

Gatineau
An Inclusive City

A Framework and Action Plan
for the Integration of People with
Disabilities or Reduced Mobility

Preamble

In December 2004, the National Assembly of Quebec passed Bill 56, *An Act to amend the Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights and other legislative provisions*.

Section 61.1 of *An Act to secure the Handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view of achieving social, school and workplace integration* (R.S.Q. E-20.1) now assigns a bigger role to departments, municipalities and public and private-sector organizations. It ensures the integration of people with disabilities into society, and identifies a larger role for the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).

For municipalities of 15,000 and more inhabitants, of which Gatineau is one, this means an obligation to develop an annual action plan to reduce obstacles to the integration of people with disabilities by taking the necessary measures to correct them.

For Gatineau's municipal administration, integrating people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility is a priority. In collaboration with its partners, Gatineau intends to put everything into place to ensure that residents find their place within the Gatineau community. Over the past few years, this municipal commitment has been reflected in the strategic plan, the planning program and the family and cultural policies. The integration of every resident will also lie at the core of the Policy on Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors and the Housing Policy, which are about to be launched.

In September 2005, Gatineau set up a municipal working group under the Module de la culture et des loisirs to develop and implement an action plan on universal accessibility by 2006. This working group was supported by a committee of partners coordinated by Commission Gatineau, Ville en santé, and included representatives of associations of disabled people and a representative of the OPHQ. This working group is a key factor in the development of this action plan, ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility are taken into consideration.

Gatineau, An Inclusive City, is the product of this joint effort. This framework and action plan for the integration of people with disabilities or reduced mobility will guide the interventions that will be undertaken over the next three years. In order to properly respond to the needs identified for people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, Gatineau intends to work with its partners on annually reassessing and adjusting its activities.

Taking Action and Raising Awareness

A word from the Mayor

The action plan for the integration of people with disabilities or reduced mobility, known as *Gatineau, An Inclusive City*, describes our commitment and activities in the realm of universal accessibility.

Over the next three years, Gatineau will step up its efforts to integrate people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility. In addition to providing obstacle-free access, Gatineau wants to make its residents aware and to encourage them to be open through behaviour and attitudes that are conducive to the integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

The action plan revolves around three issues: providing accessible environments, fostering openness on the part of Gatineau residents towards people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, and consulting with different local organizations, public services, merchants and municipal services.

Universal accessibility is everybody's business.

Marc Bureau
Mayor of Gatineau

Aiming for Universal Accessibility

A word from the Chairman

Improving the quality of life of Gatineau residents—this is the mandate of the Commission Gatineau, Ville en santé. For the past two years, the Commission has been working in consultation with community organizations on making Gatineau a place where it feels good to live.

Thus, the members of Commission Gatineau, Ville en santé had no reservations about setting up a committee of partners on universal accessibility, some of whom work with the municipal committee on developing the framework and action plan on the integration of people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

Given the solid cooperation and the commitment to properly representing the needs and interests of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, the Municipal Committee, along with the committee of partners and others working with people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility took part in workshops on different intervention axes under the action plan. These axes include the municipal administration, communications, buildings, housing, culture and recreation, safety, signage and parking, and well as public transit. The activities in support of universal accessibility, that might and could be undertaken over the next three years, were identified and prioritized through the workshops.

The members of Commission Gatineau, Ville en santé are happy to have taken part in the development of the framework and action plan for the integration of people with disabilities or reduced mobility and in improving the quality of life of Gatineau residents. It will continue to promote the implementation of the action plan for the integration of people with disabilities or reduced mobility to make Gatineau an inclusive city.

Pierre Philion
Municipal Councillor and Chairman,
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Other organizations and units consulted

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Gatineau, an inclusive city

An inclusive city for them and us. An inclusive city for each and every one of us is what Gatineau hopes to achieve through this framework and action plan for the integration of people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

Keenly aware of the fact that already one quarter of its population is 50 or over¹ and that 20% of Outaouais residents have a disability², Gatineau wants to ensure that people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility are integrated, and to go even farther, by fostering the integration of every individual, regardless of his or her differences.

