

Advocating for Those with Limited Mobility

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Abstract : Limited mobility (or an inability to walk more than 15 meters without sitting down to rest) restricts full community participation for 13 percent of Canadian adults or 4.2 million persons), yet Canadian accessibility standards are silent on distance to be walked as an accessibility barrier to be addressed. Instead, they focus on ensuring access for the wheeled mobility devices used regularly by le The Accessible Canada Act mandates that Canada be barrier free by 2040, which will necessitate eliminating distance to be walked as a barrier in federal programs and services. This paper details the results of a multi-year research project funded by Accessibility Standards Canada to document the lived experience of those struggling with limited mobility and make recommendations regarding how to ensure accessibility for those with limited mobility. Over 2,600 Canadians from across Canada participated in an online survey and follow-up focus groups. The results underscored the importance of providing not only mobility supports in public facilities but also the information necessary for planning access to federal programs and services. As numerous participants indicated, if they weren't sure how far they would have to walk, they simply stayed home and depended on friends and relatives for help with errands or appointments. This included failing to participate in civic activities, such as voting, for fear of having to walk too far and stand unsupported for too long. Types of information that were deemed critical included whether or not mobility aids were available, where seating to rest was located throughout the facility, what alternatives to standing while waiting for service and having to walk to the service provider (rather than the provider coming to the customer) were available, and diagrams of accessible parking and its relationship to elevators and services.

Keywords : accessibility standards, distance to be walked, limited mobility, mobility aids, service to customer

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