

Accessibility Plan

2013-2015



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City of St. Catharines 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan

Message from the Co-chairpersons Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA)

As we bring this 10th Accessibility Plan forward we find ourselves looking back on the positive steps taken toward improved accessibility. We have come a long way in learning and continue growing with new experiences. We look back on our accomplishments with great pride. It is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts and successful progress that the City has made toward removing existing barriers.

As part of our long-term accessibility planning, the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA) provides expertise and perspectives from a global accessibility viewpoint. We thank the members of MACOA and the staff representatives from each department for their continued dedication and support of accessibility initiatives. MACOA members will continue to advise the City on municipal issues relating to access for people with a disability.

A key to developing an understanding of accessibility begins with good customer service and accessible facilities. The City has provided training to its staff and volunteers and recognizes accessibility through its procurement policy and services from its third parties. It is through continued accessible customer service awareness that greater support of Provincial access requirements will be understood and achieved. Simple daily responsibilities, such as always ensuring auto-open door switches are on equate directly to the level of customer service that a person with a disability might experience.

We are proud of the efforts made by the City to accessibility training of staff and of the outreach to the private sector on the need to include accessibility, such as the construction contractor training provided in 2012, in promoting FADS as a best practice guideline to site plan developers, and providing information and in promoting awareness of the AODA from the Province.

Our ongoing goal is to create a more inclusive community. We look forward to continued advances in access during the coming years that will help the City remain progressive and achieve ever increasing levels of accessibility.

Shelley Stewart and Diane Foster, MACOA co-chairpersons

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Introduction

Purpose, Benefits and Objectives

Like other municipalities throughout Ontario, the City of St. Catharines has prepared this Accessibility Plan (10th edition) to address the issues and barriers preventing persons with disabilities from participating fully in the life of the community. Ultimately, the Accessibility Plan is intended to identify, remove and prevent barriers that may impede residents and visitors from accessing and using a municipal service. This provides a comprehensive framework for long-term strategic and financial planning. Accessibility planning has become integrated with the normal operating practices of the City of St. Catharines.

Communities are changing throughout the Province of Ontario as the population ages. It is estimated that approximately 20% of Ontarians are likely to have a disability by the year 2025. A mandate set out by the Province to remove barriers by 2025, through the ODA and AODA, will require communities to become more accessible to an aging population, persons with disabilities, everyone.

As highlighted under the Provincial mandate, as well as under the 2013-2015 Accessibility Planning strategy, the annual accessibility plan will be replaced by longer term plans in order to clearly map the City's accessibility objectives. Therefore annual plans will be replaced by longer-term plans and measured by annual progress updates.

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About our Accessibility Advisory Committee

The concept of accessibility planning is not new to the City of St. Catharines. In 1998, Council recognized the importance of removing barriers to persons with disabilities and formed the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (**MACOA**). The role of this committee is to advise Council on issues related to accessibility and make recommendations aimed at maximizing the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the City of St. Catharines. The past and present membership on MACOA has generously offered their time and expertise to guide the City in its goal to become more accessible. The range of disability experiences whether it be lived and/or relate to education and career support the removal and prevention of barriers proactively and tirelessly. The constant support and advice from the members of MACOA are duly recognized as indispensable by the City.

The terms of reference and objectives for the committee, established and endorsed by Council, are similar to the requirements outlined in the AODA and ODA. These objectives include the following Duties / Functions:

1. To create an accessibility plan, which quantifies needs and establishes priorities and achievable objectives related to persons with disabilities;
2. To make recommendations with respect to improving accessibility at all municipally-owned/leased buildings and areas of municipal responsibility;
3. To explore the possible economic benefits of promoting the City of St. Catharines as being accessible;
4. To increase awareness of accessibility needs;
5. To liaise with other communities to create opportunities for improved accessibility;
6. To encourage and maximize volunteer participation;
7. To promote continued, well-planned, cost-efficient improvements related to accessibility;

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8. To identify sources of funding;
9. To consult with experts and the community who volunteer their expertise regarding various disabilities;
10. To make recommendations with regard to relevant by-laws / policies;
11. To promote the City of St. Catharines barrier removal endeavours and successes;
12. To review and make recommendations to pertinent site plans;
13. To advocate with all sectors of the community to create barrier free environments.

Since its inception, MACOA has been instrumental in advocating for the removal of barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities within the City's facilities and services. MACOA has made numerous recommendations to Council and many of these recommendations have been implemented over the past several years. MACOA has also been a key accessibility resource for staff.

Although it is recognized that barriers still remain, the action taken by the City of St. Catharines and MACOA since 1998 should be recognized and applauded. The obligations imposed by the Province of Ontario through the AODA and ODA have strengthened the commitment by the City of St. Catharines to accessibility planning and the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities. It is important to note that accessibility planning and the measures used to address and remove barriers should be viewed as a benefit to all users. Wider doorways, automatic doors, curb cuts and ramps not only benefit persons with a disability but also benefit the general public. The use of universally recognized symbols and larger text on signs are designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities which also provides more accessible information for all users. Better procedures and practices that are designed to benefit people with various disabilities are a benefit for everyone and are an integral part of creating a strong, caring and safe community that foster a sense of belonging for all residents.

Development of an Accessibility Plan

Overview

Through accessibility planning and with the advice of MACOA, the City of St. Catharines is committed to the strategic identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities. The objective is to proactively support the AODA and ODA mandates and meet the associated obligations.

It is recognized that each accessibility plan must reflect a balance of stakeholder priorities with the ability to achieve incremental change within set priorities and budgeted resources. While it is important to identify, remove and prevent as many barriers as possible within the shortest time frame, establishing prioritized work programs will be productive to the overall process of accessibility planning. Everyone involved with accessibility planning recognizes that, beyond the core principles and policy framework that define the plan, the plan is fluid and will change over time as further barriers are identified, removed and priorities reassessed.

Based on the advice of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility, a 3-year plan was suggested for this first long term plan in order to ensure that the objectives, budgets and associated organization are successful before considering a 5-year plan. This timing strategy also better aligns with the Province's ultimate objective of an accessible Ontario by the year 2025. Therefore it is suggested that after this inclusive 3-year plan, that future Accessibility Plans be for 5 years and be inclusive from 2016-2020 and 2021-2025.

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Council Commitment

The City of St. Catharines Council, through the establishment of MACOA as well as through policy statements contained within the Sustainability Strategy and the Official Plan, has established a history of supporting initiatives related to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities. At its meeting of October 25, 1999, Council affirmed its commitment to accessibility planning by adopting the following policy:

“In that the City of St. Catharines values the full participation and contribution of its citizens in the life of the community, the City of St. Catharines commits itself to remove the barriers to full participation through ongoing research, initiatives and methods which result in:

- *the identification of barriers;*
- *the provision of safe access and egress to City property through appropriate retrofitting and upgrading and advance planning for the future;*
- *awareness and education programs for City staff and Councillors;*
- *the encouragement of sponsored (City grants, etc.) and related institutions (Library, Transit, Region, Provincial and Federal, etc.) and licensed enterprises (i.e., private businesses) to support the policy;*
- *consultation with those citizens experiencing barriers and/or their representatives;*
- *the annual evaluation of the progress of City departments in meeting the goals of this policy through the office of the Chief Administrative Officer; and*
- *the identification of planned and actual expenditures to correct the identified deficiencies.*

A new Council was inaugurated in December 2010. Council’s commitment continues to be pivotal in creating a truly inclusive and accessible City through the improvement of access to all premises, programs and services for all residents and visitors, including those with disabilities.

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Partnerships

The City of St. Catharines has taken the lead role in partnership with its boards and commissions and as such, the St. Catharines Public Library and Transit Commission's accessibility planning will fall under this Accessibility Plan and form part of the City of St. Catharines comprehensive plan in addressing accessibility. The Transit Commission has documented its accessibility undertakings in detail which is contained under Appendix B. The Library has been incorporated into the broader measures listed of this Plan.

