**Advocacy Letter Samples**

# **Sample 1: Summer Patios on Sidewalks**

Mayor Roseline Charles

Office of the Mayor

Town of Milton

123 Main Street

Milton, ON L9T 5W5

August 3

Dear Mayor Charles,

My name is Ravi Patel, and I am a blind resident of Milton. I’m writing to share my concerns about the accessibility barriers posed by summer patios on sidewalks in the downtown area.

I regularly travel downtown for work and volunteer activities. I use a white cane to navigate, and I do so independently, but the summer patios on downtown sidewalks have been impeding my ability to travel safely to and from work and my local mosque. I often encounter these patios on sidewalks which have very limited room for pedestrians to pass each other without someone being forced to step off the sidewalk onto the road. This places all pedestrians at risk for injury, especially those who are blind or partially sighted.

Over the last four months, I have spoken in person and over the phone with Joanna Garcia, Accessibility Coordinator for the Town of Milton. I met with Joanna in her office on March 3 to share my concerns about summer patios. Joanna assured me that she would address the issue with the relevant city staff. I followed up with Joanna over the phone on June 5 to reiterate my concerns about my safety, and she informed me that she had spoken with the relevant city staff but was unable to provide more information. Despite my conversations with Joanna, I continue to encounter patios on downtown sidewalks while I try to get to and from work and the mosque.

What I am asking of your office is that city staff be directed to investigate the accessibility barriers posed by summer patios on sidewalks and establish appropriate bylaws which would limit patios to areas where a clear path of travel around the patio is possible.

As a municipality that aims to improve access to active transportation options, the Town of Milton must follow through on the commitments made in recent pedestrian safety initiatives (see links below) and prioritize pedestrian safety so that all citizens can navigate with confidence, independence, and safety. While summer patios can enhance quality of life for all of us, their presence must not create accessibility barriers for pedestrians. Not only are summer patios problematic for people who are blind or partially sighted, but also for people who use wheelchairs and parents who use strollers. Our downtown sidewalks are already crowded enough with trees, utility poles, and sandwich boards. Pedestrians don’t need any additional obstacles.

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this with you in further detail. I will call your office next week to schedule a meeting with you.

I look forward to working with you to find a solution.

Sincerely,

Ravi Patel

# **Sample 2: Floor Markings and Stanchions**

Hardeep Singh

Branch Manager

Scotiabank

123 Main Street

Milton, ON L9T 5W6

August 3

Attention: Hardeep Singh, Branch Manager

My name is Francisco Martinez, and I have held an account at your branch for eighteen years. As a customer who is blind, I am writing to you to share my concerns about the floor markings and stanchions that have recently been introduced at the branch.

As a result of my blindness, I use a white cane to navigate. While I know that all customers at the branch are supposed to follow the arrows on the floor, I am not able to see the arrows, nor can I feel them with my cane. Additionally, the stanchions that direct customers to tellers are not cane detectable. As a result, I am no longer able to do my banking independently at your branch and must rely on my husband or daughter to accompany me and help me navigate safely through the space.

I ask that you please review the recommendations outlined by CNIB in Clearing Our Path (linked below) and ensure that all floor markings and stanchions within the branch are cane detectable. I know that these features have been introduced to control the flow of traffic and keep everyone safe, but they need to be made accessible for all customers, including those who are blind or partially sighted.

I will call your office next week to follow up with you directly. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at the below phone number or email address.

Sincerely,

Francisco Martinez

# **Sample 3: Access to Facilities**

James Leung, Chair, Milton Accessibility Advisory Committee

Town of Milton

123 Main Street

Milton, ON L9T 5W5

January 5

Attention: James Leung

My name is Melissa Jenkins, and I am an advocacy volunteer with CNIB. I’m writing on behalf of a group of blind and partially sighted residents of Milton. We would like to share our concerns about the accessibility of the Sports Center’s Maple Avenue entrance.

The Maple Avenue front entrance to the Sports Center is not connected to the main sidewalk. While the distance between the main sidewalk and the building’s front entrance is short, the space is occupied by a garden and is not a safe option for someone who is using a white cane or a guide dog to navigate. This means that people who are blind or partially sighted must navigate around the building and across a busy parking lot to access the front entrance, which puts our safety at risk.

I shared my concerns with Anna, the Front Desk Manager, on September 3 after a member of our group was nearly struck by a car in the parking lot while trying to get to the front entrance. I was assured that my concerns would be passed along and that someone would follow up with me. I did not receive a follow up phone call or email.

On November 23, while attempting to cross the parking lot with my guide dog, I was stopped by a driver who let me know that someone leaving a parking space had almost backed into me and my guide dog. The driver helped me get to the front entrance, but the incident left me shaken. The next day, I wrote a letter on behalf of a group of blind and partially sighted patrons of the Sports Center and sent it to the Center’s general inquiries email address. I have not yet received a response. You will find the letter attached to this email.

To reduce the risk of injury to patrons of the Sports Center, the front entrance should be made more accessible for everyone. This can be achieved by installing a sidewalk that connects the main sidewalk to the front entrance of the building.

While we understand that many patrons of the Sports Center are drivers who will access the front entrance from the parking lot, we urge the Accessibility Advisory Committee to consider the needs of patrons who are not drivers or are accessing the front entrance from the sidewalk. The lack of a direct pathway between the main sidewalk and the front doors does not only impact patrons who are blind or partially sighted, but also people who use wheelchairs, parents with strollers, and those who access the Sports Center from the nearest Maple Avenue transit stop or on foot.

We are asking that this matter be brought before the committee and that we be given the opportunity to make a formal presentation at an upcoming committee meeting.

I will follow up with you next week to find out when the committee will be able to place this matter on the agenda.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me using the below contact information.

Sincerely,

Melissa Jenkins