



# MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

## 2023 PROGRESS REPORT

*"Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at."*

– Stephen Hawking



PERIMETER



INSTITUTE FOR THEORETICAL PHYSICS

# ACCESSIBILITY WORK GROUP

Perimeter's Accessibility Working Group is made up of key Perimeter residents who provide their skills and expertise on a voluntary basis. The group endeavours to identify potential barriers to accessibility, develop additional resources for those with accessibility needs, and support internal programs.

**Angela Woods** (Chair), Manager, People and Culture Operations

**Amy Patterson**, Project Lead, Facilities Space Planning and Design

**Angela Hovdestad**, Program Manager, Training Programs

**Caroline Lima**, Resident PhD Student

**Dan Wohns**, Associate Director, Training Programs

**Dustin Lang**, Computational Scientist

**Dustin Windibank**, Associate Director, Software and Data Services

**Lee Smolin**, Faculty

**Sarah Gardiner**, Program Manager, Conferences and Scientific Events

**Shannon Henderson**, Coordinator, People and Culture

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the spirit of understanding and learning from what has come before, Perimeter respectfully acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. In particular, we acknowledge that the Institute is located on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

As settlers, we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years. We commit collectively to making the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.

## REPORT DETAILS

This report includes a summary of the progress made towards the five key areas identified in Perimeter's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to improve accessibility. The Accessibility Working Group, in partnership with Perimeter staff and researchers more broadly, continues to identify areas for improvement while working towards a shared goal to increase inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in our community.

# 2023 UPDATE:

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

*Over the next several years, Perimeter will develop and deliver accessibility training specific to programs, systems, and platforms used to conduct research and business within the Institute. Additional web accessibility training will be provided to teams and individual content managers who manage content on our websites. Internal and external experts will be consulted in the development of training materials.*

**2023** – Dr. Mahadeo Sukhai and Ms. Ainsley Latour delivered a day of learning about “Accessibility in Research and the Workplace” to Perimeter residents. Sessions were available on various topics, including: accessibility in teaching environments, accessibility in research environments, accessibility in recruitment, and building accessibility into the physical environment. Residents were invited to attend a colloquium with Dr. Sukhai and Ms. Latour and provided the opportunity to meet the experts and ask questions. Administrative staff, faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and other researchers attended multiple sessions throughout the day.

An internal resource, Accessibility Tips for Inclusive Interactions, debuted and is featured on Perimeter’s intranet, PION. Available to all Perimeter residents, the resource provides methods for making interactions with peers more accessible on various systems – including Zoom, PowerPoint, Google Docs, and Google Slides – and general information on hybrid meetings.

Part of the working group’s efforts have been focussed on dismantling common misconceptions and mistruths related to accessibility. A spotlight poster event aptly named “Myth Busters” was showcased in Perimeter’s atrium, a main space frequented by all. Working to dispel preconceived notions of what disability looks like, and persuade residents to reframe their understanding, the Myth Busters posters encouraged conversation. Resources on how to access support was provided in tandem.

## ACCOMMODATION

*Program managers and Visitor Services will direct all inquiries related to accommodation to the People and Culture team for consideration. A centralized process will ensure consistent quality of support and service across the Institute. People and Culture will work with the individual to determine appropriate accommodation.*

**2023** – The People and Culture and Training, Educational Outreach, and Scientific Programs teams partnered to improve the onboarding experience for incoming students, with an emphasis on providing ample opportunity for students to access supports and providing details on supports already accessible to them. The People and Culture team saw an increase in the number of requests for support that were both made and provided, improving the overall experience of students. Improvements and additional opportunities to access supports were made to the student application process as well. Applicants were encouraged to reach out to access supports throughout the application process.

## FACILITIES

*Perimeter's Facilities team will review the building and re-assess the overall physical accessibility in the coming year. Recommendations for improvement will be put forth to the senior leadership team for review.*

**2023** – A remodel of the reception desk was undertaken and completed. The counter height now meets universal accessibility standards. Adequate knee clearance is provided underneath desks and counters at transaction points to allow front approach for anyone using mobility devices. The coffee station, which is regularly frequented by PI residents and guests, was reworked, including widening the pathway and adding a new accessible sink.

Acoustic improvements were made to several large communal rooms which are used for meetings, lectures, and other gatherings. Carpeting and acoustic baffles were added to reduce noise.

The “Clearing Our Path” guidelines from the CNIB Access Labs initiative will be incorporated into future design planning as a resource for universal design. This initiative works with different levels of government to improve the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), as well as the Accessible Canada Act.

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

*Perimeter will meet or exceed industry standards for accessibility in future teacher guides and videos. Existing materials will be converted into fully accessible formats as needed, taking into account the accessibility needs of the person with a disability.*

**2023** – All new digital Educational Outreach resources were made AODA-compliant and accessible with a PDF reader with alt text included.

## NEXT STEPS

Perimeter recognizes the measures and practices individual departments have established to increase accessibility for all who interact with the Institute. The 2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has set ambitious goals to help the Institute continue to move forward, building on what we learn along the way. As we make progress towards our goals, we continue to assess opportunities for continued improvement and build in supports to promote inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in our community.



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