

# Clean Indoor Air Toronto

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Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee  
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To the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Council;

We are [Clean Indoor Air Toronto \(CIATO\)](#), a group of concerned Toronto residents who are dedicated to improving indoor air quality in our built environments. Many members of our group are parents/caregivers of children attending TDSB schools; other members have chronic health conditions that make them vulnerable to air pollution and infectious diseases. We believe that for the health and well-being of city residents, it is essential to prioritize high indoor air quality, providing clean, safe-to-breathe air. This includes at public events, which we believe play a key role in community building and making Toronto a liveable city.

CIATO urges the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee to consider indoor air quality (IAQ) as an accessibility issue, and therefore include it in the *Accessibility Handbook for Event Organizers*, which has been proposed in [Item DI14.7](#), Meeting 14, October 24, 2025.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it's that the air in our shared indoor spaces is not as clean as we think. Our built environments were not designed with clean, safe-to-breathe-indoor air in mind. COVID-19 and many other serious infectious diseases like measles, RSV, and tuberculosis, are primarily transmitted through the air, especially in poorly ventilated spaces or crowded conditions. At the same time, many Toronto buildings are not adapted to handle the challenges from climate change-related events like wildfire smoke and extreme heat.

The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the climate crisis, have also shown us that there are many sectors of our society that are vulnerable to the effects of air pollution and airborne infectious diseases: young children, seniors, people who are immunocompromised, people with asthma and other chronic respiratory conditions, people with chronic illnesses like diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and the list goes on.

**Clean, safe-to-breathe, indoor air is an accessibility issue.** Most members of our group, and many more in our network, have difficulty finding spaces with good indoor air quality (IAQ). Without information on the IAQ status in a given space, people who wish to protect themselves from air pollution and airborne diseases are reluctant to access a shared indoor space. Poor air quality and the lack of information regarding IAQ status of a given space are barriers to access to the city's events, services and facilities.

CIATO has spoken with Torontonians who avoid public events to minimize exposure to airborne infections that may exacerbate existing health conditions or trigger new ones. We also know of residents who skip summertime events due to concerns around potentially high indoor temperatures and/or exposure to wildfire smoke, which can trigger asthma attacks and other respiratory concerns. These are individuals who would like to enjoy many of Toronto's public events; however, to keep themselves and their loved ones safe, they choose to stay home.

**Access to clean indoor air is also an equity issue.** Poor indoor air quality is associated with higher rates of disease and poor health. Buildings lacking mechanical ventilation and air conditioning often have poor air quality and these buildings are more likely to be found in lower income communities. Thanks to decades of neglect and chronic underfunding, many of Toronto's public schools, where city-run events are held, are in a state of disrepair, which means poor air quality is commonly found in schools. All of these factors add to the burden of poor health in the city, especially in communities that can least afford it. The City of Toronto has [an indoor air quality policy for its offices](#), thus protecting its office employees, but this policy does not extend to all of Toronto's buildings, creating an inequitable access to clean air.

By including IAQ in the proposed handbook, the City of Toronto can take positive steps towards making events in this city inclusive and accessible to these individuals, with the bonus of protecting the health of attendees and event staff from the many negative impacts of poor indoor air quality.

These health impacts are well-documented and are being formally recognized by policy makers. In September 2025, expert organizations, academic and research institutions, scientists, engineers, and community advocates gathered at the UN General Assembly to sign a global [pledge](#) for healthy indoor air, and declared that ***clean indoor air is a fundamental human right for protecting health and safeguarding well-being***. Closer to home, Health Canada has [released new IAQ guidance](#) for improving the air we breathe. It notes, "Indoor air quality is considered an important environmental determinant of health. A healthy indoor environment is one that contributes to productivity and comfort of occupants and protects their health and well-being."

As with other cities around the world, Toronto faces the growing threats of air pollution related to climate change and human activity, combined with sustained circulation of airborne diseases. More and more residents are going to find themselves struggling with disabilities and health conditions due to poor air quality. The sooner the City of Toronto recognizes that poor air quality, as well as lack of information about IAQ status, forms an accessibility barrier, the sooner it can create new policies and tools, such as the proposed *Handbook*, to improve access to clean and safe air.

So what would CIATO like to see in the *Accessibility Handbook*? Clear, actionable, evidence-based information on protective measures against air pollution, extreme heat, and airborne diseases. This can include:

- Basic information on what indoor air quality (IAQ) is and why event organizers should care about it, including how good IAQ can reduce staff absences due to illness and potentially increase attendance;
- An IAQ policy for event organizers to follow, that includes:
  - Minimum ventilation, filtration, and equivalent clean air delivery rates dependent on room size and occupancy, based on the latest guidance from the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers for managing fine particulate (PM2.5) air pollution and infectious aerosols, and Health Canada's [Guidance for Indoor Air Quality Professionals](#); and an acceptable temperature range for the space.
  - Information on how event staff and building operators can quickly improve IAQ with readily available tools, such as opening windows and doors when outdoor air quality is good (with [a link to where](#) organizers can find the status of the city's outdoor air quality), keeping building fans running continuously when the space is occupied, and enough portable air purifiers to meet the minimum clean air delivery rate for the space;
  - A real-time IAQ monitoring system where IAQ data (CO<sub>2</sub> level, PM2.5 level, temperature, relative humidity, etc.) is posted outside the event venue and on an online public dashboard.

To make Toronto's events truly accessible and inclusive for all of the city's residents, the City of Toronto must consider measures to ensure the provision of clean, safe-to-breathe indoor air during these events. Given that clean air is fundamental for supporting health and well-being, IAQ needs to be considered in the City's plans and actions. Including IAQ in the proposed Accessibility Handbook would be a significant first step in this process.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic further. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any additional information.

Yours Sincerely,