



# The Corporation of the Town of Thessalon Accessible Information and Communications Policy

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA 2005)

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**The Corporation of the  
Town of Thessalon**

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## Purpose

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 is Provincial legislation that sets out Standards of compliance to ensure that services provided to Ontarians with disabilities are accessible and provided in a manner that uses reasonable efforts consistent with the core principles of:

**Dignity** – services are provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.

**Independence** – services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy.

**Integration** – allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same service, in the same place and in a similar way.

**Equality of Opportunity** – persons with disabilities are given the same opportunity to benefit from the services provided as other clients.

## Scope

Our intent is to ensure all persons with disabilities receive information and communications in ways that take into consideration their disability.

## **Definitions and Accompanying Policy**

### **Person with a Disability:**

The definition of disability under the AODA is the same as the definition of disability in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Section 2 states that "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.

## **Communicating with Persons with Disabilities**

Communication is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. This section of the regulation is a specific requirement to communicate with an individual with a disability in a way that takes the person's disability into account. This means that you must consider how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications. The goal is to communicate in an effective way.

### **Policy**

When communicating with a person with a disability, The Municipality of Thessalon (hereinafter referred to as "The Municipality") will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

## **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

Making information and communications accessible is not only helpful to people with disabilities, it benefits us all. Alternatives to standard print are often referred to as accessible formats, and ways to help communication between people are referred to as communication supports. A properly formatted document or accessible website displays properly in all browsers, including personal hand-held devices.

### **Policy**

When requested, The Municipality will provide information and communications in an accessible manner to people with disabilities. When a request is received, the employee will consult with the person to determine the most appropriate accessible format or communication support depending on the needs of the person and the capability of The Municipality to deliver.

Accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and at a cost that is not more than the regular costs charged to other people.

Some examples of alternate formats and communication supports are:

- Reading written information to a person directly
- Large print
- Handwritten notes instead of spoken word
- Information written in plain language
- An electronic document formatted to be accessible for use with a screen reader

If it is not possible to convert requested material, The Municipality will provide the individual making the request with the following:

- An explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible
- A summary of the information or communications.

By providing these two things, the employee may be helping someone to obtain an understanding of the information they need.

### **Exceptions to the Requirement**

The requirement does not apply to the following:

- Products and product labels
- Information that the Municipality does not control directly or indirectly through a contract
- Information or communications that cannot be converted.

## **Feedback Processes**

Under the Information and Communications Standard, any feedback processes in place by The Municipality will be accessible.

## **Policy**

Information about the Accessible Information and Communications feedback process is readily available to the public and notice of the process is posted on The Municipality's website [www.townthessalon.ca](http://www.townthessalon.ca) and/or in other appropriate locations. Providing the processes in an accessible format will include:

- Arranging for accessible formats and communication supports on request.
- Notifying the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

## **Emergency Procedures, Plans, or Public Safety Information**

This section of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation for Information and Communications is a specific requirement to provide publicly available emergency and public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports. It is vital that everyone be able to access emergency and public safety information.

Requirement as Stated in the Regulation:

- If an obligated organization prepares emergency procedures, plans or public safety information and makes the information available to the public, the obligated organization shall provide the information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request.

Organizations are not required to develop or create new emergency or public safety information into accessible formats or provide communication supports if they do not share the information publicly.

Prepared emergency and public safety information refers to the emergency plans and procedures that organizations develop before an emergency occurs.

This may include evacuation procedures and floor plans, information about alarms or information about other incidents that may threaten life, property, operations or the environment.

It does not include real-time emergency or real-time public safety information.

### **What is “As Soon as Practicable?”**

As soon as practicable means as soon as possible given all of the circumstances after a person with a disability asks for information in an accessible format or with communication supports.

The Municipality is not required to have accessible formats on hand, however, the critical nature of emergency and public safety information is recognized. Some people with a disability may need more time to plan for emergency situations so organizations should respond promptly to requests for this type of information.

## **Policy**

When requested, the Municipality will provide emergency and public safety information in an accessible manner to people with disabilities. When a request is received, The Municipality will consult with the person to determine the most



appropriate accessible format or communication support depending on the needs of the person and the capability of The Municipality to deliver.

The evacuation plans posted at Municipal buildings open to the public will state the following: Please contact the Municipal Office at 187 Main Street or telephone 705-842-2217 to request this plan in an accessible format.

This policy is available on The Municipality's website at [www.townthessalon.ca](http://www.townthessalon.ca).

## **Training**

The Integrated Accessibility Standards requires providers to train staff on the requirements of each of the accessibility standards.

Training must include:

- A review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the information and communication standard.
- Information about achieving accessibility by 2025.
- Highlight the requirements of the Information and Communications standard as it applies to The Municipality.

Under the Act training must be provided to:

- Every person who deals with the public or other third parties on your behalf receives training, whether the person is an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.
- Every person who participates in developing your policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties is trained.
- New staff who deal with members of the public or other third parties or who participate in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services to the public or other third parties in accordance with the training requirements set out in the standard. Provide the training as soon as is practicable after they are assigned applicable duties.
- Ongoing training in connection with any changes to your policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

## **Policy**

The Municipality will ensure that all staff that interact with our customers or create policy/procedures is trained as required by the Accessibility Standards for Information and Communications. Staff will be trained as needed to perform the duties of their job. Ongoing training to ensure excellence in the way we serve our customers with disabilities will be conducted with “mini” training and awareness as part of our annual accessibility policy reviews. The content of the training will include:

- Overall review to ensure and build on awareness of the purposes of the AODA.
- The specific requirements of the Integration Accessibility Standards Regulations for Information and Communications.

- Instruction on The Municipality’s Accessible Information and Communications policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing our services.
- Ongoing awareness sessions with other disability service providers to gain additional awareness and insight.

## **Timeline for Training**

Training will be provided as a priority for new hires and included in new employee orientation package. New employees will be required to complete the Accessible Information and Communications online training module at [www.accessforward.ca](http://www.accessforward.ca) as part of new employee or volunteer orientation.

Ongoing training will be provided to all staff to ensure ongoing learning, development and employee engagement in providing exceptional service to our ratepayers.

Training will also be provided with any change to The Municipality’s policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

## **Training Records**

The Municipality will keep records of all Accessible Information and Communications training, to include dates and content of training provided to each employee.

Provision of Accessible Information and Communications to persons with disabilities will be reviewed with each staff member at all performance evaluations.

## **Modifications to this and future policies**

The Municipality is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Therefore, any changes made to this policy will consider the needs of people with disabilities.

Any policy of The Municipality that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.