Accessibility Plan participants consist of the;

- Corporation of the City of St. Catharines
- St. Catharines Library Board
- St. Catharines Transit Commission

Roles and Responsibilities

As previously outlined, this plan is a joint collaboration between the City of St. Catharines and both the St. Catharines Public Library and Transit Commission. Each participant is responsible on an annual basis for the preparation, review and submission of the accessibility plan or its status updates as it relates to their respective operation. MACOA will act in an advisory capacity and will review, revise and endorse a consolidated Accessibility Plan prior to seeking Council approval.

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Provincial Mandate

Broader public sector organizations are required to continue to prepare and make public accessibility plans as their obligation under the Province's *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* which remains in force until such time that the ODA is repealed.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* applies to every person or organization in the public and private sectors in the Province of Ontario. The purpose of the AODA is to benefit all Ontarians by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by the year 2025.

Both visible and invisible disabilities are referred to in the Ontario Human Rights Code and in the AODA. Disabilities include physical, visual, hearing, cognitive, learning, mental health, intellectual and temporary disabilities.

In 2009/2010 the Province undertook a statutory and independent review of the AODA resulting in a report titled "Charting a Path Forward". Further to its review of the Standards and processes of the AODA, there was also a review the role of Accessibility Advisory Committees (AAC's) along with the ODA which mandates the public sector to prepare an accessibility plan.

Among its many findings were recommendations to streamline and harmonize the various standards under one consolidated standard, to continue the pivotal role of municipal AAC's, and to create a repeal strategy for the ODA. Annual reporting will be replaced by longer term accessibility plans, as identified under the recent Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation and be in more direct relationship with the AODA.

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2012 Accessibility Accomplishments

The City of St. Catharines has been actively practicing accessibility planning for a number of years achieving continued results in 2012;

- Removing physical and architectural barriers at various City locations
- Creating policies, practices and procedures to provide better accessible service including; the City's Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation Policy and report approved by Council on December 17, 2012
- Ongoing training of staff in various access related contexts including; training sessions in June 2012 for remaining staff who use computers and/or create documents on creating accessible documents, information and communication (further to comprehensive training of key staff in December 2011 at Brock University's computer labs)
- Emergency evacuation planning opportunities are offered to staff with a disability and facility safety plans are publicly available in accessible formats whenever requested
- Training in autism awareness provided for RCS lifeguards by Autism Spectrum Disorders consultants, School Support Program, McMaster Children's Hospital
- Training outreach on accessibility awareness to construction contractors in partnership between City engineering and accessibility, along with Niagara Region counterparts
- Designing of a more accessible curb ramp and sidewalk transition by City engineering to become part of future contract requirements
- Design, build and endorsement of the City's first on-street accessible parking space, at 53 Church Street across from City Hall, as the template for future on-street parking
- Endorsement of the Niagara Region's 'age-friendly' initiative to Council by both accessibility and seniors committees
- Preparedness and promotion of an accessibility accommodation statement onto all employment information, webpage and job postings

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- Orientation of new staff includes a comprehensive accessibility package and review of all accessibility related training to-date
- Orientation of students, crossing guards, etc., with an annual accessibility training
- Researching a technology solution for on-line and accessible forms
- Creating an in-house template for all future computer set-up that defaults to a minimum best practice standard of Arial 12 in Word, email and Adobe
- Incorporating accessibility initiatives into recreational programming; including therapeutic classes in the leisure pool at the new Kiwanis Aquatics Centre and Library (e.g. Angel Fish)
- Purchasing low-floor accessible buses, installing audible/visual stop announcements
- Accessible buses on all conventional bus routes
- Selection of library books available in alternative formats such as large print and audio compact disc
- Accessible features at the new Grantham Library (relocated to the Kiwanis Aquatics Centre and Library), this brand new facility has many accessible features including computer desks that raise/lower to individual preferences
- Continued installation of visual/audible fire alarms and evacuation chairs for people with a disability at various facilities
- Ongoing referral to FADS by staff in day-to-day renovations and system improvements
- Improvements to Lock 3 Museum for various accessible renovations 2012/13 including; wider and auto-open doors throughout, washroom access improvements, replacement of stairway materials leading to the viewing platform for enhanced visual contrast, an audible elevator announcer, and a self-guided tour system that allows people with a vision disability to enjoy details about displays
- Commenting on the accessibility of site plan designs by MACOA
- Advising on accessibility components of plans for municipal facilities throughout the design stages by MACOA including; Kiwanis Aquatics

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Centre and Library, Fire Station 4, future Performing Arts Centre and Spectator facility, Montebello Park slope improvement, Happy Rolph's Petting Farm renovation, Martindale Pond pedestrian bridge construction, accessible bleachers at Kiwanis artificial turf field, new parking lot at Dunlop Seniors Centre, etc.

- Opening of the Kiwanis Aquatics Centre and Library, July 2012
 - Recognize and add more accessible parking spaces Oct. 2012
- Improvements of lighting within City Hall to brighter and greener lighting solutions
- Renovations of Council Chambers in the summer of 2012 included; new contrasting carpet with contrast step-nosing, independently adjustable podium (raise/lower), new microphone/sound system retains existing listening assistive devices, improved screen and AV presentation capabilities, removed one full bench at front of the gallery to better accommodate people who use mobility devices
- Supporting a more informative, more accessible website that offers Browse Aloud speech-to-text technology free to users
- Undertaking of park audits by MACOA for reference by RCS staff in future park improvements

All are examples of how the City, along with its Boards and Commissions, has addressed accessibility planning in the past.

Some of the initiatives identified in the 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan have been carried over from the previous year mainly due to the ongoing nature of these initiatives, such as staff awareness and training. Ongoing is the term given to initiatives that are addressed on a continuous basis.

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Strategy

The 2013-2015 Accessibility Planning document more directly aligns with the AODA Standards, both enacted and pending. This will more clearly delineate the legislative requirements and timeframes. The City's annual facility budget for access related improvements is approximately \$250,000. Departmental initiatives within the 3-year timeframe of 2013-2015 are detailed in the coming pages and include the Library. Transit details are in Appendix B.

Framework

The City of St. Catharines recognizes that more can be achieved to ensure that persons with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities to participate in the life of the community. Ontario municipalities are taking an active role in the shifting culture to greater access. The City of St. Catharines continues to learn how to apply a lens of inclusion to its services and programs, just as it applies the Facility Accessibility Design Standard (FADS) to its own facility renovations and construction designs.

This Accessibility Plan should be viewed as attaining many accomplishments and continuing to address longer-term goals into subsequent years. Through the continued learning process of accessibility planning, a strong protocol of communication has been developed between staff and MACOA. Staff are more aware of disabilities and barrier identification. Significant outreach has been undertaken in the area of accessibility training. The City of St. Catharines is continually becoming better equipped to recognize and accommodate accessibility issues and, most importantly, understand the impacts (i.e. staff time, funding, training, expertise) associated with the identification, removal and prevention of

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barriers to persons with disabilities. Departmental staff representatives provided input to MACOA regarding information and updates related to last year's successes and future long-term accessibility planning. MACOA members would like to recognize and thank those staff representatives for their participation in this process and the continued liaison provided throughout the year.

Ultimately core objectives that are both measurable and achievable are becoming clearer;

- Improvements (e.g., parks, facilities, services)
- Staff training (awareness, orientation, responsibilities)
- Council awareness (budgets, connective sidewalks, inclusive community)
- Stakeholder input (public and MACOA)
- Communication (City and MACOA)
- Legislative (ODA, AODA and associated Standards)

As accessibility planning continues to gain greater priority, the identification, removal and prevention of barriers has become second nature and part of the daily routine throughout the municipality. Better planning and practices are good for everyone. Accessibility objectives are also conducive to walkable communities, including accessible and connective pedestrian routes, and complete streets. Corporate initiatives such as the Community Sustainability Strategy and guiding documents such as the Official Plan and Urban Design Guidelines continue to partner in support of an inclusive community.

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Provincial Standards in Accessibility Planning

In 2011, as part of the harmonization of the AODA Standards, the Province enacted Ontario Regulation 191/11 the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR). This integrated standard consolidates three previously pending standards into one. Further to its general requirements, the IASR includes Employment, Information & Communication, and Transportation requirements. Under the IASR, Accessibility Plans will be required to be long-term in nature and as such this 2012 Accessibility Plan was the last annual plan put forward and future plans will be 3-5 years in duration.