Gatineau is aiming for an inclusive city because it wants all residents to achieve their full potential and growth for the greatest benefit of our community.

[translation] “*The more dynamic a community (...), the more involvement and collaboration there will be, and the more likely residents will be to identify with that community, become engaged and feel part of its development: that is the foundation of a true quality of life as a society*³.”

For Gatineau, being inclusive means committing to aim for universal accessibility by working to reduce the barriers—both physical and psychological—that interfere with the inclusion and integration of every individual in active life in Gatineau.

People with disabilities and universal accessibility

Under this approach to integration, it is important that everyone agree on the same basic concepts in aiming for universal accessibility. Thus, a person with a disability is:

[translation] “*Anyone with a disability that creates a significant and persistent incapacity who is likely to encounter obstacles in the performance of everyday activities*⁴.”

The concept of universal accessibility refers to the opportunity that every individual has to access a service, activity, place, dwelling, transportation or job in a constructive and safe environment. For Gatineau, universal accessibility is closely linked to the Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, which states the following:

¹ VILLE DE GATINEAU, *Rapport de recherche 2006, consultation auprès des personnes âgées de 50 ans et plus. Imaginons Gatineau. Une ville idéale pensée pour les personnes âgées de 50 ans et plus*, 2006, 45 p.

² OFFICE DES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DU QUÉBEC. *Portrait statistique de la population avec incapacité, région de l’Outaouais 2003, Évaluation de l’intégration sociale des personnes handicapées*, Drummondville, Direction de la recherche, du développement et des programmes, 132 p.

³ From the foreword to the *Politique des loisirs, du sport et de la vie communautaire*.

⁴ OFFICE DES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DU QUÉBEC. *Guide à l’intention des ministères, des organismes publics et des municipalités en vue de la production de leur plan d’action annuel à l’égard des personnes handicapées*, Drummondville, Direction de l’évaluation, de la recherche et de l’intervention nationale, September 2005, 56 p.

“Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap⁵.”

Gatineau officially reiterated its commitment to the value and main principles stated in the Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* in a resolution voted by the Municipal Council in June 2005.

The values at the core of our actions

The actions undertaken by Gatineau and its partners to foster universal accessibility, the instrument of choice for shaping Gatineau into an inclusive city, will take root in the values that are intrinsic and unavoidable in the social development of any individual. Thus, autonomy, respect and equity will be at the core of our actions.

Autonomy

Autonomy is based on the ability and capacity of individuals to take charge of their future and act accordingly. In order to commit to one’s development, an individual must have the capacity, ability and means to act. It is important to point out that autonomy does not by any means detract from the interdependency between individuals that connects them and fosters the sense of solidarity.

Respect

Respect implies a certain openness to others, the absence of judgement, which is reflected in a respect for differences. It also requires consideration for the common good, as well as for laws and by-laws.

Equity

Equity is defined through the attention paid to taking into consideration and responding to the needs of all residents through the fair sharing of public resources, services and goods.

⁵ Extract from Chapter I.1, *Right to equal recognition and exercise of rights and freedoms*.

Gatineau will act through concrete measures...

This action plan contains a number of strategies for fostering an inclusive city. Gatineau will be called upon to use its material, financial and human resources, and to use its regulatory authority. Thus, Gatineau will use concrete measures including serving as leader, facilitator, partner or being proactive.

Leader

Gatineau will lead through different measures and initiatives, which it will manage, and will make the necessary effort to set in place the winning conditions for fostering universal accessibility leading to an inclusive city.

Facilitator

Gatineau will serve as a facilitator when its contribution to the success of an activity aimed at integrating people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility depends on the sharing of its financial, material and human resources.

