



Toronto Conference
The United Church of Canada

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Toronto Southeast Presbytery
963 Pharmacy Avenue,
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Date: March 1, 2011

To: Congregations and Non-Profit Corporations of Toronto Southeast Presbytery

Dear Friends,

Many blessings to your ministries in these lovely days of early spring!

We are writing to ask you to consider a matter which will become ever more important as the year 2011 progresses. It concerns Access for Ontarians with Disabilities. In 2005, the Ontario Government began a process of passing into law, new standards and regulations for public buildings and services. We are not just talking about wheelchair ramps, rather, the whole spectrum of disabilities must be considered. The law will be all-encompassing as you will soon learn.

The government has put in place a series of 5 steps of legislation, with the end result being, that by 2025, every single public building in this province will be fully accessible to people with all kinds of abilities. Each step will be implemented sequentially, and will be backed up with law to make sure it is happening uniformly across the province.

Of course, as Christian communities, we are concerned about the wellbeing of those who come into our buildings. But we have sometimes thought that for whatever reason, the standards and laws of other public buildings applies to us only voluntarily. This has changed now.

By January 2012, each congregation and ministry site in our presbytery **MUST** have a policy and a plan in place, according to the provincial guidelines. Each congregation and ministry site will need to have a committee or team for implementation and on-site training; each board or committee will have to pass a motion with the appropriate policy and procedures outlined.

In order to give you time to get these pieces of work accomplished by the deadline (year-end), and in order to provide a consistent plan for implementation, we are holding a workshop on Saturday April 2nd, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the presbytery offices, 963 Pharmacy. Each congregation will need to send two people, if possible. We will provide a training binder and a flash-drive for each congregation, with all the material you will need to take back to your own site, for implementation. In the fall, we will hold a second workshop for those who are having trouble with some of the rules and regulations, the date of which is not yet set.

Please find the enclosed flyer for your congregational and non-profit Board or Council. We encourage you to make this issue known throughout your congregation in the coming months, as all of us adapt to some new compliance with some new regulations. The end result is going to be worth it!

The mission of Toronto Conference is to strengthen Congregations, Pastoral Charges, Outreach Ministries, and Missions to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.



Jamie Ramesbottom and I have attended training events on the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act), and we will be leading the workshops in our presbytery. Jamie manages one of the non-profit corporations in our presbytery, and I am one of the ministers in one of our congregations. We hope that you will let us know soon who is coming from your congregation (or board) so that we can plan accordingly. Please register with Wendy Miller at the presbytery office as soon as you can. We'll collect the \$5 fee from folks at the door.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday April 2nd, at 9 a.m.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John G. Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. John G. Smith
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