



Policy Name	Accessibility		
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Author	CEO	Next Review	2029
Policy Maintenance	Reviewed by Management and City Accessibility Coordinator		

Policy Statement

St. Catharines Public Library (SCPL) is committed to the provision of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities and shall at all times undertake reasonable efforts to ensure library policies are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity.

This policy outlines how SCPL will comply with the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11 ("IASR") issued under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 ("AODA").

This policy applies to all aspects of SCPL's operations and is intended to meet the requirements of the IASR. It governs the accessible provision of goods services, facilities, information, and communications to persons with disabilities, including members of the public, staff, volunteers, and third parties acting on SCPL's behalf.

As required by the IASR, this policy also encompasses our commitment to accessible employment practices, the design of our public spaces, and our general requirements, including staff training and the procurement of accessible goods.

Scope

All library employees, volunteers, or others who are responsible for delivering goods, services or facilities by, or on behalf of SCPL are required to comply with this policy.

Definitions

Assistive Devices: Devices and technologies that increase mobility, hearing, vision and communication capacities of persons with disabilities.

Accessible Formats: May include but not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille, and other formats that are useable by persons with disabilities.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or practice.

Communication Supports: May include but not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

Disability: (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.

Guide Dog: A “guide dog” is a dog trained as a guide for a blind person, and which has the qualifications prescribed under the Blind Persons’ Rights Act.

Internet website: Means a collection of related web pages, images, videos or other digital assets that are addressed relative to a common Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) and is accessible to the public.

Kiosk: An interactive electronic terminal, including a point-of-sale device, intended for public use that allows users to access one or more services or products or both.

Practicable: In the context of the IASR, practicable refers to actions or measures that are reasonably possible to implement, considering:

- Technical feasibility
- Availability of suitable tools, resources, or technologies
- Financial and operational constraints
- Impact on service delivery or organizational functions

Where full compliance with accessibility requirements is not practicable, SCPL will make genuine and documented efforts to identify alternative solutions that uphold the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities.

Service Animal: an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,

(a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or

(b) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

- (i) A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
- (ii) A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
- (iii) A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- (iv) A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
- (v) A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
- (vi) A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
- (vii) A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
- (viii) A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- (ix) A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

Support Person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities.

Regulations

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
- Human Rights Code
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11
- Blind Persons' Rights Act
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment)

Responsibility

All library staff have a shared responsibility to implement this policy operationally or through policies, practices or procedures. All library policies and procedures related to the provision of library goods, services or facilities must also comply with the IASR.

SCPL recognizes that the Ontario Human Rights Code has primacy over the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and that the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations do not diminish SCPL's legal obligations toward persons with disabilities that arise under the Human Rights Code or any other Act or which are otherwise imposed by law. If two laws conflict, the provision that provides the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities is the law that will be followed.

Operational Guidelines

1.0 General Requirements

1.1 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

SCPL establishes, implements, maintains and documents a multi-year accessibility plan ("the plan"), which outlines the libraries strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the IASR.

The plan is updated every five years and is available on SCPL website. SCPL will establish, review and update the plan in consultation with persons with disabilities, as required by legislation.

A report on the progress of measures taken to implement the plan is included within the City of St. Catharines annual accessibility status report and is posted on the City of St. Catharines website.

The plan and annual status report are available in an accessible format upon request.

1.2 Procurement

SCPL incorporates accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.

Where SCPL determines it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features, SCPL will provide an explanation upon request.

SCPL incorporates accessibility features when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

1.3 Training

SCPL ensures that appropriate training is provided, as soon as practicable to (1) all employees and volunteers, (2) to those persons who develop and approve library policies, and (3) any other person who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of SCPL.

Appropriate training includes a review of the purposes of the AODA, and the requirements of the IASR and the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities, and includes specific training on the Customer Service Standards of the IASR, and including the following:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
- How to use equipment or devices available on library premises or otherwise provided by SCPL that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities;
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing SCPL goods, services or facilities; and
- Library policies, practices and procedures relating to the Customer Service Standards of the IASR.

