



THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES

AND THE ACCESSABILITIES FOR ONTARIANS WITH

DISABILITIES ACT , 2005

The OAAS is well aware of the AODA but many Societies may have become lax with its implementation, not purposefully, but perhaps as an oversight. As a result, these Societies may be looking to the OAAS for some guidance in this respect. We will therefore attempt to simplify an understanding of the act so that all Societies can comply.

It is important to understand the sections of the law related to Accessibility. These are the important points of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

10.1 Sections of Law Related to Accessibility

2. “[...] all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated.....without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on a prohibited ground”

3.(1) For all purposes of this Act, the prohibited grounds of discrimination are race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which a pardon has been granted

5. It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of goods, services, facilities or accommodation customarily available to the general public.

(a) To deny, or to deny access to, any such good, service, facility or accommodation to any individual, or

(b) To differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination

7. It is a discriminatory practice, directly or indirectly,

(a) To refuse to employ or continue to employ any individual, or

(b) In the course of employment, to differentiate adversely in relation to an employee, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

This law makes it a crime to refuse or discriminate against those who may fit the above criteria. As a result of these sections of the law, each Society must resolve to accommodate those individuals covered under the aforementioned sections.

A visit to your fair must be an enjoyable experience for all who wish to attend. Those with physical or mental disabilities should enjoy the same experience as those individuals who do

not suffer from said disabilities. It should be your purpose to send everyone home feeling happy and fulfilled by the experience that you have provided.

Let us now examine some of the things that need to be addressed in order to come into accordance with this Act and the Human Rights Law.

1. Are your buildings with exhibits accessible to all, including those with walkers and wheelchairs?
2. Do the workers at your gates understand how to properly greet all who wish to visit your exhibition?
3. Do your directors and volunteers have a sufficient understanding of the Act so as to be able to react accordingly when dealing with a disabled person?
4. Are all who wish to volunteer or to work for pay during your fair treated equally whether they have or do not have any disabilities?

Let us now look at specific examples of situations which could be addressed at your individual fairs.

Assisting a Visitor with Restricted Mobility

To assist a visitor who has a physical or mobility disability

- Do not direct, touch or move a visitor using a wheelchair, walker, cane or other assistive device, without first asking permission.
- Remember to be patient and courteous as it may take this visitor more time to walk or wheel into your event. Ask how you can be of assistance.
- If the visitor uses a wheelchair or a scooter, consider sitting or kneeling at the same level so that you can make eye contact.

Assisting a Visitor who has Visual Impairment or is Blind

To assist a visitor who has visual impairment or is blind

- Speak directly to the visitor and always identify who you are and what your role is
- *A visitor with a white cane:* Although a visitor with this condition would probably be accompanied with a guide or guide dog, always speak directly to the visitor and ask if he or she would like a guide to visit the exhibits. Offer your arm, if necessary, above the elbow.
- *A visitor with a guide dog:* Walk with the visitor and guide dog; direct the visitor to the event they are seeking using vocal direction, including identifying physical barriers. Clearly indicate any physical barriers, for example, "There are display tables to your left", or "There is a row of seats directly in front of you."

- **NOTE:** Do not pet, feed or interact with the service animal; it is working and should not be distracted.
- *A visitor with low vision:* In narrow passages or crowded facilities, clearly describe obstacles and when and if assisting, move your guiding arm behind you to ensure that you are walking in single file and that the visitor you are assisting is able to follow an unobstructed path.
- Consider overhead and protruding obstacles when providing verbal directions.

Assisting an Visitor Volunteer or worker who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

It is advisable to encourage in your ads and event books for visitors who are Deaf to arrange for an American Sign Language interpreter. When communicating through an interpreter, maintain eye contact with the visitor.

To assist a visitor who is Deaf or hard of hearing:

- Always speak slowly and clearly, as visitors who are Deaf or hard of hearing may utilize speech reading or lip reading to aid them in understanding your directions.
- While communicating, face the visitor and always maintain eye contact. Make sure you are in a well-lit area with light on your face, not behind you. Rephrase questions instead of repeating.
- If other methods are not available, use a paper and pencil to communicate.
- Some visitors may use adaptive technology such as a "Pocket Talk". This device is normally used by persons who are hard of hearing, and requires the use of a microphone. When communicating with the visitor, speak directly into the microphone.

Assisting a Visitor, Volunteer or Worker who has a Mental Health Disability

To assist a visitor or worker/volunteer who has a mental disability:

- Be patient. These people may require more time to understand and respond.
- Treat this person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- If this person appears to be in crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.

Assisting a Worker or Volunteer who has a Learning Disability

To assist a worker or volunteer who has a learning disability:

- Be patient. These people may require more time to understand and respond.
- Try to offer a few methods of communication. Some workers/volunteers may have difficulty reading and may prefer instructions and information to be read aloud. Others that have difficulty with numbers and math may need alternative work.
- Workers/volunteers with learning disabilities generally have average to above-average intelligence, they simply process information in a different way.

Assisting a Visitor, Worker or Volunteer who has a Developmental Disability

To assist a visitor, worker or volunteer who has a developmental disability:

- Do not make assumptions about what that person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.

