

Canadian Summary

Braille and Tactile signs are a requirement in Canada. More specifically, any permanent room in a public building requires a sign that has raised text (tactile copy) and corresponding Braille. The size of the text, the font, its placement on the sign, spacing, pictogram size, color contrast, Braille shape and whether it is Grade 1 or 2 Braille are all part of a well tested system for people with vision impairments and people with low sight.

The underlying principle of this requirement is to safeguard the rights of people with disabilities by providing equity of access into the same buildings people without disabilities have.

Building owners are responsible for ensuring equity of access for people with disabilities.

Architects, Graphic Designers, Building Inspectors, Sign Companies, and Access Auditors are responsible for giving advice and compliance of legislation, building standards and codes.

Why Braille & Tactile signs? It is a long answer.

The world is littered with examples of discrimination. All developed countries agree that a world with equal access to all people regardless of their ethnic background, religion, or physical ability should be the end goal.

In 1993 the United Nations (UN) adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons that have provided policy guidelines on promoting the same opportunities to persons with disabilities that others enjoy and these have served as model legislation for a number of countries. The legal framework for this has been a long process.

In 2008 the United Nations Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was completed and Canada Ratified the Convention. (A Convention by definition is a set of agreed, stipulated, or generally accepted Standards). A universal, legally binding standard is needed to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are guaranteed everywhere. Canada as well as other countries has started the process of implementing the CRPD. The CRPD is a tool that helps communities and governments understand why and how the rights of people with disabilities haven't been realized and it provides a framework that articulates the conditions needed to make rights a reality.

In Canada legislation starts with one province, moves to the others, and then is adopted nationally. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is the start. It is supported by the Canadian Building Standards and the National Building Code. Again these standards are used as guidelines and are adopted at the provincial and municipal level. The portion of the standards that governs signage is the CAN/CSA B651-12. This outlines the specifications for Braille & Tactile signs within the design built environment.

It is everybody's responsibility to make our world a better place to live in. We can do our small part by ensuring the rights of all people are taken into account. This is why Braille & Tactile signs are a standard part of the design built environment.

Links below.

<http://www.aoda.ca/make-buildings-and-spaces-accessible/>

<http://www.oboa.on.ca/events/2010/sessions/files/510.pdf>

<http://www.signs.org/SignIndustry/TechnicalRegulatoryResources/BuildingCodes/FederalStandardsforAccessibleDesign.aspx>

<https://www.standardsstore.ca/eSpecs/search.do;jsessionid=?=&searchKey=TITLE&organization=&generic=true&text=Accessible%20Design%20for%20the%20Built%20Environment>