

ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED MOBILITY Executive Summary

Limited mobility (or the inability to safely walk more than 15 meters or stand unsupported for more than 1-2 minutes) is an overlooked disability, with many believing that it is simply their own personal problem. This project documented that (a) 13 percent of Canadians 15 and older struggle with limited mobility, which is significantly more than the one percent that use wheeled mobility devices; (b) federal accessibility standards have focused exclusively on accessibility for those using wheeled mobility devices; (c) societal messaging has reinforced negative attitudes towards those with limited mobility, designating them as not keeping physically fit; and (d) the key accessibility barriers for those with limited mobility with regards to the design and delivery of federal programs and services are *distance to be walked* in order to access federal programs and services and *time standing unsupported* to wait for or receive service.

The project also noted the significant community participation restriction that results from limited mobility, as well as the dependency created by needing others to help meet needs outside the home. In addition to the need for continual self-advocacy and the need to ingratiate oneself with others to ensure goodwill, those with limited mobility may struggle with self-esteem issues due to limitations on social engagement and a lack of serendipitous encounters.

As part of its work program, the project developed five tools and shared them with federal departments that have public-facing in-person services:

- *HMDA Audit Framework for Limited Mobility Accessibility*
- *Best Practices Regarding Limited Mobility Accessibility*
- *HMDA Framework for Limited Mobility Physical Accessibility Requirements*
- *Online Information Required* [for planning visits to the department]
- *Tips for Making Services Accessible to Those with Limited Mobility*

The project also requested specific changes by the CSA Group and Accessible Standards Canada to the following accessibility standards in order to remove distance to be walked and time standing unsupported as access barriers: CSA 480 (*Customer Service Standard for People with Disabilities*), ASC/CSA 651 (*Accessible Design for the Built Environment*), CSA B659 (*Inclusive Design for an Aging Population*).

Since the lack of attention to accommodating the access needs of those with limited mobility may be attributed in part to deficits in the disability data collected by Statistics Canada, the project provided Statistics Canada with a question to be included in surveys that would address the data gap. Unfortunately, Statistics Canada has declined to include the question in its survey. The training provided to federal employees on accessibility has also resulted in the access needs of those with limited mobility being overlooked and so the project made recommendations for improvement. Finally, the project provided 11 federally regulated entities (with in-person services) with recommendations to improve their mandated accessibility plans.