Assisting a Visitor who Speaks Another Language

To assist a visitor who speaks another language and did not bring a friend or interpreter:

- Be patient, make eye contact and be aware of your body language.
- Determine if anyone else at your fair can speak the same language and can assist you to help the visitor in finding events that may interest him or her. If no one else is present to assist, direct the visitor to the events they may be interested in by using your fair book as a guide. They may be able to read or recognize some English words.

Thus far in this document, we have only addressed the treatment of the disabled. The Accessibility Act has more, far reaching effects on each Agricultural Society in the conditions of their grounds, buildings etc. during their events.

The following is a checklist to which the answers could be yes or no when overseeing your buildings and grounds:

ENTRANCES:

Entrances are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters.

Canopies or other sheltering devices have adequate headroom.

Is there an accessible door that opens automatically, has power assisted door operators or can be easily opened with one hand?

Mats are level with the floor and door thresholds are beveled so they do not create a tripping hazard.

People can easily find information, a reception counter, and accessible call bell or information phone for persons requiring assistance.

EXTERIORS

Accessible pedestrian route(s) or path(s) are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices.

Curb cuts or ramps are wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters, have a non-slip finish and are kept clear of debris.

Routes are not obstructed by poles, plants, bike racks, etc.

Accessible entrances are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.

Building and route signage is provided in large, high contrast lettering.

Accessible passenger loading zones accommodate taxis, buses or accessible vehicles.

On exterior steps, forward edges are highly colour contrasted for easy visibility.

On both sides of ramps or exterior stairs, continuous handrails are a bright, contrasting colour and have horizontal or vertical rails to prevent people from slipping through.

FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY

A fire policy and fire safety plan are in place for the evacuation of people with disabilities.

Main exit routes and exit doors are easily accessed and used by people using mobility aids.

Exit instructions are printed in large text and mounted in an accessible, highly visible location.

Fire alarms have both visual and audible signals.

GENERAL LAYOUT AND SERVICES

Queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids including electric wheelchairs and scooters.

Cashier desks, service counters or counter/tables in eating areas are accessible to and useable by patrons using wheelchairs or scooters.

Public telephones or display shelves are accessible to and useable by patrons with various disabilities e.g. wheelchair users, persons with low vision or hearing loss.

Appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with vision disabilities may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage.

INTERIORS

Floor finishes have non-slip surfaces under wet and dry conditions.

Open-concept, accessible routes are marked by bright colour or textural changes at floor level, to provide directional cues for people with vision disabilities.

There are no protruding objects or tripping hazards in accessible routes and if so, they are clearly marked with a bright colour, a cane detectable floor finish, or a guard.

Where floors are carpeted, the carpet is of firm, dense construction and easy for a wheelchair user to roll over without difficulty.

Thresholds are beveled to accommodate different floor materials.

PARKING AREAS

Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.

There is a safe, clearly marked accessible pedestrian route from the designated parking area to an accessible building or gate entrance.

An accessible underground parking area, a call bell or two-way communication system is located near parking spaces reserved for persons who may require assistance i.e. C.N.E.

Accessible pedestrian route is made of firm, level material.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

An accessible stall is provided for each sex when integrated into regular washrooms or an accessible stand-alone unisex washroom is located nearby.

The following washroom features are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities:

- Grab bars
- coat hooks
- flush controls
- wash basins
- toilet paper dispensers
- call buttons for emergencies
- mounted automatic hand-dryers or paper towel holders
- lever-handled faucets or automatic faucet

SIGNAGE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Necessary places show the International Symbol of Accessibility.

Display universal hearing disability symbols where equipment is available e.g. TTY

Include Braille information.

Include appropriate pictograms wherever possible (e.g. on washroom doors).

Include large, high contrast text, clear, light-coloured lettering or symbols on a dark background or dark characters on a light background.

Displays are mounted at a convenient height for both wheelchair users and people with vision disabilities.

WALL FINISHES

Walls in busy areas, corridors, ramps or staircases are finished in smooth, non-glassy, non-abrasive finishes.

Colour of doors or door frames in hallways contrast with surrounding wall colours.

Fire exit doors are consistently coloured throughout the building, so that they are easily distinguishable from other doors.

Fire hose cabinets and fire extinguishers are in a highly contrasting colour.

Wall mirrors are limited in size to prevent visual confusion.

Mirrors that cover a wall (e.g. as in a washroom) are clearly marked for people with low vision.

These are just some of the areas that must be addressed by each Agricultural Society prior to their fair or exhibition. Note that there are fines for non-compliance so it is suggested that each society visit the web-site at:

www.aoda.ca This web-site will give the parameters for implementation of each section of the Act.

Each Society must provide training to employees, volunteers and others who will deal with the public or other third parties on its behalf.

Training will include:

- An overview of the accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- Each Societies plan related to 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 an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use supportive devices e.g. TTY, wheelchair ramps etc.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing your Societies goods and services.
- Staff will also be trained when changes are made to your accessible service plan

The OAAS has attempted to provide each Society with pertinent information as to what will be needed to hold a successful and eventful fair or exhibition for those who have disabilities in your community. Please communicate this information to all in your Society who will have contact with the public during your event.