Training is provided in a way that best suits their actual duties and on an ongoing basis in respect of any changes to this or other library accessibility policies.

2.0 Information and Communication

2.1 Website and web content

SCPL internet website and web content will conform to the Worldwide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). SCPL will update its practices as guidelines evolve.

2.2. Accessible formats and communication supports

SCPL will, upon request, provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner that considers a person's accessibility needs due to disability, and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons. SCPL will consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

2.3 Feedback Process

SCPL welcomes feedback and maintains a feedback process so that members of the public are able to comment on the provision of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities.

Feedback may be provided in person, by telephone, in writing, by electronic text, or through other accessible means. All feedback will be reviewed by the CEO or their designate and responded to within 5 business days, in a format that is accessible to the individual.

SCPL will ensure that all other feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

2.4 Emergency procedure, plans or public safety information

SCPL will provide any emergency procedures, plans or public safety information that it makes available to the public, in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request.

2.5 Resources and Services

SCPL offers resources in a wide range of formats for customers with disabilities. Such resources include (but are not limited to):

- Downloadable e-Audiobooks
- Downloadable eBooks and digital periodicals, which allow the customer to customize the text size and typeface
- Books on CD
- Large Print books
- DVDs and Blu-ray videos with subtitle and descriptive narration options
- Online resources with text-to-speech capabilities

SCPL will provide access to or arrange for the provision of access to accessible materials where they exist.

SCPL will make information about the availability of accessible materials publicly available and will provide the information in accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request.

SCPL may provide accessible formats for archival materials, special collections, and rare book donations.

3.0 Customer Service

3.1 Use of Service Animals

Persons with disabilities accompanied by a guide dog or service animal may access library owned or operated premises that are open to the public or other third parties and may keep the guide dog or service animal with them except where excluded by law.

Where law excludes the guide dog or service animal, other options are to be made available to ensure the owner has access to library goods, services or facilities. Where the guide dog or service animal may affect the health and safety of other persons, SCPL will discuss the situation with both parties and make every effort to meet the needs of both parties.

3.2 Use of Support Persons

Persons with disabilities accompanied by a support person may access library owned or operated premises that are open to the public or other third parties.

Where the assistance of a support person is required by a person with a disability they must not be prevented from having access to the support person.

Before SCPL requires a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health and safety reasons, SCPL will consult with the person to understand their needs, consider health or safety reasons based upon available evidence and determine whether there is no other reasonable way to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability and the health or safety of others on SCPL premises.

Where a library department or area charges an entry fee, the department or area will ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, payable in respect of the support person. SCPL will not charge an entry fee to a support person in any case where SCPL requires the presence of the support person in accordance with the previous paragraph.

3.3 Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use Assistive Devices to access library goods, services or facilities and SCPL will facilitate use of such Assistive Devices, as needed.

3.4 Notice of Temporary Disruptions

Notice of temporary disruptions of library facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities is provided as far in advance, or as soon as possible, as is reasonable in the circumstances, and will include:

- The reason for the disruption;
- The anticipated duration of the disruption; and
- Information identifying alternative facilities or services, if any that may be available.

4.0 Employment

All requirements in Part III of the Employment Standards Act are set out in the SCPL Accommodation Policy.

5.0 Built Environment and Public Spaces

SCPL follows the *Design of Public Spaces Standards* under the IASR for all newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces, ensuring accessible entrances, walkways, parking, and service desks. All construction, retrofits, and redevelopment projects also comply with the *City of St. Catharines Facility Accessibility Design Standards*, with consultation from the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

6.0 Availability and Format of Documents

If SCPL is asked to provide this document or any other document describing this policy to a person with a disability, SCPL will do so in a timely manner in a format that accommodates the person's disability.