

## **Backgrounder on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005**

(reference: <http://accessontario.com/aoda/>)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law on June 13, 2005. Under this legislation, the government of Ontario has developed mandatory accessibility standards that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

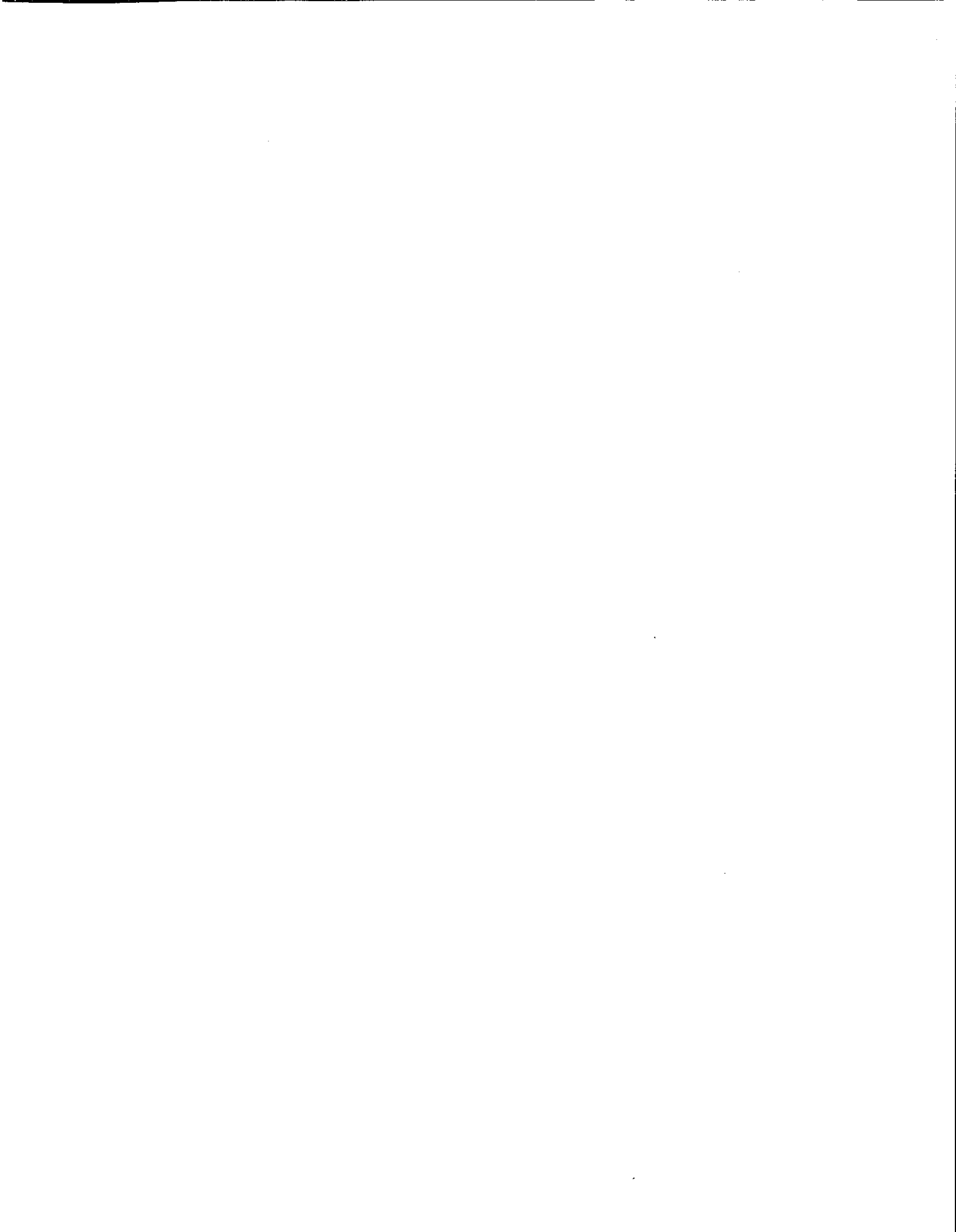
Types of disabilities considered by the AODA include visible physical disabilities as well as less readily apparent disabilities such as vision, hearing, and intellectual or developmental impairments. It is estimated that approximately 16% of Ontarians would be considered disabled under the definition in the Act.

The AODA is made up of five Standards, each covering an aspect of daily living. Deadlines for compliance range from January 1, 2010 into 2021. The Accessible Customer Service Standard is the first standard.

The **Accessible Customer Service Standard** applies to all levels of government, private sector businesses, and nonprofits and charity organizations which have one or more staff, all of which are expected to comply with this Standard by January 1, 2012. Monetary penalties have been established to enforce compliance with accessibility standards.

The Accessible Customer Service Standard sets out the obligations for businesses and organizations to provide goods and services in a way that is accessible to people with disabilities.

The draft policy to be considered at the HLBC Member's Meeting on November 11, 2012 addresses the requirements of the Standard.



# Heart Lake Baptist Church

## Accessibility Policy For Providing Programs and Services to People with Disabilities

(Updated: February 17, 2012)

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### 1. Our mission

The mission of Heart Lake Baptist Church (HLBC) is to connect people to Christ and His church and engage one another on the journey to maturity.

HLBC recognizes that all people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and that God's image is uniquely reflected in each person. Each person's characteristics, abilities and disabilities are to be valued and respected.

### 2. Our commitment

In fulfilling our mission, HLBC strives at all times to provide its programs and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

We are also committed to giving people with disabilities equal opportunity to access our programs and services and to allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other church attendees.