Upon its upcoming 2013 statutory review, the Accessible Customer Service Standard (O. Reg. 429/07) is anticipated to be rolled into the Integrated Standard. Additionally the pending Accessible Built Environment Standard is expected to have its technical elements rolled into an updated Ontario Building Code (OBC) with the remaining elements reflected into the IASR. In December 2012 the Province passed Ontario Regulation 413/12 under the AODA, for the Design of Public Spaces, thereby amending the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) with this additional content. The Design of Public Spaces amendment addresses the accessibility of exterior public spaces in areas such as; trails, beach access, picnic areas, play grounds, exterior paths of travel and stairs, ramps, curbs, pedestrian signals, accessible parking as well as interior or exterior service counters, queuing areas, waiting areas, etc. Additionally, the Ontario Building Code is undergoing a public consultation process (until March 1, 2013) that is looking to include accessibility for interior elements.

With the implementation of the Provincial AODA Standards into Regulation well underway, the 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan will incorporate the Standards into the accessibility planning format. This will allow for greater clarity and tracking capabilities as legislative obligations are introduced.

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Accessible Customer Service Standard;

The Province enacted the Accessible Customer Service Standard (ASC) under Ontario Regulation 429/07. Council approved the Accessible Customer Service (ACS) policy as part of the 2009 Accessibility Plan presentation. A renewed City focus on overall customer service will be undertaken in 2013 and will include accessibility.

Related practices, procedures and materials were developed subsequent to the policy. This includes the Procurement Policy that recognizes third party obligations.

All full-time staff, part-time staff and volunteers received comprehensive ACS training in the fall of 2009. ACS training & awareness is ongoing.

New staff receive comprehensive training as part of their orientation and volunteers receive the ACS information and materials through their trained supervisor. Detailed ACS training continues to be part of the orientation program for groups (e.g. students, crossing guards and election workers).

In 2011 the comprehensive ACS training packages were consolidated into 1 guide. This continues to be distributed as part of the on-going corporate ACS training and orientation.

Compliance Deadline:

January 1, 2010

Compliance Reporting:

Completed, prior to December 31, 2009

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Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation;

In July 2011 the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) was enacted as Ontario Regulation 191/11. The IASR consolidated several previously individual pending Standards for Employment, Information & Communication, and Transportation along with a number of general requirements.

In living up to its title the “integrated” standard is compiling elements within additional sections as Standards become enacted or amended. Most recently the IASR was amended to include a section for outdoor and public spaces in December 2012 under Ontario Regulation (O. Reg.) 413/12. These elements were formerly held within the draft Accessible Built Environment (ABE) Standard. This recently enacted requirement will be integrated into the City’s existing IASR policy shortly. This latest amendment recognizes the need to separate elements that do not come under the Ontario Building Code (OBC) such as outdoor and public spaces. Elements specific to the built environment that are within the parameters of the OBC are being addressed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They are currently seeking public feedback on the accessibility content being considered for inclusion in a revised OBC until March 1, 2013. The pending ABE is addressed in greater detail on subsequent pages.

See Appendix B for Transportation Standard objectives noted within the Transit Commission’s section of this Plan.

As noted in previous plans, the Province has indicated that it may consolidate the Accessible Customer Service Standard into the IASR upon its next review in 2013.

There are various deadlines for different requirements under all Sections of the IASR and various deadlines within each requirement based on sector

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(provincial, both large and small organizations of the broader public sector, both large and small organizations of the private sector).

Some requirements had to comply almost immediately. Elements such as emergency plans in accessible formats, creation of emergency plans for employees who requested when canvassed, as well as multiple requirements under Transportation including stop-call announcements, designated courtesy seating, storage assistance for mobility aids as appropriate (further details outlined in Appendix B, Transit) have met compliance deadlines.

Barriers are most commonly thought of as structurally related; steps vs. ramps. However there could also be barriers to information and communication if documents are created without basic concepts of what is needed to ensure compatibility of documents with various types of assistive technology.

The City of St. Catharines recognizes the importance of providing easily accessible information and communication sooner than later. As the foundation to this ongoing initiative, training of key staff was identified as a priority shortly after the IASR was enacted. Staff who create documents, generate computer information or post to the City's website received detailed hands-on computer training in creating accessible text documents or PDF's and using accessibility check applications in both Word and Adobe. This is to take place prior to new documents being posted to the City's website.

Although the compliance deadline for providing information and communication in accessible formats is not imminent, it is an identified priority by the City. A Provincial compliance date chart for the broader public sector with 50 or more employees under the IASR is included on a subsequent page.

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The City has been actively removing any barriers to employment and is an equal opportunity employer. The Human Resources Department within Corporate Support Services is clarifying a more comprehensive approach with respect to accommodation throughout the cycle of employment for people with a disability. It has been identified that a majority of requirements within the IASR Employment Standard are already undertaken by the City, however need to be adopted into clearer policy and practices.

Compliance Deadline:

Various; between July 2011 and January 2021

Compliance Reporting:

Annually; due December 31 starting in 2013

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Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation
 - compliance requirements

<p>Broader Public Org. 50+ employees</p>	<p>2011</p> <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical requirements (purchased after July 1, 2011) • Fares (equal fares for persons with/without disabilities) • Pre-boarding and On-board announcements (verbal) • School transportation - accessible service • Public sector organizations • Ferries • Non-functioning accessibility equipment • Origin to Destination services • Storage of mobility aids (no charge) • Duties of Municipalities (taxicab - equal fares and fees) 	<p>2012</p> <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency and public safety information <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit stops • Storage of mobility aids • Companions and Children • Duties of Municipalities (taxicab - registration ID and information) • Availability of information on accessibility equipment • General responsibilities • Emergency preparedness and response • Ferries • Courtesy seating <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace emergency information 	<p>2013</p> <p>General Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies • Accessibility plans • Procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities • Kiosks <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational/training resources/materials • Training to educators • Public libraries <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical requirements (manufactured on/after Jan 1, 2013) • Accessibility plans • Coordinated services • Service disruptions • Visitors • Fare parity (within same provider) • Alternative accessible method of transportation • Hours of service (within same provider) • Service delays • Ferries • Duties of municipalities (bus stops/shelters) • Duties of Municipalities (accessible taxicabs) • Fares (payment options) 	<p>2014</p> <p>General Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible feedback processes • New internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A. <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Employees returning to work • Employee accommodation • Performance management, career development, and redeployment <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Trip restrictions • Fares, support persons • Eligibility application process (existing) • Booking • School transportation - policies • Emergency or compassionate grounds • Ferries 	<p>2015</p> <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible formats and communication supports • Educational libraries - print based resources • Producers of educational or training material - textbooks <p>2017</p> <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-boarding and on-board announcements (electronic) • Fare parity (separate conventional and specialized providers) • Hours of service (separate conventional and specialized providers) • Categories of eligibility 	<p>2020</p> <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational libraries - multi-media/digital resources • Producers of educational or training material - supplementary print materials <p>2021</p> <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, excluding live captioning and audio description
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Accessible Built Environment Standard; pending

This final proposed standard is still pending and not enacted. It is anticipated by the Province that the pending Accessible Built Environment (ABE) Standard will have its technical elements consolidated into a new version of the Ontario Building Code with the remaining public space and outdoor elements being added to the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation via amending O. Reg. 413/12, enacted in December 2012. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking public feedback on the accessibility content being considered for inclusion in a revised OBC until March 1, 2013.

The overall scope and outcome of the ABE does not preclude accessibility within the many future plans and successes already achieved at the City:

- City Hall (built in 1937) is offered as an example of an older building that is highly accessible to people with various disabilities (talking elevator, wider auto-open doors, lever door handles, listening assistive devices, brighter lighting, lower customer service counters, more fully accessible washrooms, etc.
- All new City buildings and renovations are designed to be FADS compliant such as the; future performing arts centre, future spectator facility, new downtown parking garage, new aquatics/library community centre, and various renovations to City facilities as identified in the City's 2008 facility accessibility audit.
- Guiding documents are being revised periodically to support requirements and concepts that promote accessibility such as the Sustainability Plan, Official Plan, the Zoning By-law and Site Plan Manual.

