have focused on the last accessibility standard yet to be implemented. This standard has gone back and forth through the review process and, as of the last update, was with legal counsel prior to public consultation regarding the *Design of Outdoor Public Spaces Standard*. Some members of the Council have recently suggested expanding the scope back to all public spaces, as was initially proposed. The AMM cautions that such an expansion would significantly increase costs for retrofitting and upgrading existing municipal buildings and infrastructure and would require large scale provincial investments and funding support to ensure successful implementation. To achieve accessibility outcomes without placing undue strain on municipalities or the Province, it is essential that changes remain practical and properly resourced.

Similarly, the AMM cautions that mandating procurement practices or imposing administrative penalties without adequate resources and guidance could place undue strain on municipalities and organizations, potentially hindering the shared goal of a more accessible Manitoba.

Recommendations

As part of the proposed changes to *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)*, the AMM recommends the government:

- *Support municipalities by reducing administrative and financial burdens under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and extending compliance deadlines for accessibility plans to four years to allow more effective implementation.*
- *Prioritize education and capacity-building alongside any potential enforcement strategies to better support municipalities in meeting accessibility standards.*
- *Ensure that adequate funding accompanies new accessibility standards, including for the Design of Outdoor Public Spaces Standard, recognizing that implementation will involve significant costs even without expanding its scope.*



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- *Maintain AMM representation on the Accessibility Advisory Council to ensure municipal perspectives continue to inform provincial decision-making.*

Concluding Comments

In conclusion, the AMM continues to support the goal of a barrier-free Manitoba that is inclusive and accessible for all residents. Meaningful progress toward accessibility outcomes is best achieved through a collaborative municipal-provincial approach that emphasizes education, capacity-building, and adequate investment to support implementation.

We remain committed to working with the Province on accessibility initiatives, while noting that administrative penalties could hinder municipalities' ability to implement accessibility improvements effectively.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denys Volkov', written over a horizontal line.

Denys Volkov
Executive Director

cc: Hon. Nahanni Fontaine, Minister of Families
Hon. Glen Simard, Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations
Deputy Minister Michelle Dubik, Manitoba Families
Deputy Minister Maurice Bouvier, Manitoba Municipal and Northern Relations
Assistant Deputy Minister Heidi Wurmman, Manitoba Families
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