

**AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESSES: ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR**  
**WEBINAR 7**  
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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**Date:** April 29, 2016

**Presenters:** Rebecca Johnson (Thunder Bay) & Maury O’Neill (Wawa)

**Host:** Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Planning Outreach Initiative

**TOPICS COVERED**

**General Questions**

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**Questions for Maury About Wawa’s Experience**

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## GENERAL QUESTIONS

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### 01. Could you explain how you overcome "objections" to what you were trying to do? Any major push back that you weren't expecting?

**Thunder Bay** – Well I think Maury really identified that in her presentation. There is no question that it's an economic driver for a business. If you're not age-friendly, particularly now when we look at the growing demographics of the senior population, you better be because that's your customer and it's a growing customer. So I thought Maury did a very fine job of identifying the economic spin-off for a business. That's all you have to do. What is better for your bottom line? Where do you want your bottom line to be? And you better make sure that you are addressing those customer needs because that's who your customer is and you don't want to be in the red at the end of the year, you want to be in the black. Beyond that, you can do as much as you want, but it's profit and loss and that's what it boils down to in the final analysis

### 02. Who was the push back coming from mostly- council members or businesses?

**Thunder Bay** – I can't speak that we had any real pushback. Council had no pushback at all. Our city council was very receptive to identifying and approving a senior charter. We went to the WHO, we were approved by that. We now have a city action plan in place, "[Age-Friendly City Services Action Plan](#)". Our city council was very receptive to that. We went to all of the businesses. Businesses were saying, how do I make my bottom line better? If that's my customer, how do I do that? And of course too, accessibility for Thunder Bay - all of those things are being addressed a bit at a time, which ties in with seniors. To sum up, I don't recall any pushback at all to be quite honest with you.

**Wawa** – I would say that there is no pushback from the community. I think it's more just reluctance. Because this is a new process in Wawa and the action plans are not complete, it's just reluctance from the business community at this time, because of basically the bottom line - the financial commitment. We need, down the road, to look at businesses and say this is what it might cost but here's what the return might be, and it's all about that ROI. So again, I would just echo Rebecca's comments. There is no pushback.

### 03. Are funds still available through seniors secretariat to hire an organization to do the work Thunder Bay and Wawa has conducted?

**Seniors Secretariat** – We released the age-friendly grant program about a year and a half ago and we are looking at possibly running another one in the fall, so stay tuned. We'll make sure it's on our website and, of course, on our partner Age-Friendly Ontario website. So stay tuned.

### 04. Were the businesses already on board with their AODA Customer Service Policies, staff training, etc.? Many items on the checklist are recommended under the AODA.

**Thunder Bay** – Well I can't speak for Wawa but I can tell you in Thunder Bay that the businesses that are under the AODA are either already business-friendly for seniors or working towards

that. We're all aware that with the AODA regulations this year that you must be up to code. but all businesses are not there; there is no question about that. Some things need to be grandfathered; some things need to be changed. For example in Thunder Bay, we have an accessibility committee for our city, which as senior representation. So those needs are recognized at that level of the community. That is why we're talking about, for example, additional handicap parking - seniors are requesting that. The other thing that we have to look at is the whole area of accessibility and are seniors' needs really tied together. There is no question about that, and I think that through both lenses, they can be very similar and it's something that we really need to look at and we are doing that already in Thunder Bay.

**Wawa** – I ditto Rebecca's comments and basically the municipality (as I understand in researching this project) because of our buildings, as long as they have a plan to address accessibility issues, which might include ringing a bell and providing service at the street level, they're in compliance of the AODA and they're not required under legislation to have an accessibility committee but I believe they're looking at one.

## QUESTIONS FOR REBECCA ABOUT THUNDER BAY'S EXPERIENCE

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### 01. Do you have a pass/fail for businesses? Do seniors verify what the store says they have?

- Not at this point in time and that's one of the things that we are going to do, we need a measureable. When we went out and did this back in 2012 and 13 we just did it because we thought it was good, and at that time, we didn't think about how to really measure or evaluate our initiatives.
- We do know that it's happening in some businesses, but at the same point in time that's why we're going back to the drawing board to say, if we have this many businesses today in 2016, how many will we have that are actually doing what we want in regards to the age-friendly business component and what we are doing for 2017? So we have to develop those measurables and if we wanted to do a webinar in approximately 5 months from now or we would have that in place and that's what we're working on right now.

### 02. What form of recognition do businesses get? A decal? A Certificate? Do you have an event recognizing them? Promote them through featured interviews?

