

Government Relations and Social Action Training
Workshop
April 26,2008

Welcome All.

Thank you to Deanna and Kim for inviting me to discuss my membership on Transportation and Accessible Built Environment Standard Development Committees. As you all recognize Built Environment and Transportation are the number one concerns within the ms Family. Only the priority changes on any given day. This presentation is strictly from my own personal perceptions and not representative of the AODA Directorate Standards Development Committee.

It is so encouraging to know there are so many of us interested in the same goal of Removing Barriers where ever they exist.

I will use the word Challenged rather than Disabled throughout this presentation because personally Challenged is more positive and recognizes Challenges are dealt with positively.

The background history of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2001.

On May 9, 2005 the bells rang for all Members of Parliament to attend the House and vote for acceptance of Bill 118. The bells stopped. The Members returned to their seats. Then the names were read for acceptance. Everyone rose and most members motioned acceptance with the American sign language motion of a bent fist moved up and down meaning YES. It was unanimous.....Bill 118 was accepted. To many of the persons attending Parliament that day there were tears of joy and anticipation. Joy that supporting this momentous moment in Ontario history was well worth the wait and effort. The anticipation of knowing the shining example Ontario will make for the other provinces in Canada.

There should be notice given that many Bills are presented in Parliament but are never accepted with a unanimous vote. This was the politicians saying that they too were interested in removing Barriers.

The after party in room 247 attested to the unanimous acceptance of Bill 118 by the attendance in the room of persons from all walks of life reveling in the acceptance of Bill 118. Minister Bountrogianni and Premier McGuinty spoke of the future for Ontarians. There was a representative from the Retail Council of Canada, who expressed the willingness of retailers and private business to conform to the Bill. Happy Faces everywhere! Yes I was there.

The Ministry responsible for Accessibility of Ontarians Disability Act 2005 was the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration since then moved to the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). The Ministry of C&SS is responsible for the Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act 2005 more commonly known as AODA. Under the Act, the Minister is required to establish an Accessibility Standards Advisory Council (ASAC). This is an advisory council whose mandate is to advise the minister on the development of accessibility standards and on sector-specific and general public education programs to support the implementation of the AODA. The Minister is also required to establish standards development committees (SDCs) which are made up of members of the community, business, the broader public sector, such as hospitals and school boards, Ontario government ministries and people with disabilities or their representatives. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario is a component of the Ministry which supports both ASAC and the SDCs.

There are five Standards Development Committees created as follows:

1. Customer Service Standards (became a standard effective Jan. 2008)
2. Transportation
3. Accessible Built Environment
4. Employment

5. Information and Communication

As you probably already realize from the Proposed Transportation Standard released in 2007 there are many areas to be reviewed. As a new member of the Transportation Committee I anticipated perhaps another few months of reviewing changes. The fact is they have planned for another 10 months of review. It will be 3 years of addressing the Proposed Standard for Transportation. I am a Voting Member of that Committee. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the Canadian Standards Association are taking the process very seriously. All areas are being considered from needs, costing, and review with other transportation standards already formed. There is an interjurisdictional report that compares these factors.

As a member of the Accessible Built Environment Standards Development Committee (ABE-SDC) since the beginning it has been truly exciting. The builders, architects, developers, Canadian Standard Association representative, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario have been listening, sharing and caring in this process. Even before the committee met there was a survey submitted to the members regarding Built Environment's Barriers, Trends and Issues.

This Document plus an Open Space meeting has led the committee to 90 plus elements. The Element list is a growing list but ensures we address all areas. From stairs, ramps, accessible routes, to Play Areas.

All presently existing committees have increased membership since December of 2007. The 'Challenged' (disabled) community is represented NOW as 50% membership on each committee, sub-committee, and Task Force. This was part of the election promise and part of the AODA 2005 that 50% of persons on Accessibility Advisory Committees be Disabled and/or represent the Disabled community.

This start doesn't mean that we may sit complacently but rather it encourages us to continue the dialogue with politicians ensuring that this process continues and truly our voices will be heard.

Each participant on the various committees has literally tons of reading prior to the two day meetings. Two days of very intense dialogue addressing the subject of the committee (Transportation or ABE). The morning starts at 8.00 a.m. with Continental Breakfast and the formal meeting officially starts at 8.30 a.m. Often Lunch is a working Lunch. There is Terms of Reference, Rules and Procedures, plus a Charter for each committee.

The members are encouraged to share the information with the community and stakeholders. The business community is aware and perhaps even anxious about the end results of this process. While we all are knowledgeable about the American Disability Act I personally feel that our present process will be more positive and with less litigation. Our process affords us the privilege of each Standard to be reviewed in 5 years time and with that the shortfalls will be addressed.

I anticipate some of the people hearing this saying 'what about a political party change in government?' Then the members of Social Action will have to be diligent and make sure this process continues. The positive side is that the government staffers are keen to have a Barrier Free Ontario as much as we are. There has been a lot of behind the scenes education of politicians and staff regarding Challenges not through 'Burning Wheelchairs' but rather by Open Clear Dialogue. The target market for our message really is 'those persons not impacted by Challenge' at this present time.

The status of the Transportation SDC is a review of the previously submitted Proposed Standard. The review has started with categorized Work Plan of Task Forces (for example: Training Task Force, Fixed Route/Public Transit Task Force, On-demand Taxi Task Force, and Booked, School and Other Service Task Force. I am a member of the Taxi TF. One particular aspect being addressed is

the cost for Accessible Taxi. A member shared with me that it cost \$32.00 in Toronto for Access. Taxi whether going 2 blocks or more. While in Burlington it is the same cost for a regular taxi and the City of Burlington subsidizes the cost with 'Taxi Script' if you qualify for that script. That fact alone recognizes the need for standardization of service throughout Ontario.

A tip for our community members is to tell the Committees either directly or through communications with the Directorate of YOUR concerns/challenges/etc. If we don't tell them they can't know! Contact me or anyone you know that is a member anytime with your concerns or your suggestions.

Check the web site for the Minutes of the Committees and read.

One part that needs expanding in our Challenged Community is the Communicating/Networking. Transportation, (Toronto Transit, etc.) Architects, Developers, Builders, etc. all have their organizational meetings outside of the Committee and have the privilege of knowing each other's personalities, agendas, and history. We don't! The more the Challenged Community can meet and share is beneficial rather than re-inventing we will be able to collaborate on ideas with strength and knowledge. We should have our own Organization that

meets weekly/monthly/etc. in order to put forth ideas
and shape the future of Ontario as BARRIER FREE!

Thank you all and God Bless!

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