

**Department:** All Departments  
**Applicable:** All Employees  
**Date Issued:** February 2026

**Date Reviewed:** March 2026  
**Review Period:** 2 years

## 1.0 Statement of Commitment

- 1.1 Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. STO is committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and Ontario's accessibility laws.
- 1.2 STO is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.
- 1.3 STO understands that obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.
- 1.4 STO is committed to excellence in serving and providing goods, services or facilities to all clients, including people with disabilities. Our accessible client service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of STO.

## 3.0 Definitions

Accessibility: refers to giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. It is used to describe how widely a service, product, device or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility can be seen as the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.

Accessible formats: may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

AODA: the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and its regulations.

Assistive device: any device used by people with disabilities to help with daily living; any auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, mobility assistive devices and medical aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks and electronic communication devices).

Barrier: anything that keeps someone with a disability from participating in all aspects of society. Examples of barriers include the following: attitudinal barriers; informational or communication barriers; technological barriers; systemic barriers; and physical and architectural barriers.

Client: any person who uses the goods and services of the agency.

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

Guide dog: means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations

Person with a disability: an individual who has a disability. "Disability" is defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code as

- 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;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Service animal: An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if

- 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
- 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:

- A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario
- A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

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

## 4.0 Training

4.1 STO is committed to training all staff and volunteers in accessible client service, other Ontario accessibility standards, and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

4.2 In addition, STO commits to training:

- a) all persons who participate in developing STO policies; and
- b) all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of STO.

4.3 Training will be tailored to the specific roles of employees and volunteers.

4.4 Training may include:

- a) the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards;
- b) STO's policies related to the Customer Service Standards;
- c) how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- d) how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- e) how to use equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities;
- f) what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing STO's goods, services or facilities.

4.5 Equipment and devices may include:

- a) accessible meeting rooms or seating arrangements;

- b) assistive listening devices (where available);
- c) captioning and transcription tools for virtual meetings;
- d) screen reader-compatible digital platforms.

4.6 Training will be provided as soon as practicable after an individual is hired or engaged, and additional training will be provided when policies change.

4.7 STO maintains records of training provided, including the dates of training and the number of individuals trained.

## **5.0 Assistive Devices**

5.1 People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing STO's goods, services or facilities.

5.2 If an assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern, or is otherwise not permitted, STO will use alternative measures to ensure the person with a disability can access goods, services or facilities.

5.3 STO ensures staff are trained and familiar with assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities, including those provided by STO or commonly used personal devices and are not reimbursable.

## **6.0 Communication**

6.1 The STO communicates with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

6.2 Communication methods may include:

- a) plain-language verbal communication;
- b) written materials in accessible digital formats;
- c) email or telephone communication;
- d) virtual meeting platforms with captioning features;
- e) alternative formats upon request.

6.3 STO will work with individuals with disabilities to determine the most appropriate method of communication for their needs.

## **7.0 Service Animals**

7.1 STO welcomes people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are permitted in areas of STO premises that are open to the public and third parties.

7.2 If it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, STO staff may request documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the service animal for reasons related to their disability.

7.3 A service animal may be identified through visual indicators such as a harness or vest, or by the tasks it performs for the person.

7.4 If service animals are prohibited by another law, STO will:

- a) explain why the service animal is excluded; and
- b) discuss alternative ways of providing goods, services or facilities.

7.5 At this time, STO does not maintain areas where service animals are prohibited, except as required by law.

## **8.0 Support Persons**

8.1 person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is permitted to have that person accompany them on STO premises.

8.2 STO does not charge an additional fee for support persons where fees are applicable.

8.3 In certain cases, STO may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons. Before making such a determination, STO will:

- a) consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs;
- b) consider health or safety concerns based on available evidence; and
- c) determine whether there is any other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the individual or others.