We will be welcoming to all by being a community of people who do not show favouritism to anyone, and by readily extending grace rather than casting judgement, greeting all with warmth and acceptance. We will communicate the gospel in ways that are easily understood by the community with which we are connecting. As good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us we will strive to make our church facilities and programs easily accessible to those unfamiliar to us and to those who move about with difficulty.

### 3. Administration of this Policy

The Council of HLBC will oversee the administration of this policy. The policy will be reviewed at least once each year and updated as appropriate to ensure compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07).

Council will:

- monitor church programs and services to ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with this policy
- ensure that accessibility training and training materials are provided for all relevant church staff and volunteers
- ensure that assistive devices provided by the church are in good working order, and that requests for additional assistive devices are considered promptly
- regularly solicit and respond to feedback on this policy and HLBC's approach to accessibility

## **4. Providing programs and service to people with disabilities**

HLBC is committed to excellence in serving all church attendees, including people with disabilities, and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

### **4.1 Communication**

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will train staff and volunteers who communicate with church attendees on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

Where appropriate, we will provide church materials (study material, bulletin, financial statements) in formats that are accessible for people with disabilities.

### **4.2 Telephone services**

We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our church attendees. We will train office staff to communicate with members over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. We will offer to communicate with church attendees by email or letter if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

### **4.3 Assistive devices**

We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to participate in and benefit from our programs and services. We will ensure that people are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices to access sanctuary services and all other applicable church programs and services. We will familiarize ushers and other front-line staff with the various assistive devices that may be used by members with disabilities while accessing our programs or services.

The church acknowledges that when circumstances prevent the use of certain assistive devices it is our responsibility to provide appropriate alternative accommodations.

The church will provide the assistive devices it deems necessary for accessing its programs and services. Ushers and other front-line staff will be trained on how to use the assistive devices available on our premises, including wheelchairs and listening devices.

Upon a member's request, the church will make every effort to provide the requested assistive device and/or service, and to cover relevant financial expenses.

## **5. Use of Service Animals and Support Persons**

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public. We will permit people with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal when participating in services and programs.

We will provide appropriate accommodations for both members and their service animal in cases where an activity excludes the use of service animals (e.g. kitchen).

We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with church attendees are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter HLBC's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises. Fees will not be charged for support persons accompanying the person with a disability to events hosted by HLBC that include a cost (e.g. dinners, conferences).

## **6. Notice of temporary disruption**

HLBC will provide attendees with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities (e.g. accessible washroom, main doors, accessible parking spaces).

This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be delivered by means of an email to congregation or a verbal announcement during services (see Appendix A for sample communications).

## **7. Training of Staff**

HLBC Council will be responsible for coordinating training for all employees, ministry leads, ushers and Council members (see Appendix B for a suggested list of positions requiring training).

Council will also be responsible for developing training resource materials in compliance with the legislation.

## **8. Feedback Process**

HLBC is committed to surpassing expectations while serving attendees with disabilities. Comments on the accessibility of our programs and services are welcome and appreciated. Feedback can be provided by e-mail, verbally, or feedback card (see Appendix C).

All feedback should be directed to the Chair or Vice-Chair of Council. Attendees can expect to receive a confirmation of receipt and outline of next steps within three days (See Appendix D).

## **9. Modification to this or other policies**

We are committed to developing church accessibility policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Any policy of HLBC that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be reconsidered.

## **10. Questions about this policy**

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to church attendees with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to, Council of HLBC.

## **Appendix A**

### **Sample Documents for Notifying Church Attendees about Disruptions in Service**

Sample 1

Dear Church Attendee,

The accessible parking spaces will not be available between April 1 to 15 for routine maintenance.

We regret any inconvenience this may cause. Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ to make alternative arrangements for accessible parking during this time.

Thank you.

Council

Sample 2

Dear Church Attendee,

One of our accessible washrooms is out of service due to a broken pipe. A repair person will be on the premises tomorrow to fix it. In the interim, one accessible washroom is available on the main floor outside the office. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Thank you.

Council

## **Appendix B**

### **List of positions requiring training**

Pastoral Staff

Administrator

Ushers

Council

## **Appendix C**

### **Sample Documents for Obtaining Feedback**

Sample 1

Attendee Feedback Form \*

Thank you for attending HLBC. We value all of our attendees and strive to meet everyone's accessibility needs.

Please tell us the date and time you attended HLBC:

Did we respond to your accessibility needs today?    \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_ PARTIALLY (please explain below)

Contact information (optional)\*:

Name:

Phone Number:

Thank you.

HLBC Council

Sample 2  
Record of Church attendee Feedback \*

Date feedback received:

Name of church attendee [optional]:  
Contact information (if appropriate)\*:

Details:

Follow-up:

Action to be taken:

Council member:

Date:

\* Note: There may be privacy implications for organizations collecting personal information. Need for a disclosure statement.

## **Appendix D**

### **Sample Notices on the Feedback Process**

Feedback process on provision of programs or services to attendees with disabilities

Sample 1  
Dear Valued Church Attendee,

We strive to improve accessibility for our attendees with disabilities. We would like to hear your comments, questions and suggestions about the provision of our programs or services to people with disabilities. Please contact the Chair or Vice-Chair of Council in person, by mail or at [phone number], or by email [email address] to share your comments.

Thank you.  
HLBC Council

Sample 2  
Dear Valued Church Attendee,

We strive to improve accessibility for our attendees with disabilities. We welcome your feedback. Please call [phone number] or email [email address] to share your comments, or request a copy of our accessibility policy.

Thank you.  
HLBC Council