



The Accessible Ontario Disability Act and The Bruce Trail Conservancy

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Overview

Ontario is the first province and one of the first jurisdictions in the world to enact specific legislation establishing a goal and time-frame for accessibility. It is also the first jurisdiction to legislate accessibility reporting and to establish standards so people with disabilities can participate more actively in their communities. This is how the government is making Ontario more accessible by 2025. The information provided in this document has been adapted from <http://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is a law that sets out a process for developing accessibility standards. Persons with disabilities and industry representatives work together with the government to develop the standards. Implementing and enforcing these standards will help us reach our goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Does this apply to me?

The Accessibility Ontario Disability Act (AODA) applies to all organizations (public, private and non-profit) that have one or more employees in Ontario.

Who needs to be trained?

- all employees and volunteers (paid and unpaid, full-time and part-time positions)
- anyone involved in developing any policies for your organization (including managers, senior leaders, directors, and owners)
- anyone who provides goods, services or facilities on your behalf (such as external contact centres or facilities management companies)

All BTC employees, office volunteers, board volunteers and hike leaders must be offered this training package. The BTC does not need to keep track of who has been trained.

This package is available to all volunteers on the BTC volunteer training resources webpage <http://brucetrail.org/pages/volunteer/training-resources>

Training

1. Customer Service Training

The AODA training standard requires training to staff and volunteers on providing customer service to people with disabilities. This includes hike leaders, SSPC members, board members, Head Office volunteers and staff.

2. Human Rights – Working Together: The Human Rights Code and the AODA

This e-learning video is for the public, private and not-for-profit sectors and completes the training requirements for section 7 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards of the AODA. The video has been divided into 5 parts, and takes about 20 minutes to view. Please review all the videos to complete the training.

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/learning/working-together-code-and-aoda>

3. All Other Training Requirements – Training for an accessible Ontario

- a. Information and Communications Standard
- b. Employment Standard Training
- c. Transportation Standard Training
- d. Design of Public Spaces Standard Training

Please review all the videos to complete the training.

<http://www.accessforward.ca/>

Hike Leaders - Please note the following statement -

This statement should be used, if necessary, to let people know what to expect when hiking the Bruce Trail:

While there are a few portions of the Bruce Trail within Conservation Areas that are wheelchair accessible, use of the majority of the Trail is suitable for foot traffic only. To participate in an organized hike, you need to be able to complete the specified length of the hike on your own or with your own support person within the time allowed. Please refer to the hiking schedule for hike details.

This statement can also be added to your Club Newsletter hike listings.

Training tips

Here are a few tips for interacting with people who have various disabilities.

People with physical disabilities

Only some people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair. Someone with a spinal cord injury may use crutches while someone with severe arthritis or a heart condition may have difficulty walking longer distances.

Tips:

- if you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level
- don't touch items or equipment (e.g., canes, wheelchairs) without permission
- if you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors

People with vision loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.

Tips:

- when you know someone has vision loss, don't assume the individual can't see you; many people who have low vision still have some sight
- identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the customer
- ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (e.g., a menu or schedule of fees)
- when providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive
- offer your elbow to guide them if needed

People with hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may be deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. They may also be oral deaf – unable to hear, but prefer to talk instead of using sign language. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

Tips:

- once a customer has identified themselves as having hearing loss, make sure you are in a well-lit area where they can see your face and read your lips
- as needed, attract the customer's attention before speaking; try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand
- if your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area
- if necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (e.g., using a pen and paper)

People who are deafblind

A person who is deafblind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss. Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication.

Tips:

- a customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note
- speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor

People with speech or language impairments

Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or may cause slurring. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

Tips:

- don't assume that a person with a speech impairment also has another disability
- whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or a "no"
- be patient; don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences

People who have learning disabilities

The term "learning disabilities" refers to a variety of disorders. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

Tips:

- be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond
- try to provide information in a way that takes into account the customer's disability; for example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math

People who have intellectual/developmental disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

Tips:

- don't make assumptions about what a person can do
- use plain language
- provide one piece of information at a time

People who have mental health disabilities

Mental health issues can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. For example, some customers may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias or panic disorder.

Tips:

- if you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability be sure to treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- be confident, calm and reassuring
- if a customer appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help

People who use assistive devices

An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help them with daily living (e.g., a wheelchair, screen reader, hearing aid, cane or walker, an oxygen tank).

Tips:

- don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission
- don't move assistive devices or equipment (e.g., canes, walkers) out of your customer's reach
- let your customers know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms)

People who use service animals

There are various types of service animals who support people with various types of disabilities. People with vision loss may use a guide dog. Hearing alert animals help people who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure.

The law requires you to allow service animals on the parts of your premises that are open to the public. In cases where the law prohibits them (e.g.: a service animal would not be allowed in the kitchen of a cooking school), provide another way for the person to access your goods and services.

Tips:

- avoid touching or addressing a service animal (it is not a pet, it is a working animal)
- if you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer

People with a support person

A support person, such as an intervenor, may accompany some people with disabilities. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help your customer with a variety of things, such as communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs.

Welcome support people to your workplace or business. They are permitted in any part of your premises that is open to the public.

Tips:

- if you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods or services, or simply ask
- speak directly to your customer, not to their support person

Relevant AODA Policies

AODA.01.01 Statement of Commitment Policy

Policy

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The BTC believes in integration and equal opportunity. It is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by meeting accessibility requirements and preventing and removing barriers to accessibility, as required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Procedure

1. This policy will be posted on the AODA section of the BTC website.
2. There will be no changes made to any BTC policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Any policy of the BTC that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

AODA.02.01 Customer Service for People with Disabilities Policy

Intent

This policy outlines the customer service that the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) provides to people with disabilities and our commitment to train staff and volunteers on this, as per the requirements of Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Policy

The practices on how the BTC will provide goods or services to people with disabilities will be consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Procedure

1. The BTC will ensure the following areas are accessible to all people.
 - Communication – The BTC will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. The BTC will train staff who communicate with members of the public on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
 - Telephone services – The BTC will provide a fully accessible telephone service. The BTC will train staff and volunteers to communicate over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.
 - Billing – The BTC will provide accessible invoices to all of our customers. For this reason, invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request: large print, hard copy, electronically.

2. Use of service animals and support persons – The BTC is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal in the Head Office. The BTC will provide training to all staff and volunteers who deal with the public on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.
3. Training for staff and volunteers – The BTC will provide training to all BTC staff and Head Office volunteers and other volunteers who deal with the public, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies and procedures. This training will take place within the first 3 months after staff/ volunteers commence their duties. Training will be provided in an online format. Training will include:
 - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
 - How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
 - How to interact with people with disabilities who use a service animal
 - How to use the TTY – if appropriate
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the BTC’s goods and services
 - The BTC’s policies and procedures relating to the customer service standard
4. Feedback process – Feedback can be provided to the BTC via email, phone or mail.
 - Email: contact info@brucetrail.org, subject line AODA,
 - Phone: call 1 800 665 4453,
 - Mail: write to PO Box 857, Hamilton ON L8N 3N9 attn: AODA.The BTC will respond to you within 5 business days.