Departmental 3-year Projections for Accessibility Planning

All Departments

- On-going and updated staff training relating to enacted accessibility standards
- Conduct daily business in compliance with accessibility standards and policies
 - o Accessible Customer Service Policy
 - o Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy
 - Both policies are included in Appendix “C”
- Provide on-going accessible customer service; align with new 2013 corporate customer service initiative
- Ensure accessible information and communication
 - o Create documents in accessible formats
 - o Create PDFs that are searchable
 - o Post accessible documents and information to the website
 - o Provide accessible information and communication in a format that is accessible to the requestor, upon request
- Update settings of all City computers to preferred default fonts

Chief Administrative Office (CAO)

(Administration and Council)

- Support for new and continuing corporate accessibility objectives
- Support the budget process for projects relating to accessibility
- Support and promote a communication statement that “accessible formats available upon request”
- Ensure information regarding any corporate initiatives that may be of benefit to people with a disability are supported and clearly promoted
- Support accessibility throughout the corporation and refer accessibility concerns to the Accessibility Coordinator

Corporate Support Service (CSS)

(Accessibility, Human Resources, Information Systems, Legal)

- Continue AODA awareness and compliance through staff orientation, and continued training
- Comply with AODA standards throughout the corporation and outreach where possible

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- Inform and engage Boards and Commissions of AODA updates
- Provide continued accessibility input on all City facility renovations and new builds
- Provide core access expertise and leadership to all departments
- Provide on-going corporate support to MACOA by the Accessibility Coordinator
- Ensure alternative formats and accommodation requests are addressed. Further support from accessibility staff on arranging American Sign Language (ASL), captioning services and audio file format requests.
- Promote awareness of BrowseAloud for website text to speech and use for MP3 audio file formatting, currently available free to users of the City's website
- Install updated version, BrowseAloud Plus, which has a mobile application allowing users to have the website read aloud on iPads.
- Ensure Information Systems continues to meet or exceed IASR website compliance requirements
- Ensure Information Systems' third parties and/or suppliers are aware of all AODA obligations and associated Standards
- Create corporate-wide accessible forms solution and/or create interim solutions to meet accessibility requests
- Prepare to meet the requirements and various compliance deadlines associated with the IASR relating to; website, communication, information, employment, public spaces requirements, and general sections
- Promote employee emergency plan opportunities that continue to be offered to employees upon request
- Promote awareness that emergency safety plans continue to be available to the public upon request for various facilities that have existing fire safety plans
- Create supportive policy, practices and procedures for overall compliance with the IASR Employment Section by January 1, 2014
- Notification and accommodation statement included with job postings and on the employment webpage has been posted since 2012
- Assessment of legal compliance with the AODA and its Standard to be on-going
- Continued promotion of FADS as a best practice throughout the community by various departments and staff

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Financial Management Services (FMS)

- Ensure on-line forms to become more accessible with the support of technology solutions and/or provide alternative solutions in the meantime and upon request
- Compile the annual budget document in more accessible formats and/or provide alternative formats upon request
- Service at front-line counters of accessible customer service to continue, improve and/or update to meet accessibility feedback provided by the public or MACOA
- Updated procurement policy to meet the requirements and compliance deadlines associated with the IASR
- Ensure the procurement policy clearly addresses the AODA and its associated standards

Economic Development / Customer Service, Clerk's (EDCS)

- Renewed focus on customer service is being undertaken corporately and will contain a major component on customer service to include access perspectives throughout the process
- Promote the benefits of accessible goods, services, programs and facilities to local businesses
- Promote awareness of the AODA and compliance obligations to local businesses
- Promote benefits to local businesses of becoming more accessible
- Research options for closed captioning (CC) for Council meetings on cable TV
- Continue to ensure accessible Council documentation within technology applications and/or updates
- Ensure ongoing accessibility of Council documentation via the City website
- Support continued use and promotion of Council Chamber access; e.g. auto-adjustable podium raise/lower and listening assistive devices.

City of St. Catharines 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan

Planning & Development Services (PDS)

- Promote accessibility components and benefits relating to Site Plan
 - Review draft site plan manual, January 2013
 - Recognize 2016 implementation requirements of public and outdoor spaces, as amended in the IASR, December 2012
 - Advocate for access to community (e.g. builders, developers, owners, businesses, CIP, etc.)
 - Offer clear and succinct leadership for a more accessible community through guiding documents (Official Plan, Urban Design Guidelines, CIP Guidelines, etc.) and continue to update with further details to enhance community accessibility
 - Ongoing promotion of FADS as a best practices guideline
- Investigate opportunities for the Community Improvement Program (CIP) under the Planning Act and/or other opportunities to become more proactive for inclusion of accessibility
 - Encourage CIP, under the Planning Act, to offer opportunity and reward for focus on access (e.g. more accessible entrances)
- Continue to hold public meetings at accessible venues and upon request provide information in accessible formats
- Continue to scrutinize building plan applications for barrier-free compliance
 - Supportive of accessible components being put forward for future updated version of the Ontario Build Code

Fire & Emergency Management Services (FEMS)

- Review accessible customer service and information/communication awareness as part of overall departmental preparedness
- Support improved accessible communications, e.g. 911 texting in Ontario
- Promote awareness and information sharing regarding accessibility at conferences
- Continue to support public emergency information (upon request) related to access at facilities that have a fire safety plan and ensure this information is included in all future fire safety plans

City of St. Catharines 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan

Recreation & Community Services (RCS)

- Continue to improve access throughout RCS for parks, trails, seniors' facilities, pools, arenas, recreation centres, programming (Angel Fish)
- Recognize 2016 implementation requirements of public and outdoor spaces, as amended in the IASR, December 2012
- Continue to review the 2008 facility access audit to identify and address existing barriers
- Planned future access improvements (by TES) include;
 - Review and provide access input on future performing arts centre and spectator facility
 - Renovations to washrooms at Dunlop and West St. Catharines Seniors' Centres, Happy Rolph's, Russell Avenue Community Centre, Lester B. Pearson Park soccer field
 - Renovations to change-rooms at Lancaster Pool and Lancaster soccer field
 - Renovations for accessibility at Memorial Park cenotaph in planning stages
 - Improvements at Port Dalhousie Lion's pool parking lot
 - Plan and design future pedestrian access into Burgoyne Woods Park and Malcolmson Eco Park
 - Research opportunities and funding for an accessible area that includes - a community garden, picnic benches and physical activity equipment at the Dunlop Seniors Centre
- Various access renovations to the Lock 3 Museum under a federal Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) grant to be completed in 2013
- Audits for park accessibility undertaken by MACOA reps in 2012 to be addressed and integrated into future budgets or parks planning
- Recognition that pedestrian pathways require on-going maintenance (e.g. washouts)
- Ensure level surface of pedestrian pathways between surface and materials/grass beside (should be virtually level with no drop-off, etc.)
- Assess City parking lots for current accessible zoning specifications re size, ratio and signage particularly recreation facilities, arenas and parks (in conjunction with TES traffic) and address deficiencies
- Accessibility attributes for all RCS facilities (particularly Kiwanis details are beneficial to promote); include details on City website
- Accessibility attributes for parks and trails; details onto City website
- Consider opportunities to promote and share the above-noted accessibility attributes through future cultural mapping opportunities

City of St. Catharines 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan

Transportation & Environmental Services (TES)

- Continue to budget and implement accessible on-street parking spaces at identified areas
 - Design to approved prototype, 53 Church St. across from City Hall
- Ensure current zoning compliance of accessible parking dimensions, ratios and signage at all City lots and facilities;
 - Create an upgrade schedule for deficient lots
- Recognize 2016 implementation requirements of public and outdoor spaces, as amended in the IASR on December 2012
- Advocate for a connective sidewalk system throughout the City
 - Continued rehabilitation of heaved, cracked or sunken sections and/or installation of accessible curb ramps
 - Promote connection of sidewalk sections along the west side of Ontario Street, approximately between the QEW and Carleton
 - Promote this to Niagara Region (Regional roadway) as current setbacks prevent sidewalk connectivity
- Include new TES curb-ramp design into construction standards
- Review all City lots for curb ramp access at accessible parking spaces, access signage and line painting (e.g. Lancaster Park)
- Assess and re-paint all accessible parking space lines at all city lots and facilities on a scheduled basis (including Central Library)
- Reconstruct the exterior plaza of Central Library on James Street as some surfaces have heaved significantly
- Continue to review the 2008 facility access audit to identify and address existing barriers (refer to RCS facility improvements listed previously)
- Include details on City accessible parking locations on website; locations, numbers, access routes, etc.

