



# Technical Appendix B: **Outreach & Guidance to Local Businesses**

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As part of the Accessibility Review, the Village of Cumberland expressed an interest in receiving advice and guidance in reaching out to local businesses to help build increased awareness and support around some of the potential benefits of making improvements and changes to increase the overall level of accessibility of their businesses. As well, there was an interest in having a checklist that could be shared with local businesses on how to make their businesses more accessibility friendly.

## Accessibility makes good business sense

One in 3 residents living in Cumberland are seniors or near seniors—it makes good business sense to ensure that they can continue to use the shops and services in the community.

Cumberland is recognized as a destination community. Accessible shops and services add to the ability to market Cumberland in this way.

By ensuring that your business is accessible to someone with a disability, you are adding to your potential to grow your business and attract more customers.

## We are All Cumberland!

Cumberland is a progressive community that has taken many positive steps to becoming as accessible and inclusive as possible. Building on this foundation is an important step in becoming a model community where everyone is welcome and everyone is included.

## What can local businesses do?

The following are some specific actions that local businesses can take:

1. **Commitment**—Show your commitment to being inclusive through your actions—ramp it up!
2. **Knowledge and learning**—Work to build your knowledge and understanding of the needs in the community and train yourself and your employees on the different ways to ensure that people with disabilities feel welcomed in your business.
3. **Make adjustments where you can**—Little things like a step at the entrance to your business can be easily changed and can make a big difference. Consider making small adjustments like these where you can—it sends a signal that you care and that you are open for business.
4. **Consider recruiting and employing someone with a disability**—Employing someone with a disability can give you access to a wider pool of talented individuals who have proven to have many untapped skills and abilities as well as a deep sense of loyalty and commitment including a lower rate of absenteeism in some cases.

## How to make accessibility a priority

One of the key ways that you can make your business welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities is to ensure that the entrance to your business is accessible.

The entrance to your business represents your invitation to someone to come in and is one of the most crucial considerations in terms of accessibility.

## Ensuring that your business is accessible is both pragmatic and symbolic.

If a person with a disability cannot get into your business it sends a strong signal that you don't care. Likewise, if you design your space to be accessible, local people with disabilities and their friends and family members will notice.

Many of the businesses in Cumberland have done a good job in taking the extra steps to try to be as accessible as possible. Over time, the community might want to consider putting information on AXSmap or Planat as a way of telling others that Cumberland makes accessibility a priority and is a great place to visit.

## Make your business accessible both inside and out!

Once a customer enters your business, they should be able to access all of the same areas of the business as customers without disabilities including product displays, the checkout counter, dining areas and washrooms. The following are some questions that you might want to consider as a business owner:

- Is there an accessible entrance to your business?
- Are there any potential obstructions or tripping hazards on the sidewalk?
- Are there accessible pathways linking all of the key areas of the business?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Is the surface area slip resistant and smooth?
- Are the accessible pathways kept free of obstructions (e.g. displays, furniture, chairs) that could potentially block or narrow the accessible path of travel?
- Are the circulation paths wide enough for people using mobility devices?
- Is there signage that is easy to understand and that helps to direct customers?
- Is your service counter an accessible height and easy to get to?
- Are there places for people to sit and rest?
- Is there an accessible washroom and an accessible path of travel leading to the washroom?
- Do you have staff willing to do what they can to help to problem-solve and to make sure that everyone feels welcomed to your business?

These are some of the steps and actions that you can take to become an accessibility-friendly business. Many of these are small steps and actions that you can take but they make a big difference.