

Thank you Dean Moran.

My municipality has stated that AODA is “not a real law” and this statement guides the lack of compliance to the AODA and its subsequent standards for those of us with disabilities living in the municipality.

We have also been told that “It (specialized transportation service) is a gift, done out of the goodness of our hearts ...and can be taken away any time we want.” Another guiding principle.

By extension, this means that in my municipality:

- Access to education for people with disabilities is a gift, done out of the goodness of “our” hearts...and can be taken away any time “we” want.
- Access to medical and health care by people with disabilities is a gift, done out of the goodness of “our” hearts...and can be taken away any time “we” want.
- Access to employment by people with disabilities is a gift, done out of the goodness of “our” hearts...and can be taken away any time “we” want.
- Access to social, recreational and religious activities for people with disabilities is a gift, done out of the goodness of “our” hearts...and can be taken away any time “we” want.
- Access to any goods and services by people with disabilities is a gift, done out of the goodness of “our” hearts...and can be taken away any time “we” want.
- Access to voting and participation in the political process by people with disabilities is a gift, done out of the goodness of “our” hearts...and can be taken away any time “we” want.

And finally, living in the municipality is a “gift” that can also be taken away at any time. In fact, it has been mentioned that perhaps we should move.

We need enforcement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and its subsequent standards.

We need an independent investigative body that those of us with disabilities can go to start an investigation, even at the municipal level, when we encounter noncompliance and violations of the provincial laws.

We need that independent investigative body to be able to impose penalties.

Adding to the noncompliance in the municipality is the Accessibility Advisory Committee which is not currently supporting the AODA or its subsequent standards, is making decisions without consultation of those of us with disabilities and has had no training on its responsibilities under the AODA.

We need consequences and accountability for Accessibility Advisory Committees that support noncompliance and violations of the AODA and its subsequent standards.

We need consequences for Councils and staff who foster the noncompliance of their Accessibility Advisory Committees.

There must be accountability for this partnership when there is “agreement” to noncompliance.

The AODA 2005 must be strengthened to clearly state that a municipality cannot divert reports and recommendations of an Accessibility Advisory Committee to sub-committees.

It must be clear that the working relationship is between the Council and its Accessibility Advisory Committee. Penalties must be imposed for noncompliance.

I would like to address the issue of the need within the Transportation Standards to recognize both conventional and specialized transportation service as being public transit or public transportation. Although this umbrella category does include both types of transportation, in rural municipalities, specialized transportation service as public transportation may not be acknowledged, especially if it is taxi-based.

In rural municipalities research has shown that often the most cost effective and best way of providing specialized transportation is taxi-based or limousine/car for hire based.

In most cases, a municipality recognizes the need for specialized transportation years before there is a need for conventional transportation.

We must have clarification in the Transportation Standards that specialized transportation service is a separate contract from that of the primary business and that it is a form of public transit and must comply with any public transit rules, regulations and legislation and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations for Transportation.

Currently in my municipality, because specialized transportation is viewed as a “gift” that can be taken away, and because in July of 2012 staff and elected officials stated that by rebranding specialized transportation service as a “subsidized transportation program we can get rid of AODA” we have a service that has no rules and live in fear that at any time we will be imprisoned in our homes through the elimination of the current “transportation service.”

Prior to this Council and staff, we have had specialized transportation in one form or another for about 20 years in my municipality including the ability to travel on holidays. We were included in our community and recognized as a part of our community. We are now moving backward instead of forward.

We need intervention and enforcement of the AODA and its subsequent standards.

Aside from specialized transportation services that are taxi-based, we need the standards to begin looking at taxi fleets and creating the standard that all taxis must be accessible by 2025. Given that research is now showing that rear entry taxis for wheelchairs is not

comfortable and represents accessibility issues, we need to investigate and establish which type of accessible taxi vehicle is a standard in Ontario.

We need to begin looking at the standard for technology within taxis such as the ability for people who are blind to have fares read to them to ensure that what the driver says is correct and that they are taking the best route to the destination. We have that technology now, it must be part of the standards.

We need it stated in the Transportation Standards that a public transit whether conventional or specialized must have an up to date website with all the information about the transportation service. In rural municipalities this means a website separate from the primary business. There must be no confusion about which service you are accessing. Public transit should not be kept secret.

There must be transparency and separation between the primary business and the contract for specialized transportation service.

In summary:

- We need enforcement of the AODA and its subsequent Standards.
- We need an independent investigative body that those of us with disabilities can go to for assistance; and that body must have the ability to impose penalties.
- We need accountability and consequences for Accessibility Advisory Committees and Councils who support the noncompliance and violation of AODA and its subsequent standards; and who are not moving Ontario toward being an inclusive community.
- We need clear language that both conventional and specialized transportation service ARE public transit as globally defined;
 - That a contract for specialized transportation service is a contract for public transit and separate from the primary business;
 - And that all information pertaining to public transit (conventional and specialized transportation) be updated and current on a municipalities website (including application forms, appeals process and how much of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations, Customer Service Standards and main Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act have been implemented and the timeline for the remaining standards implementation).
- We need to begin thinking about the standards for the purchase of all taxi and limousine type vehicles as we move toward 2025 and those standards should represent the best fit for those of us with disabilities based on safety and comfort.

Again I thank you for holding these public meetings and allowing those of us who believe in the rights of people with disabilities and the AODA to speak to the review.