Transit

- Developed a 5-year strategy for access compliance and improvements for 2013-2018
 - See Appendix B for details

Library

- Developed and presented a 5-year strategy for access improvements to MACOA in 2012.
- Preparing for various access renovation in 2013; Central Library
- Participant in City's IARS policy and 2013-2015 accessibility plan

City of St. Catharines 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan

Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA)

- Continues to provide advice to Council in areas relating to people with disabilities and access
- Continues to promote benefits of access to businesses in the community
 - Fairview Mall, new pedestrian link in 2012
 - Sidewalk disruption and closure training to construction companies working in Niagara
- Reviews site plans
 - actively comment on site plans from an accessibility perspective
 - support a renewed Site Plan Manual with more specific access criteria
- Undertakes projects such as; park access audits, design review of new builds (performing arts centre, spectator facility) and other renovations
- Participates with corporate access training opportunities
- Participates as access advocates on other committees
- Continues to meet monthly offering expertise to Council and support to staff
- Proactively promotes accessibility throughout the City
- Reviews and endorses the Accessibility Plan to Council

Acknowledgements

Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA)

Councillor Matthew Harris on behalf of **Mayor McMullan**

Shelley Stewart, Co-Chairperson

Diane Foster, Co-Chairperson

Bob Asham

Chantal Barrette

Ian Crawford

Tony DiPaola

Stephen Kurtic-Lentinello

Julie Morris

Linda Marie O'Hagan

David Reed

Mary Jane Waszynski

Membership appointment is for a 4 year period concurrent to the term of Council. Current appointments are until January 2015.

Anyone interested in membership is welcome to contact the Accessibility Coordinator or the City Clerk.

Corporate

City of St. Catharines – Staff Resources

Mayor Brian McMullan / Councillor Matthew Harris

Dan Carnegie, Deputy CAO/Director of Corporate Support Services

Diana Lecinski, Accessibility Coordinator, Corporate Support Services

Chantal Switzer, Human Resources, Corporate Support Services

Wayne Racey, Information Systems, Corporate Support Services

Helen Perron, Information Systems, Corporate Support Services

Cindy Upshall, Corporate Communications, CAO's Office

Susan Dods, Clerk's Office, Economic Development/Customer Service

Marco Marino, Development Officer, Economic Development/Customer Service

Joanne Tessier, Assistant Director, Financial Management Services

Chris Leonard, Prevention, Fire & Emergency Management Services

Amanda Knutson, Site Plan, Planning & Development Services

Sam Carrera, Building, Planning & Development Services

Jennifer Douglas, Programming, Recreation and Community Services

Kristen Sullivan, Park Design, Recreation and Community Services

Mauro Becchetti, Parks Maintenance, Recreation and Community Services

Christine Adams, Engineering, Transportation & Environmental Services

Henry Colyn, Facilities, Transportation & Environmental Services

Steve Bittner, Transportation, Transportation & Environmental Services

City of St. Catharines 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan

Participant contact information

City of St. Catharines

PO Box 3012, 50 Church St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7C2
905-688-5601, ext. 1510
www.stcatharines.ca
TTY 905-688-4TTY (4889)

Primary Contact:

Diana Lecinski
Accessibility Coordinator
905-688-5601, ext. 1510
dlecinski@stcatharines.ca

St. Catharines Public Library – Central Branch

54 Church St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 7K2
905-688-6103 www.stcatharines.library.on.ca

Primary Contacts:

Lilita Stripnieks, CEO
Jack Foster, Business Administrator

St. Catharines Transit Commission

2012 First Street Louth, RR3
St. Catharines, ON L2S 3V9
905-685-4228 www.yourbus.com
905-685-9844 Para-Transit & TTY

Primary Contacts:

David Sherlock, General Manager

Appendix A:

Interpretations

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix A

Interpretation

The terms “disability” and “barrier” are referenced throughout this plan and it is important to define both terms as related to the context of this document. In order to be consistent with the direction and guidance provided by the Province, the City of St. Catharines has adopted the following definitions for “disability” and “barrier” as they appear in the AODA and ODA:

Disability means;

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”).

Barrier means;

anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; (“obstacle”).

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix A

Acronyms

FADS	Facility Accessibility Design Standard (accessible building dimension guidelines) - Passed by Region of Niagara Council – 09/2005 - Adopted by City of St. Catharines Council – 04/2006
MACOA	Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Accessibility
AAC	Accessibility Advisory Committee
ODA	<i>Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001</i>
AODA	<i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005</i>
IASR	Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation
O. Reg.	Ontario Regulation

Participant abbreviations:

- Administration - Mayor and CAO offices (CAO)
- Corporate Support Services (CSS)
- Economic Development and Customer Services (EDCS)
- Financial Management Services (FMS)
- Fire and Emergency Management Services (FEMS)
- Legal Services (LS)
- Planning and Development Services (PDS)
- Recreation and Community Services (RCS)
- Transportation and Environmental Services (TES)
- St. Catharines Public Library Commission (Library)
- St. Catharines Transit Commission (Transit)

Appendix B: St. Catharines Transit Commission

2013-2018 Accessibility Plan

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix B

Introduction

The St. Catharines Transit Commission (SCTC) is committed to developing, implementing, maintaining and enhancing accessibility as set out under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its Standards for people with a disability in a manner that:

- Reflects the continual improvement of access to public transportation premises, facilities and services for passengers and employees with disabilities.
- The provision of high quality service which is accessible to all passengers and employees.

The following document is the St. Catharines Transit's Accessibility Plan for the next five years starting 2013. It forms a part of the City of St. Catharines Accessibility Plan.

Report on Achievements

SCTC has been working at increasing access to all people for over two decades. In July 2011 the Integrated Accessibility Regulation (IAR) became law under the AODA. Because of the investment we made in accessibility prior to July 2011 we are pleased to say that SCTC is in compliance with a number of these regulations before the required deadlines.

The following are recent actions taken by SCTC:

1. As of September 2011 all conventional bus routes operate with accessible buses.
2. Automated stop announcement technology was installed on all conventional buses in early 2009.
3. Six new bus shelters with accessible concrete pads were installed on bus routes in 2012.
4. All SCTC buses have customer enhancements as required by the Transportation Standard of the IAR, such as brightly coloured on-vehicle grab rails, handrails and stanchions, visual differentiation of platform edges and lowered stop request buttons. Stop request strips

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix B

are easily accessed underneath the courtesy seats on low floor buses.

5. In 2011 and 2012 SCTC completed Customer Service Training to drivers in accordance with the Customer Service Standard of the IAR.
6. Key SCTC staff members participated in the city's "Accessible Communication" seminars held at Brock in 2011, in compliance with the Information and Communication Standard of the IAR.
7. In 2011 the public reception counter at our administration office was reconstructed to meet accessibility standards.
8. In 2012 an additional curb access was constructed at our administration office.
9. St. Catharines Transit information is accessible on the website (<http://www.yourbus.com>), and is linked to the City of St. Catharines Web site (<http://www.stcatharines.ca>). The website has been upgraded with flexible fonts and maps. We have also expanded the accessible service page.
10. The Paratransit System includes Paravans, which are modified vans that will travel door-to-door to pick-up customers who are unable to board conventional buses, yet do not require any ambulatory aids.
11. In 2012 all bus route information from our Rider's Guide was transcribed into an accessible format, and is available upon request.
12. In 2012 priority seating was assigned on all buses, new compliant signage placed at the seats and also on visible posters, information was posted on our website and drivers advised of the priority seating policy.
13. In December 2012 the St. Catharines Paratransit Advisory Board was consulted on the content of this Accessibility Plan.