8.4 Where a support person is required, any applicable admission fee for the support person will be waived.

## **9.0 Notice of Temporary Disruption**

9.1 In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to goods, services or facilities used by people with disabilities, STO will notify clients promptly. Notices will include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration, and information about alternative goods, services or facilities where available.

9.2 Services and facilities may include:

- a) in-person service counters;
- b) meeting or training facilities;
- c) online portals and digital services.

9.3 Notices will be provided through:

- a) STO's website/social media accounts;
- b) email notifications where appropriate;
- c) signage at affected locations.

## **10.0 Feedback Process**

10.1 STO welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible client service. Feedback helps us identify barriers and improve accessibility.

10.2 Feedback may be provided:

- a) by email;
- b) by telephone;
- c) through STO's Feedback Form on its website.

10.3 All feedback, including complaints, will be directed to the appropriate management representative and addressed in a timely manner.

10.4 Clients can expect a response within 10 business days.

10.5 STO ensures its feedback process is accessible by providing accessible formats and communication supports upon request.

## **11.0 Notice of Availability of Documents**

11.1 STO notifies the public that documents related to accessible client service are available upon request through:

- a) its website; and
- b) written notices in public-facing offices.

11.2 STO will provide documents in accessible formats or with communication supports upon request, in a timely manner and at no additional cost. We will consult with the requester to determine the most suitable format or support.

## **12.0 Self-Service Kiosks**

12.1 STO will consider accessibility features for people with disabilities when designing, procuring, or acquiring self-service kiosks.

## **13.0 Procurement**

13.1 Where applicable, STO incorporates accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities. If it is not practicable to do so, an explanation will be provided upon request.

## **14.0 Information and Communications**

- 14.1 STO has an accessible process for receiving and responding to feedback.
- 14.2 Upon request, STO will provide information about the organization and its services in accessible formats or with communication supports:
- a) in a timely manner; and
  - b) at no additional cost beyond that charged to other persons.
- 14.3 If information or communications are deemed unconvertible, STO will provide an explanation and a summary of the content.
- 14.4 STO notifies the public of the availability of accessible formats and communication supports through its website and public notices.
- 14.5 STO will meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

## **15.0 Employment**

- 15.1 STO notifies employees, job applicants, and the public that accommodations are available during recruitment and hiring.
- 15.2 Applicants selected for an assessment or selection process will be informed that accommodations are available upon request. STO will consult with applicants to provide suitable accommodation.
- 15.3 Successful applicants are informed of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when employment offers are made.
- 15.4 STO provides employees with disabilities with information on supports and accommodations as soon as practicable after employment begins and whenever policies change.
- 15.5 STO consults with employees when developing accommodation plans and provides accessible formats or communication supports for:
- a) information needed to perform job duties; and
  - b) information generally available to employees.
- 15.6 Where required, STO provides individualized workplace emergency response information and reviews it when circumstances change.
- 15.7 STO maintains written processes for:
- a) developing individual accommodation plans; and
  - b) supporting employees returning to work following disability-related absences.

15.8 Performance management, career development, and redeployment processes take into account accessibility needs.

## **16.0 Design of Public Spaces**

16.1 Where applicable, STO will meet accessibility requirements when building or making major modifications to public spaces, including service counters, waiting areas, and parking.

16.2 STO maintains procedures to prevent service disruptions to accessible features of public spaces.

## **17.0 Changes to Existing Policies**

17.1 Any STO policy that does not respect or promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

## **18.0 Availability of This Policy**

18.1 This Accessibility Policy is publicly available. Accessible formats are available upon request.

## **References**

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O. 2005, c. 11 (2005). Retrieved from <https://www.aoda.ca/the-act/> and <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

Blind Persons' Rights Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7 (1990). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90b07>

Government of Ontario. (2019). How to Create an Accessibility Plan and Policy. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-create-accessibility-plan-and-policy#AppendixA>

Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11 (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191>

Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19 (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19>

This policy aligns with the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) and the agency's equity and inclusion practices.