



Accessibility Guidelines

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

This outline is for general guidance only. When undertaking any building project, please ensure all current local, provincial, and federal requirements are observed.

Most provinces have adopted the *National Building Code of Canada* (National



Research Council, 1995), which is used as a model for almost all building regulations in Canada. The NBC details minimum accessibility requirements for new

buildings, including churches, and for major renovations to buildings.

While the definition of “major renovations” is not precise, most renovations need to include provisions for accessibility if there are structural or major floor layout changes, or if the alterations affect washrooms and one of the main entrances.

Check your local and provincial authorities for current guidelines and requirements for your jurisdiction. The following are some guidelines to keep in mind.

Site Development

- The ground should be graded so there are one or more ground-level entrances.
- Walks should be at least 48 inches (1.2 m) wide, with a grading no greater than 5 percent.

Parking

- Some parking spaces 12 feet (3.7 m) wide should be reserved and identified for use by people with handicaps.
- Such spaces should be placed as close as possible to an accessible entrance.

Ramps

- Ramps should have a gradient of 1 in 20 to a maximum of 1 in 12, with an unobstructed width of at least 3 feet (91 cm) and a non-skid surface.
- Ramps should have handrails on each side extending 1 foot (30 cm) beyond the top and bottom of the ramp.
- Landings at the top should be 5 feet (1.5 m) square, and at the bottom 6 feet (1.8 m) long and equal in width to the ramp.

Entrances

- At least one primary entrance should be usable by people in wheelchairs.

Doors

- Interior and exterior doorways should have a clear opening width of at least 32 inches (81 cm).
- All doors should be operable by a single effort.
- Revolving doors should be avoided.

Stairs

- Stairs should have a rise of no more than 7 inches (18 cm), with a non-skid finish and nosing of 1.5 inches (3.8 cm) maximum bevelled to tread.
- There should be continuous tubular handrails along both sides of a flight of stairs and at least one side of an intermediate landing.

Washrooms

- At least one toilet stall in the washrooms should be accessible to people in wheelchairs.
- A wheelchair-accessible stall has an entrance 34 inches (86 cm) wide, with a door opening out and an interior space of at least 54 inches (137 cm) wide and 60 inches (152 cm) deep.
- There should be grab bars on each side of the toilet.
- A wheelchair-accessible sink needs a clearance of 28 inches (71 cm) from the floor, and the pipes either insulated or covered by a protective housing.
- The faucet should be a nonspring-loaded single-control mixing faucet with a lever handle, or separate nonspring-loaded faucets with lever-type handles, or a time-flow pushbutton-type faucet requiring pressure no greater than 3 psi.

Elevators

- At least one elevator should be accessible to and usable by people with physical handicaps.
- Call buttons on every floor served should be mounted at a height 42–48 inches (107–123 cm) from the floor.

- Audio and visual signals on the exterior should indicate approaching elevator, and on the interior should indicate approaching floor.
- Mount interior controls at a minimum height of 35 inches (89 cm) and a maximum height of 54 inches (137 cm).

Wheelchair Accommodation in Auditorium

- The accessible seating area should be the greater of two spaces or 1 percent of occupant load.
- Spaces for wheelchairs should be level areas of at least 5 feet long and 5 feet wide (152 cm x 152 cm) to accommodate two wheelchairs, or 5 feet long and 30 inches wide (152 cm x 76 cm) for a single wheelchair.
- These spaces and seating should be an integral, not a segregated, part of the assembly area.

Acoustics

- The amplification system should be adequate for every part of the sanctuary.
- Also consider a hearing assistance system.

Worship Resources for Visually Impaired People

- Make large-print worship resources available to allow visually impaired people to participate in the service or share in the leadership.