Partner

Agreeing to work as one is what Gatineau is aiming for as a partner. It will work actively and in partnership with other organizations or bodies on implementing an inclusive city for everyone.

Proactive

Gatineau will also be very proactive in its actions by paying careful and continued attention to compliance with the existing rules and benchmarks that govern and sustain an inclusive city.

The guiding principles for our actions

In a sense, the guiding principles are the parameters that guide the actions. They represent the different variables that have to be taken into consideration to ensure the success of a given activity. Every intervention under the action plan must take into consideration the principle of accessibility, be carried out in partnership with the environment, call upon the sense of responsibility of residents and be addressed in a long-term perspective.

Accessibility

The principle of accessibility involves several factors that must be made accessible. There is the matter of the **proximity** of services and activities offered, of the availability of **transportation**, of access to **information**, of the variable **schedules** and of the **absence of physical and social barriers**.

Partnership

Partnership is a principle that calls for a collective effort, the sharing of strengths and the commitment of different players, including organizations, health care and social services, merchants and, of course, municipal services. It implies working **together** towards a common goal.

Social responsibility

Social responsibility is a key principle that calls upon the social consciences of residents. When it comes to universal accessibility, it is important to understand that integrating everyone requires everyone taking responsibility for demonstrating their good will and openness to the validation and inclusion of differences. It means demonstrating the ability to act with respect towards human beings, customs and rules, and calling upon **constructive and active participation by all residents** in the community's life.

Planning sustainable actions

This principle is part of a strategy of **sustainable development**. It proposes that the actions undertaken in terms of universal accessibility serve not only a very pressing need, but also that they be anchored in a long-term plan of action.

Intervention axes

Working along the intervention axes

In cooperation with its partners in the development of an action plan, Gatineau has identified several steps that must be taken over the next three years on the path to universal accessibility. In order to target and focus these steps, eight intervention axes have been identified, leading to specific objectives.

1.1 The municipal administration

Ensuring everyone's full integration into social life certainly means self-fulfillment through work, the symbol of autonomy and validation. Access to work means financial independence, being part of a place where one can make contacts and achieve one's own goals.

Gatineau is committed to opening its doors to people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility...

By working to...

- make municipal jobs more accessible to people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility;
- ensure the integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility into the workplace; and
- make the municipal administration more accessible to people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

1.2 Communication

Communication is clearly one of the key factors in an inclusive city. It is the key to every means for making the public more aware, developing ideas, and bringing about positive changes in attitudes and ways of thinking.

Gatineau is committed to perfecting its communications to better inform its residents, and to use different means of communication to break prejudices and make universal accessibility a given...

By working to...

- increase everyone's access to information; and
- promote universal accessibility and everyone's participation in an inclusive city.

1.3 Buildings

Access to buildings, whether municipal, public or commercial, is a major obstacle to the integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility. Imagine being able to attend a show but not being able to use the washrooms because you are in a wheelchair! Unfortunately, for many this is an all too frequent occurrence. The *Quebec Construction Code* has risen to the challenge by imposing access criteria for new constructions. However, an overwhelming amount of work needs to be done to upgrade

buildings so that people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility can access them, move around in them, and take advantage of all of the services provided.

Gatineau is committed to reducing the obstacles to access to municipal, public and commercial buildings...

By working to...

- make municipal buildings accessible within the limits of architectural and heritage requirements; and
- increase access to commercial, service and public buildings.

1.4 Housing

Housing is the core around which a number of factors revolve, including access to transportation, services and recreational activities. For everyone, cost, safety and the proximity of services are among the factors they consider when choosing a place to live. For people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, there are a number of specific requirements, involving adapted housing or the ability to adapt their own homes.

Gatineau is committed to promoting access to housing for people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility...

By working to...

- improve access to housing for people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

1.5 Recreation, culture and tourism

Recreation, culture and tourism provide entertainment and are sources of enjoyment. For people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, having access to them is intrinsic to their sense of inclusion and to their social integration. Recreation, culture and tourism are clearly sources of personal growth and popular ways of expressing a community's vitality.

