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TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy – Proposed Revisions

Date:	March 27, 2013
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

This report outlines Toronto Public Library's (TPL's) strategies and initiatives undertaken to meet the legislative obligations and policy commitments under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), 2005, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation 2010, and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation that came into effect for large public libraries on January 1, 2013.

To meet the requirements, the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy has been updated to incorporate the new regulation and the revised policy is recommended for approval. Public consultation was undertaken on the policy to understand residents' needs and to increase outreach and awareness of Library services and accommodation for persons with disabilities.

The Library has met its legislative requirements for 2013 through the specific initiatives outlined below and detailed in the Compliance Status Report (TPL's multi-year accessibility plan) that details legislative requirements, highlights achievements and is available through the Library's website.

Toronto Public Library is committed to meeting or exceeding the requirements of the AODA and its regulations by identifying, removing and preventing barriers to persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1.   adopts the revised *Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy* (Attachment 2).

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The report has no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

The most recent AODA regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), came into force on July 1, 2011. The regulation schedule required the meeting of the requirements for large designated public sector organizations by January 1, 2013.

The Library's Accessibility for People with Disability Policy incorporates AODA requirements up to 2010, including the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service ("Customer Service Standard"), and was approved by the Toronto Public Library Board on January 18, 2010.

The Library Board received the *Website Translation and Accessibility* report on December 17, 2012 that detailed the Library's use of accessibility and translation tools to promote and improve the accessibility and usage of the website.

COMMENTS

The revised Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy (Attachment 2) is updated to include requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. The policy reinforces the Library's commitment to meet or exceed the requirements of the AODA in a manner that ensures the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity.

Changes to the policy were made based on 2013 legislative requirements and the results of the public consultation. Some minor changes were made for clarity, including: aligning the definition of "disability" to reflect the full definition in the Act; changing the word "people" to "persons" to highlight the diversity of experience among individuals living with disabilities[1][2] ; and updating references to reflect current legislation.

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[1] Council of Ontario Universities. "Understanding AODA and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" Accessed March 13, 2013. http://www.aoda.utoronto.ca/ascs/COU-ASCS-Module-1-HTML/22.html
[2] Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities. "A Way with Words: Guidelines for the Portrayal of People with Disabilities" Accessed March 13, 2013. http://www.aoda.ca/a-way-with-wordsguidelines-for-the-portrayal-of-people-with-a-disability/

Legislative Requirements

TPL has fulfilled the requirements of the AODA and related regulations as they have come into force. AODA and its regulations fit underneath the Ontario Human Rights Code and other existing legislation with respect to the accommodation of persons with disabilities. In 2005, the AODA came into effect to ensure that all Ontarians are given equal treatment and service, regardless of ability. AODA's regulations are to be phased in over time, and include requirements for large public service organizations, as well as specific requirements for public libraries.

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation's requirements for TPL came into effect as of January 1, 2013, including the Compliance Status Report (TPL's multi-year accessibility plan), which is publicly available. TPL's status report is posted on the website to guide staff and inform the public of legislative requirements and annual achievements related to the AODA and its regulations. The Library is required to submit an annual status report on the progress of the plan to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which will be submitted in the first quarter of 2013. The 2013 requirements are outlined below and summarized in the *Summary of Changes to the Proposed Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy* (Attachment 1) chart:

- Establish an accessibility policy;
- Create a statement of commitment;
- Incorporate accessibility criteria into the selection and procurement processes for goods, services, and facilities;
- Incorporate accessibility criteria into the design, selection and procurement processes for self-service kiosks;
- Provide access to accessible collections, including e-books, e-audio books, large print and talking books
- Establish a publicly available AODA Compliance Status Report (multi-year accessibility plan).

TPL was in compliance with a number of the accessibility requirements in advance of the 2013 legislative deadline. The Library established its Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy in 2010, which included a statement of commitment as its policy statement. TPL also provides access to accessible collections, and has accessibility features incorporated in the website to meet the requirements of the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

Through the capital program, the Library incorporates accessibility criteria and features into building projects in accordance with the City's Accessible Design Guidelines. These guidelines[3] have been in place since 2004 to ensure that accessibility criteria is uniformly incorporated into the design of new buildings owned or operated by the City. The guidelines were created using the legislation that was in place at the time, including the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) that was replaced by the AODA. In these

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[3] City of Toronto (2004). "Accessible Design Guidelines" Accessed March 15, 2012.
http://www1.toronto.ca/static_files/equity_diversity_and_human_rights_office/pdf/accessibility_design_guidelines.pdf

guidelines, there are accessibility requirements for libraries, including requirements for book return and checking areas (service counters) and exterior paths of travel such as ramps and stairs.

There are additional accessibility requirements that TPL will be required to comply with in the future. Under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, TPL will be required to:

- Make website and web content accessible with WCAG 2.0 Level A compliance (2014) and then increasing to Level AA (2021);
- Updated human resources practices and processes (2014);
- Make communications accessible (2015).

