

Accessibility Tips

- Not all disabilities are obvious. Not all people with disabilities use a wheelchair or cane. Some are "invisible". For instance, you may not know that a person is deaf or deafened until you try to talk to him/her.
- Not all disabilities are the same. Some people with a visual impairment have minimal night vision and prefer bright lighting while others are photo sensitive and prefer less lighting.
- People with disabilities do have a sense of humour and can usually handle some good-natured jokes, but to be on the safe side, wait until you have developed some sort of relationship.
- Don't be afraid to say "see" to a blind person or "hear" to a deaf person. These words are part of our language and the person is quite aware of their condition.
- In general, as you should do with anyone, treat people with disabilities with respect and then you can't go wrong.
- Speak directly to the person who has a disability. It is disrespectful to speak about a person in front of them.
- When you wish to help a person who has a disability, ask him/her if he/she needs assistance and then ask how you may help.
- Take time to listen to a person with a disability. Listening includes paying attention to facial expressions, gestures and body language.
- Language is powerful. Always put the person first – not the disability! i.e. "person who has a disability" rather than "disabled person".
- It is the law that business owners/snow removal contractors should keep accessible parking spaces free of snow. Make sure there are stand-up signs indicating the accessible parking spaces.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee now has an email address:
aac@newmarket.ca
There is also a direct link to this e-mail address on the Accessibility Advisory Committee page of the Town's web site.
- If you are purchasing/selecting items for a vision impaired/blind person, choose items of a quality you would select for yourself or your own family.
- Place a vision impaired/blind person's hand on the back of the chair to assist seating him/her.
- Be courteous and leave the handicap stall in public washrooms free for those who need to use it.

- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to do or say something.
- Do not push, lean on, or hold onto a person's wheelchair or other mobility aid unless the person asks you to. The wheelchair/mobility aid is part of his or her personal space.
- When talking with a person who is deaf or uses a hearing aid, talk directly to the person, keeping eye contact, even when a sign language interpreter is present.
- If a person lip-reads, face him or her directly, speak clearly and with a moderate pace.
- A person with a disability may be accompanied by their service animal, even in places where animals are not normally permitted. These places would include restaurants, hotels and stores.
- If holding a lengthy conversation with someone using a wheelchair, seat yourself on a chair, squat down or back away a few feet. This allows an even eye to eye contact.
- Not all parking lots are well designed. Keep an eye open for the curb cut and avoid blocking it with a car. It may be the only access on and off the sidewalk for someone using a mobility aid.
- A service animal (normally identified by a vest, collar, etc.) is working and should not be spoken to or touched. Service animals are used by people who are deaf/hard of hearing as well as by people who are mobility impaired and those who are blind/vision impaired.
- If you or a loved one has a disability, ensure an emergency response plan is in place. For ideas and information regarding emergency preparedness check the government website www.ontario.ca/emo
- If you encounter a non-speaking person, ask them how they say 'yes' or 'no'. With this information you can then find out if they need assistance or not. Many non-speaking persons use an electronic or manual communication device. Ask if they want to access their communication device.
- When ringing up the total of several items being purchased by a person with a vision impairment (e.g. in a grocery store), please remember to inform this customer of the item, and number/amount, as well as the price of each item, to assist this person to ensure that the item being purchased is what he/she wants, and at the prices he/she expects to pay.
- Every business should have emergency procedures for customers with disabilities. Make sure you, as an employee, know what they are.
- When finished speaking with a person who has a visual disability, don't walk away without saying good-bye so that they know you are no longer there"

- Never slap a disabled person on the back or thigh as a goodwill gesture. This can cause the person to lose their balance, or trigger muscle spasms which can lead to the person falling out of their chair.
- If you have children, they will stare, it's their nature. Talk to the child about disabled people, and help them to understand why people use wheelchairs. This helps prevent fearful and negative attitudes towards disabled people. And last but not least, look beyond the chair, there is a person in front of you, not a disability !
- When first meeting a disabled person, offer to shake their hand even if they appear to have limited use of their arms. This action of personal contact breaks the psychological barrier of non acceptance, and creates a warmer environment for communication.
- If your children ask you about someone who has a disability, answer their questions honestly, and discreetly - to show respect for the specific individual. 'Avoiding' such questions could result in your children 'avoiding' persons with disabilities in future".