- Our Chamber of Commerce has business awards every year which many chambers of commerce have across the country. We are in discussion now with the Chamber to actually have an age-friendly award. So when they have their annual business awards, there would be one that would be recognized for age-friendly. So by the time the awards come up again next spring we are hoping the award will be in place. That will be a huge bonus for us. To have a business that is recognized amongst its peers as being age-friendly. If we can accomplish that, that will be the biggest promoter of this program that we could ever get in the business sector.
- Businesses don't want another decal on their door. They're not interested in that, and if they're in a mall they won't even put it up so why go through the effort of doing that. I think it's the one-on-one. When I walk into a store and I observe they're either age-friendly or they're not, that to me is the recognition. We can give businesses certificates, but to me that's not the value. It's whether they really are. We have people that serve as a mystery shopper who visit a business and do a review of their business from an age friendly perspective. That was part of our analysis of 'are they age-friendly?' So if we can send them a note and say that we understand that you're age-friendly including a copy of our business guide that has significant rewards. Those are the kind of incentives that are more of value to an individual store. It's one by one that you really make progress. One by one.

### 03. What's the follow up after the Guides are distributed? Are changes made or is it just to create awareness?

- I would say that it was more about awareness when we started this off. We didn't do any real, true, what I would call evaluation - that was not part of it initially. But what we did do was we went to various businesses, the 20 for example that we brought to the table originally that worked with seniors and our steering committee, we went to those businesses and said 'how have you changed' and we were able to identify some specifics.
- We followed up with those 20 businesses. We have seen change in those 20 businesses, but that was all we did at that point in time. You definitely need to have some form of an evaluation so that you can really know what the trends are, are there really improvements being made, etc. As I say that's something that we are going to look at as we develop and redo our whole business program for this year.

### 04. Can you tell us how you engaged businesses with franchises? Did you do the policy research first, call head office, or work with the local franchise manager?

**Chairperson** – Rebecca you had touched on franchises. I believe you said that you hadn't reached out to franchises but you would in the future, correct?

**Thunder Bay** – Yes, there is no question that they will be part of our discussion now. If I was going back and doing this back in 2012 and 13, I would have incorporated those at that time. We just thought they're doing their thing at their national level and we wouldn't really have much of an impact on them. We felt that we could make changes with local businesses that are locally owned. Maybe some of the franchises are locally owned as well but we thought that they wouldn't be particularly welcoming if they had to go under a national policy. We didn't know, we just decided at that time that we were just going to go with local businesses because we could actually make changes at that level. But going back, if I had to do it again as I've noted, I would bring some of those retailers and some of those nationals to the table and find out what their policies were relative to age-friendly. I would not have eliminated them. But we learn as we go.

**Participant comment** – In Ottawa, they've had good interactions with some Farm Boys and Your Independent Grocers.

**05. What resources does the city commit to AF Thunder Bay (i.e. funding, dedicated staff resources, other?)**

- Well that's a very good question. Right now, we are in the process of looking at that. If I could say there's a budget for age-friendly Thunder Bay, it would be probably in the ballpark of about \$10,000, which is very insignificant to be quite honest with you. That would be a direct budget allocation. There are budgets allocated within the overall city in various divisions but are not necessarily specific to age friendly. What we have done though, is we have our city action plan that has been approved by city council as an age-friendly action plan. So how much that actually costs, I don't know if there is a real financial dollar target that I could give you. But all of our divisions and departments are age-friendly, they have to be, so that's incorporated right within the whole division of all of our city departments. Beyond that, to actually get some dollars for an age-friendly initiative, as I say it would be approximately \$10,000.
- We are now going through a consultation which will provide a community action plan which will network into the city's action plan. From that we know that we are going to be looking at additional dollars. We have a committee in place at the city council level dealing with age-friendly and they will be putting up a proposal to council for the next year's budget. My expectation is that it will be much higher than \$10,000. But we have a starting point and recognition by council that age-friendly needs a budget. Small steps that lead to larger ones.

**06. Have those 20 Thunder Bay businesses communicated to your community the improvements they have made to become more age-friendly?**

- I would say that the initial 20 businesses have communicated to their clients by way of attracting more seniors into their business. There has not been a formal recognition but we intend to go back to those initial 20 businesses as we do our review.

**07. Has a community seniors contact/consultant position been established by telephone?**

- Not in Thunder Bay. A good question though. We are looking at establishing a Senior Advocate at the City Council. That decision will come out of our City Council Special Purpose Committee. The Committee has a Terms of Reference with a set list of objectives. Their report and recommendations will come back to council in October of this year.



## QUESTIONS FOR MAURY ABOUT WAWA'S EXPERIENCE

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### 01. Where did you take your stat from - 140% more spent by happy customers?

- When I was doing my research, I found that in some of my research. I don't have it at the tip of my brain where I got that stat. But it was quoted from a source that I could share later, but basically the stat means that if your customer is happy they will be a repeat customer and they will spend usually on a shopping visit 140% more if they're a repeat customer. So I can cite that later for you to share.
- Source: [The Value of Customer Experience, Quantified \(Harvard Business Review\)](#)

### 02. Are your businesses aware of the customer service and accessibility rules from the Govt. of Ontario?

- Generally, no. The businesses in Wawa are often less than 10 employees and need to be trained on the legislation.