Gatineau is committed to implementing activities and development strategies to promote access to recreation, culture and tourism...

By working to...

- adapt the offer of municipal services to integrate people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility;
- facilitate the integration and participation of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility in recreational activities; and
- encourage the participation of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility in cultural, festive and tourism events.

1.6 Safety

It is well known that the sense of safety is one of the essential needs of human beings. When people feel safe and are safe they can get out to meet other needs, such as getting food, working and, of course, entertaining themselves and being active.

Gatineau is committed to remaining a safe city and to developing its activities in the area of safety...

By working to...

- increase the sense of safety and physical security of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility; and
- ensure the safety of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility in emergency situations.

1.7 Signs, parking, sidewalks and street furniture

Access to proper signs, parking, obstacle-free sidewalks and adapted street furniture are all factors that, when overlooked, can jeopardize universal accessibility. Although it may appear that it would be easy to adapt them to the needs of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, in reality it is not so simple. A number of special needs have to be taken into consideration, and steps have to be taken to ensure that the safety of a few does not detract from that of others. This calls for consultation.

Gatineau is committed to working with local organizations on reducing parking and signage obstacles...

By working to...

- facilitate access to reserved parking;
- improve and adjust signs to the needs of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility; and
- facilitate the use of sidewalks and street furniture.

1.8 Public transit

Access to public transit is an essential factor because it is often the “means” used by people to access services or meet specific needs. Access to public transit is one of the key steps towards autonomy. Given the ageing population, Gatineau and the Société de transport de l’Outaouais are particularly attentive to acting quickly in regard to access to public transit for people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

Gatineau would like to facilitate access to public transit for people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility...

By working to...

- improve access to adapted public transit within financial constraints; and
- encourage alternative transportation.

An implementation strategy

In order to become an inclusive city, Gatineau must develop an implementation strategy for its three-year action plan for the integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

A resource to implement the action plan

An individual will have to be hired for a three-year period by the Division de la qualité de vie et du développement communautaire, which is part of the Module de la culture et des loisirs. This individual's day-to-day responsibilities will be to mobilize the municipal units and different partners, and to increase their awareness in order to ensure that they work together on implementing the action plan for the integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility. This individual will also work with a monitoring committee to annually assess and adjust the action plan to properly meet the needs expressed by people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

A monitoring committee

Also reporting through the Division de la qualité de vie et du développement communautaire, Module de la culture et des loisirs, and working closely with the Commission Gatineau, Ville en santé, Gatineau will set up an official monitoring committee chaired by a municipal elected official and comprising different partners and municipal units. As an ambassador of an inclusive city, the committee will ensure consultation with partners and the identification of the essential conditions for achieving an inclusive city.

Financial considerations

Given that the action plan is part of a process of sustainable development and involves investments that will enable building and municipal units to meet the criteria of universal accessibility, Gatineau will have to set up a specific budget for universal accessibility. This budget will be used to turn into reality the three-year action plan for the integration of people with disabilities and reduced mobility, and to support and ensure Gatineau's participation in local initiatives.

Promoting an inclusive city

Well beyond the money and the financial resources committed to carrying out the action plan, Gatineau will have to validate and promote the inclusion and integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, as well as all of the individuals in its community.

Conclusion

By working along eight intervention axes over the next three years, Gatineau will proudly be taking these first steps towards the integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility. However, it is aware that some of the axes will require action in the near future. This applies to everything connected to financial accessibility, which could be addressed in an upcoming social development plan.

By using this framework and action plan to integrate people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, Gatineau is acquiring an important asset in becoming an inclusive city, in which everyone's openness and involvement in the inclusion and integration of people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility are paramount. There is no doubt but that the combination of these three factors will soon lead us to universal accessibility.