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Barriers to Access at St. Catharines Transit

St. Catharines Transit recognizes that some parts of its infrastructure may present certain barriers to people with disabilities. In striving to ensure access to physical facilities, St. Catharines Transit's objective is to create a service environment that is free of barriers to the extent that is reasonably possible.

St. Catharines Transit Administrative Offices

- Interior doors are manual and therefore difficult for some people to use.

Shelters & Stops

- Approaches:
 - Clearing snow and ice from major bus stops and shelters is undertaken, however this cannot be accomplished instantaneously.
- Landing pads:
 - Boarding and exiting buses can be difficult at stops that do not have a concrete landing pad.
- Shelters:
 - During inclement weather, the absence of a shelter at the bus stop can be a barrier to using SCT.
 - Some shelters do not have interior seating and many bus stops do not have exterior seating.

St. Catharines Downtown Terminal

The Downtown Terminal is owned by Infrastructure Ontario and SCT is one of many tenants. All SCT bus routes (except for two) pass through the Downtown Terminal, which facilitates customers making connections to other buses in the system. On an average weekday during the academic year, SCT accommodates over 30,000 trips.

Areas identified as barriers at the Downtown Terminal include:

- The time available for a connecting passenger to travel between buses may not be sufficient for some people with disabilities.
- Some signage may not be easily read by persons in a wheelchair due to signs being located too high to be read.
- The public washrooms are not fully accessible due to their size.

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Buses

- Restraint equipment for wheelchairs and scooters is designed to accommodate most designs. However, some of the newer scooters may be too large to manoeuvre into position or be properly restrained and may not be able to be safely accommodated.

Roads and Sidewalks

The roads and sidewalks on the approaches to St. Catharines Transit bus stops, although maintained by the City of St. Catharines, determine the accessibility of St. Catharines Transit services. Specific barriers in the following areas have been identified:

- The walking and wheeling path to and from bus stops do not always have curb cuts at corners.
- Where curb cuts exist they may be too low or lacking in tactile demarcations to provide a cue to a person who is visually impaired.
- Sidewalk snow clearing is undertaken diligently, however cannot be accomplished instantaneously.

Resource Barriers

St. Catharines Transit recognizes the availability of resources can be a major factor in determining the progress in reducing or eliminating the barriers identified in consultation with people with disabilities. SCT further recognizes that resource constraints require a process of prioritization.

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix B

Actions planned for the next 5 years

SCT intends to make its services more accessible by taking the following on-going actions throughout the next five years:

- Request funding to purchase a minimum of 4 new low-floor, accessible buses per year.
- Request funding to purchase a minimum of 1 new Paratransit vehicle per year.
- Review bus stops to determine which ones are the least accessible and continue to improve these stops.
- Ensure that Paratransit customers are fully informed of the travel options available to them on the conventional transit routes and Community Bus routes.
- Work with City and Regional staff to improve the curb cuts and tactile demarcations at bus stops to assist those with visual impairments.
- Consult with our Paratransit Advisory Board to seek their advice on which barriers and which remedial actions should have priority for the coming year.
- Request funding through our municipal capital and operating budgets to address the highest priority barriers.
- Take advantage of opportunities to secure funding to extend or accelerate the removal of priority barriers.
- Lobby the provincial government to ensure that sufficient additional funding is provided to allow us to meet the new IAR without compromising service.

In addition, there are specific actions required by the IAR over the next five years and these are identified in our Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy, which was approved by the SCTC on October 25, 2012 and is available on our website, and at our administrative office.

The SCTC will prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement this Plan and post the status report on our website, and provide it in an accessible format upon request.

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix B

Communicating the Accessibility Plan to the Public

SCT will communicate the accessibility plan to the public through the following actions:

The Plan will be available at our administrative office in an accessible format upon request, also on our website and at City Hall.

Appendix C: Supporting Policy Documents

Accessible Customer Service Policy (2009)

1. PURPOSE

The “Corporation” of the City of St. Catharines is dedicated to providing high quality services for our community under the leadership of City Council. In doing so, we recognize the diverse needs of our community and strive to provide services and facilities that are accessible for everyone. As an employer and a provider of services, the City of St. Catharines is committed to providing services that are accessible.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

This policy applies to all City of St. Catharines employees; fulltime, part-time as well as volunteers. Third Party providers of goods and services to the City of St. Catharines are required to comply with all current accessibility legislation.

3. PRINCIPLES

The City of St. Catharines promotes accessibility through the development of the City’s policies, procedures and practices that are consistent with the core principles of integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Reasonable efforts are made to ensure the following:

3.1 SERVICE:

The provision of services to persons with and without disabilities are integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from services.

Persons with disabilities will have opportunities equivalent to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from services.

3.2 COMMUNICATION:

Communication will be provided in ways that take into consideration a person’s disability.

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- 3.3 ASSISTIVE DEVICES:
Persons with a disability can use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from services.
- 3.4 SUPPORT PERSONS:
Persons with a disability can be accompanied by a support person on City premises. (See 4. Expanded Principles)
- 3.5 GUIDE DOG / SERVICE ANIMAL:
Persons with a disability can be accompanied by a guide dog or service animal on City premises unless otherwise excluded by law. (See 4. Expanded Principles)
- 3.6 TRAINING:
Training on customer service to persons with a disability is provided to all employees, volunteers or other third parties who provide customer service on behalf of the Corporation, and to those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures. (See 4. Expanded Principles)
- 3.7 SERVICE DISRUPTION:
Notice of service disruption is provided in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services generally used by persons with a disability. This notice will include information about the reasons for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternatives.
- 3.8 FEEDBACK:
The City of St. Catharines welcomes feedback on all aspects of its customer service and provides the following formats to allow people with a disability to provide feedback on the provision of its customer service through the following; in person at City Hall Administration, electronically at www.stcatharines.ca under Contact Us, via TTY at 905-688-4889, or contact the Accessibility Coordinator at 905-688-5601 ext. 1510.

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4. EXPANDED PRINCIPLES

Support Person (3.4) means;

A person who accompanies a person with a disability to assist that person with a disability for purposes of participation, communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to services.

- a) Admission fees are waived for support persons who accompany a person with a disability, into facilities or programs where admission is charged;
 - Staff shall be notified by either of the parties of the presence of the support person.
 - Staff reserves the right to require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on City premises, but only if the support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of other persons on City premises.

Guide Dog / Service Animal (3.5) means;

- a) A Guide Dog (as defined in Section 1 of the *Blind Person's Rights Act*)
- b) A Service Animal for a person with a disability is recognized;
 - If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability; or
 - If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse or authorized agency confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the person's disability;

If a guide dog or service animal is excluded by reason of law, rule or regulation from the City's premises, the provider of services shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the provider's services.

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Training 3.6

Customer service to persons with disabilities training will be held periodically and include;

- i) Purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
 - ii) How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
 - iii) How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a support person, guide dog or service animal
 - iv) How to use assistive equipment available at the Corporation
 - v) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing services
 - vi) Material on corporate policy, practices and procedures relating to the Customer Service Standard (This Customer Service Policy is supported by further practices and procedures that are developed in consultation with the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Accessibility).
-
-

This Customer Service Policy is based on the Accessible Customer Service Standard, Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The Province provides the following definition of disability.

Disability means;

- “a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”).”

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Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy (2012) – St. Catharines (includes Library)

Statement of Organizational Commitment

The Corporation of the City of St. Catharines (herein after the “City”) is committed to developing, implementing, maintaining, and enhancing accessibility as set out under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and its Standards for people with a disability, in a manner that:

- Reflects the principles of dignity and independence;
- Seeks to provide integrated services; and
- Provides opportunity equitable to others to obtain, use and benefit from its goods or services.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements of the AODA, Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) Ontario Regulation 191/11 which reflects a number of accessibility standards that organizations across Ontario, including the City, are required to comply with.