In addition, the Design of Public Spaces Standards Regulation (Accessibility Standard for the Built Environment) was introduced on December 17, 2012[4] through an amendment to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation to address the removal of barriers primarily in outdoor public spaces, by ensuring that accessibility features are incorporated into the designs of new building projects and planned redevelopment projects.[5] It came into force on January 1, 2013 and TPL will be required to comply by 2016 through:

- Incorporating accessibility features to allow for mobility aids when upgrading or building new service counters;
- Incorporating accessibility features such as accessible seating when upgrading or building new waiting areas;
- Incorporating accessibility features when creating or upgrading parking lots or on-street parking;
- Having an accessibility plan that includes preventative and emergency maintenance procedures for the accessible parts of the public space;
- Having procedures to handle temporary disruptions in service when an accessible part of the public space stops working;
- Incorporating accessibility features into exterior paths of travel such as ramps and stairs when building new or upgrading existing exterior paths of travel.

The Library will track developments at the City regarding its capital program and new guidelines based on the Design of Public Spaces Standard Regulation. In addition, it is expected that accessibility barriers inside public spaces will be addressed through the enhancement of Ontario's Building Code, to be released at a later date.[6]

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[4] Saint-Cyr, Y. (2012, December 20) "Ontario Accessibility Standards: What Comes After the December 31, 2012 Reporting Deadline?" Accessed March 15, 2013 http://www.slaw.ca/2012/12/20/ontario-accessibility-standards-what-comes-after-the-december-31-2012-reporting-deadline/

[5] Saint-Cyr, Y. (2012, August) "Proposed AODA Built Environment Standard for Public Spaces Released for Public Consultation" Accessed March 14, 2013. http://www.slaw.ca/2012/08/30/proposed-aoda-built-environment-standard-for-public-spaces-released-for-public-consultation/

[6] Ministry of Community and Social Services (2013, March 5) "Built Environment". Accessed March 14, 2013. http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/built_environment/index.aspx

As new requirements come into force, the Board will be updated on City guidelines, new requirements and budget implications, and the policy will be revised as appropriate.

Summary of Public Consultation and Proposed Revisions to the Toronto Public Library's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy

TPL's Public Consultation Policy requires the Library to consult on new services. To fulfill this requirement, public consultation is undertaken as each of the AODA regulations is released. Goals of the consultation include understanding residents' needs related to accessibility and creating awareness of services and programs currently available.

Consultation strategies included:

- An online survey with options for completion in person, by phone, TTY, or email;
- A presentation to the City's Disability Issues Committee, to provide information on the proposed policy, accessible services at TPL and the opportunity to promote the consultation to interested stakeholders;
- An e-mail to 120 stakeholder agencies providing services to adults and children living with disabilities;
- Discussion with TPL's Home Library Service customers.

Comments received through the consultation will inform service strategies in 2013 and beyond and are summarized below.

Stakeholder Responses
Stakeholder responses focused on the draft policy with suggestions to improve the clarity of the policy by detailing how the Library is addressing barriers to accessibility.

Specific comments related to several sections of the policy, including:

- Increased detail around the feedback process;
- The presence of support people when discussing personal or confidential information;
- The incorporation of considerations for risk associated with use of assistive devices;
- The addition of the Ontario Human Rights Code as a reference;
- Addition of the word "attitude" to the definition of barrier.

Public Responses
Overall, the public respondents indicated that they were pleased with accessibility at TPL and were making specific suggestions to lead to future improvements. Responses focused on branch and online accessibility. There were a limited number of comments related to the draft policy. Specific suggestions included:

- To enhance accessibility, both virtual and branch services must be considered; small barriers still exist including entrance gates;
- E-audio and e-books provide new accessibility options, but the interface has to be easy to use;
- CNIB collections are important resources and should be available through public libraries;
- Options for accessible registration, including large print cards and online registration need to be considered;
- Video content on the Library website should include closed captioning.

TPL is responding to suggestions made through the consultation process in the 2013 Strategic Plan Work Plan, including the addition of close captioning on videos on the Library's website and the objective to increase the range and amount of available e-content, including e-books and e-audio, and making it more easily accessible. TPL participates in the CNIB Partners Program to provide access to the CNIB collection in alternate format for persons with print disabilities.

Further training of staff will be conducted and communications will be updated. A training session for Board members will be provided in the upcoming months.

Conclusion

The Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy requires TPL to meet or exceed standards in the AODA in a manner that respects the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity through the provision of accessible services and collections.

Beyond legislative requirements, TPL has initiatives and services to remove service barriers, including a commitment for the provision of materials in a variety of formats and reading levels, including e-content and online information resources. The Adaptive Technology Centre at the Toronto Reference Library and accessibility hubs at the North York Central Library and at a number of district branches offer adaptive aids and service options. These strategies enable TPL to deliver services that promote accessibility for all.

TPL has been selected to house the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Documentation Centre for Books for Young People with Disabilities, arriving in 2013. The Centre's collection of 4,000 books will be an important new resource for Toronto's children and families, and will further enhance TPL's reputation as a leader in children's library services.

To promote awareness and sensitivity of the importance of accessibility, training on the new policy, the AODA and regulations will be provided to all staff and the Board in accordance with the Act.

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SIGNATURE

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Jane Pyper
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of Changes to the Proposed Accessibility for Persons with
               Disabilities Policy
Attachment 2: Proposed Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy
Attachment 3: AODA Compliance Status Report (TPL's multi-year accessibility plan)