This document has been organized into the following sections:

- Part I – General Requirements; Accessibility Plans, Procurement and Training
- Part II – Accessible Information and Communications Standards
- Part III – Accessible Employment Standards
- Part IV – Transportation Standards
- Part V – future amendments to the IASR

This policy is not intended to replace or supersede City’s Accessible Customer Service Policy (ACAO-01-09) that was approved by Council on March 30, 2009.

The requirements set out in this policy and the IASR are not a replacement or a substitution for the requirements established under the *Human Rights Code* nor do the standards or policy limit any obligations owed to persons with disabilities under any other legislation.

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix C

Terms are as defined by the AODA and its Standards and are referred to herein with that intent and contained at the end of this policy as reference.

Scope and Responsibility

This policy applies to all City of St. Catharines employees; fulltime, part-time, volunteers as well as other third parties acting on behalf of the City for the provision of goods, services, programs and facilities.

Policy Principles and Requirements

Part I: General Requirements

4.1 Accessibility Plans

The City will establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan starting in 2013 that outlines its strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meets its requirements under the IASR.

The multi-year accessibility plan will be:

- posted on the City's website and be provided in an accessible format, upon request, as soon as is practicable.
- reviewed and updated at least once every five years
- established, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and the St. Catharines' Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA)

The City will:

- prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the multi-year accessibility plan
- post the status report on its website and provide the report in an accessible format, upon request, as soon as is practicable.

4.2 Procurement

When procuring or acquiring goods, services, self-service kiosks or facilities, the City shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features, unless it is not feasible (practicable). If not practicable, the City shall provide an explanation, upon request.

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix C

4.3 Training

As required by the IASR, the City shall ensure that the following persons are provided training on (1) the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in the IASR and (2) on the *Human Rights Code*, as it pertains to persons with disabilities:

- all employees and volunteers;
- all persons who participate in developing the organization’s policies; and,

All other persons or third parties who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization shall continue to be trained or meet their obligations as part of the City’s procurement process.

The training on the requirements of the IASR and the *Human Rights Code* shall be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons. Record of the training provided including the dates shall be kept of employees by the Human Resources Department.

Part II: Information and Communication Requirements

4.4 Feedback

Further to the City’s Accessible Customer Service Policy (ACAO-01-09, Section 3.8) whereby it notifies the public of various formats and methods of communications, that it also, upon request, can provide accessible formats and communication supports when receiving and responding to feedback.

4.5 Accessible Formats

The City will:

- notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports
- upon request, provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities:
 - in a timely manner that takes into account the person’s accessibility needs;
 - by consulting with the person making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support; and,
 - at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

2013-2015 Accessibility Planning – Appendix C

Exceptions, the IASR does not apply to the following:

- product and product labels
- unconvertible information or communications
- information that the City does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship

If the City determines that information or communications are unconvertible, the City shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible and a summary of the unconvertible information or communications. Information or communications are unconvertible if, it is not technically feasible to convert the information or communications; or the technology to convert the information or communications is not readily available.

4.6 Emergency Information

The City shall provide publicly available emergency procedures, plans or public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request, as soon as practicable.

4.7 Website Accessibility

The City shall make their internet website and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA. By January 1, 2014, any new web content shall conform to WCAG 2.0 Level A. By January 1, 2021 all internet website and web content shall conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA (exceptions; Captions (live), Audio Descriptions (pre-recorded)).

4.8 Public Library

Public Library Boards;

- Shall provide access to or arrange for the provision of access to accessible materials where they exist;
- Shall make information about the availability of accessible materials publicly available and shall provide information in accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request;
- May provide accessible formats for archival materials, special collections and rare books.

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Part III: Employment

4.9 Scope and Interpretation

The Accessible Employment Standard applies to paid employees and does not apply to volunteers and other unpaid individuals.

4.10 Recruitment and Notification

The City shall notify;

Employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities during the assessment or selection process
Job applicants selected to participate in an assessment or selection process relating to the materials or processes to be used that;

- accommodations are available upon request
- accommodations will take into consideration the applicants disability
- accommodations will be based on consultation between the employer and applicant

Successful applicants of City policies and any other additional supports pertaining to the accommodation of employees with disabilities

4.11 Employee; Accessible Formats and Supports

The City will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication job supports, upon request.

4.12 Employee; Workplace Emergency Information

The City will provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, upon request.

4.13 Accommodation Plans

The City will develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

4.14 Return to Work

The City will develop and have in place a return to work process for employees who have been absent due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

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4.15 Performance Management, Career development, Redeployment

The City's performance management will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans.

The City's career development/advancement or redeployment will take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans.

Part IV, Transit

See St. Catharines Transit Commission policy

Part V, Future amendments

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Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy - Transit

Statement of Organizational Commitment

The St. Catharines Transit Commission (SCT) is committed to developing, implementing, maintaining, and enhancing accessibility as set out under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and its Standards for people with a disability, in a manner that:

- Reflects the principles of dignity and independence;
- Seeks to provide integrated services; and
- Provides opportunity equitable to others to obtain use and benefit from its services.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements of the AODA, Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) Ontario Regulation 191/11 which reflects a number of accessibility standards that organizations across Ontario, including the SCT, are required to comply with.

This document has been organized into the following sections:

- Part I – General Requirements
- Part II – Accessible Information and Communications Standards
- Part III – Accessible Employment Standards
- Part IV – Transportation Standards

This policy is not intended to replace or supersede SCT's Customer Service Policy approved by the Commission on November 26, 2009. Compliance timelines have been met or will be met in accordance with the IASR. The SCT annual status report required by Regulation 4-3(a) will provide updates in this regard.

The requirements set out in this policy and the IASR are not a replacement or a substitution for the requirements established under the *Human Rights Code* nor do the standards or policy limit any obligations owed to persons with disabilities under any other legislation.

Terms are as defined by the AODA and its Standards and are referred to herein with that intent.

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Scope and Responsibility

This policy applies to all SCT employees, volunteers as well as other third parties acting on behalf of the SCT for the provision of public transit service.

Part I: General Requirements

Accessibility Plans

The SCT will establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan starting in 2013 that outlines its strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the IASR.

The multi-year accessibility plan will be:

- posted on the SCT's website and be provided in an accessible format, upon request, as soon as is practicable.
- reviewed and updated at least once every five years.
- established, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities.

The SCT will:

- prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the multi-year accessibility plan.
- post the status report on its website and provide the report in an accessible format, upon request, as soon as is practicable.

Procurement

When procuring or acquiring goods, services, self-service kiosks or facilities, the SCT shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features, unless it is not feasible. If not feasible, the SCT shall provide an explanation, upon request.

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Training

As required by the IASR, the SCT shall ensure that the following persons are provided training on (1) the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in the IASR and (2) on the *Human Rights Code*, as it pertains to persons with disabilities:

- all employees and volunteers
- all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies

All other persons or third parties who provide services on behalf of the organization shall continue to be trained or meet their obligations as part of the SCT's procurement process.

The training on the requirements of the IASR and the *Human Rights Code* shall be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons.

Record of the training provided to employees, including dates, shall be kept by the Training Supervisor.

Part II: Information and Communication Requirements

Feedback

Further to the SCT's Accessible Customer Service Policy whereby it notifies the public of various formats and methods of communications, SCT will also, upon request, provide accessible formats and communication supports when receiving and responding to feedback.

Accessible Formats

The SCT will:

- notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.
- upon request, provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities:
 - in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs.
 - by consulting with the person making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.
 - at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

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Exceptions, this IASR does not apply to the following:

- product and product labels
- unconvertible information or communications
- information that the SCT does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship

If the SCT determines that information or communications are unconvertible, the SCT shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible and a summary of the unconvertible information or communications. Information or communications are unconvertible if it is not technically feasible to convert the information or communications or the technology to convert the information or communications is not readily available.

Emergency Information

The SCT shall provide any publicly available emergency procedures, plans or public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request, as soon as practicable.

Website Accessibility

The SCT shall make their internet website and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA. By January 1, 2014, any new web content shall conform to WCAG 2.0 Level A. By January 1, 2021 all internet website and web content shall conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA (exceptions; Captions (live), Audio Descriptions (pre-recorded)).

Part III: Employment

Scope and Interpretation

The Accessible Employment Standard applies to paid employees and does not apply to volunteers and other unpaid individuals.

Recruitment and Notification

The SCT shall notify:

- Employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities during the assessment or selection process.

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- Job applicants selected to participate in an assessment or selection process relating to the materials or processes to be used that:
 - Accommodations are available upon request.
 - Accommodations will take into consideration the applicant's disability.
 - Accommodations will be based on consultation between the employer and applicant.
- Successful applicants about SCT policies and any other additional supports pertaining to the accommodation of employees with disabilities.

Accessible Formats and Supports

The SCT will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication job supports, upon request.

Workplace Emergency Information

The SCT will provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, upon request.

Accommodation Plans

The SCT will develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

Return to Work

The SCT will develop and have in place a return to work process for employees who have been absent due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

Performance Management, Career development, Redeployment

The SCT's performance management will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans.

The SCT's career development/advancement or redeployment will take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans.

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Part IV: Transportation Requirements

Availability of Information on Accessibility Equipment

The SCT will provide information on the accessibility features of its conventional and specialized transit services to the public, and will make this information available in an accessible format upon request.

Non-Functional Accessibility Equipment

In the event of non-functioning accessibility equipment on any of its vehicles, the SCT will provide an equivalent service to customers who rely on the accessibility equipment and service. The SCT will repair the accessibility equipment in a timely manner.

Accessibility Training

The SCT will provide accessibility training to all conventional and specialized transit employees and volunteers. Training material shall include:

- The safe use of accessibility equipment and features.
- Acceptable modifications to procedures in situations where temporary barriers exist or accessibility equipment on a vehicle fails.
- Public transit emergency response procedures that provide for the safety of persons with disabilities.

Training records are maintained including training dates for each employee.

Public Transit Emergency Preparedness and Response Policies

The SCT shall establish emergency preparedness and response policies that provide for the safety of persons with disabilities, and shall make these policies available to the public and in an accessible format upon request.

Fares - Support Persons

The SCT will not require a support person to pay a fare when that support person is needed to provide assistance to a person with a disability while travelling on its conventional or specialized transit. It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to identify their need for a support person.

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Accessibility Plan - Conventional and Specialized Services

The SCT shall develop an accessibility plan which addresses both Conventional and Specialized services. The Plan shall identify the process for managing, evaluating and taking action on customer feedback and shall be reviewed once per year at a public meeting, by persons with disabilities. The Plan will also identify the procedure for estimating demand for specialized services and ways to reduce waiting times for specialized services.

Conventional Transit Services, General Requirements

When providing conventional transit services the SCT shall ensure the following services are being offered, upon request, and that information related to those services is available in an accessible format upon request.

- Deploy lifting devices, ramps or portable bridge plates upon the request of the person with a disability.
- Ensure that adequate time is provided to persons with disabilities to safely board, be secured and de-board transportation vehicles and that assistance be provided, upon request, for these activities.
- Assist with safe and careful storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices used by person with disabilities.
- Allow a person with a disability to travel with a medical aid without additional charge.

Fares

The SCT will not require persons with disabilities, using conventional transit services, to pay a higher fare than persons without disabilities.

Transit Stops

The SCT will ensure that persons with disabilities can board and de-board its conventional transit vehicles in a safe location, other than the designated transit stop, if the designated stop is deemed to be inaccessible, and the safe location is on the same route. When identifying a safe location, the SCT shall take into consideration the preferences provided by persons with disabilities. The SCT will develop a process from promptly reporting, to a designated authority, when a transit stop is temporarily inaccessible or when a temporary barrier exists.

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Storage of Mobility Aids

The SCT will ensure that all mobility aids and mobility assistive devices are safely stored in the passenger compartment of its conventional transit vehicles when feasible, and be placed within easy reach of the person with a disability who uses the mobility aid or mobility assistive device when feasible. The SCT will not charge a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.

Priority Seating

The SCT will ensure that clearly marked priority seating for persons with disabilities is available on all of its conventional transit vehicles. This seating will be located in close proximity to the front entrance, and be identifiable through accessible signage.

Service Disruptions

In the event of a temporary service or route disruption, when the commencement of the disruption is known, the SCT will inform the public of the disruption, route detours, and communicate alternate accessible transportation services available.

Pre-boarding Announcements

The SCT shall, upon request, provide verbal pre-boarding announcements of routes, directions, destination, and next major intersection.

On-board Announcements

The SCT will provide electronic audible verbal announcements, on all of its conventional transit vehicles, of all destination points or available route stops, while the vehicle is on route or being operated.

Conventional Transit Technical Requirements

In accordance with sections 53 through 61 (and subject to section 40) of the IARS, the SCT will adhere to the technical requirements for transportation vehicles, specifically:

- Grab bars
- Floor and carpeted surfaces
- Allocated mobility and spaces
- Stop-requests and emergency response controls
- Lighting features

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- Signage
- Lifting devices
- Steps
- Indicators and alarms

Specialized Transit Requirements, Categories of Eligibility

The SCT will maintain three categories of eligibility to qualify for specialized transportation services; unconditional, temporary and conditional eligibility, as defined in Regulation 63.

Eligibility Application Process

The SCT will develop an application process for determining eligibility for its specialized transit services. This process shall include criteria for applying on emergency or compassionate grounds, be reviewed on an annual basis, and shall not charge a fee for persons with disabilities applying to use this service.

Fare Parity

The SCT will ensure that the same fare structure is being used for both conventional and specialized transit services. Furthermore, the SCT will ensure that the same payment options are available for both conventional and specialized transit services.

Visitors

The SCT will incorporate criteria related to visitors into its eligibility process for specialized transit services, and provide the service to visitors if the visitor provides proof that they are eligible for specialized transit services within the jurisdiction for which they reside, or meet the eligibility criteria established by the SCT.

Origin to Destination Services

The SCT will provide origin to destination services within its service area that takes into consideration and accommodates the needs of persons with disabilities. This service shall apply to both specialized and accessible conventional transit services.

Hours of Service

The SCT will ensure that its specialized transit service has, at a minimum, the same hours and days of operation as its conventional transit services.

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Bookings

The SCT will provide same day booking service to the extent that it is available and provide accessible means to accept reservations.

Trip Restrictions

The SCT will not restrict the availability of its specialized transit services to persons with disabilities by limiting the number of trips a person with a disability can request, or implement any policies or practice that unreasonably restricts the availability of its specialized transit services.

Service Delays

On specialized transit services SCT will provide information on a service delay of 30 minutes or more when known before the trip begins.

Companions and Children

The SCT will allow companions of persons with disabilities to travel with the person, if space is available or does not deny service to another person with a disability, on its specialized transit service. Similarly, the SCT will allow children of the person with a disability to travel with the person if appropriate child safety restraints, if required, are available.

Duties of Municipalities: General

The SCT will assist the City in developing design criteria for the construction, renovation, or replacement of bus stop areas and subsequent amenities.

Feedback on Accessibility

The City of St. Catharines welcomes all feedback regarding;

- accessible customer service,
- accessible information, communication, accessible formats
- accessible facilities, goods or services

The City of St. Catharines offers its documents in alternative formats upon request.

You may contact us in person, by mail, email, website, phone, fax, TTY, or contact the Accessibility Coordinator directly.

Visit Us: City Hall, 50 Church Street
Located at the corner of Church St. and James St.
Accessible Main Entrance at James St. side of City Hall

Mail: City of St. Catharines
P.O. Box 3012
50 Church Street
St. Catharines, ON
L2R 7C2

Phone: 905-688-5601 extension #1510

TTY phone: 905-688-4TTY (4889)

Fax: 905-682-3631

Email: info@stcatharines.ca

Website: www.stcatharines.ca

Primary Contact: Diana Lecinski, Accessibility Coordinator
dlecinski@stcatharines.ca
905-688-5601 extension #1510