

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Making Ontario accessible for persons with disabilities.

The Province of Ontario has adopted important legislation regarding persons with disabilities. It's called the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#). It's the first of its kind in Canada that sets out a number of Standards that both the public and private sector will be required to comply with within prescribed time lines.

Persons with disabilities should have the same kind of opportunities as everyone else. They should be able to do the things that most of us take for granted - going to work or school, shopping, taking in a movie or eating out.

That's the goal of Ontario's legislation. Businesses and organizations who provide goods and services to people in Ontario will have to meet certain accessibility standards in five important areas of our lives:

1. **customer service**
2. **transportation**
3. **information and communications**
4. **built environment**
5. **employment**

Advisory Committees of people representing disabled and business communities are working towards:

- developing proposed accessibility standards
- releasing an initial proposed standard for public review
- revising the proposed standard to incorporate public input
- submitting a final proposed standard to the government for consideration as law.

What is the importance of the Ontario AODA legislation?

This legislation recognizes the need to be more accessible to people with disabilities as the right thing to do. It also makes good sense economically and socially. Ontario's population is getting older. Twenty years from now, 20 per cent of the people living in the province will probably have a disability of some kind. When barriers get in the way of people with disabilities participating fully in society as a result of their disabilities, everyone in Ontario loses.

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) provides various standards and mechanisms for Ontario to become barrier-free.

Who does this legislation apply to?

The AODA applies to both the public and the private sectors. The public sector is required to gain compliance earlier than the private sector and both sectors are anticipated to work towards compliance and provide a barrier free Ontario by 2025.

What is a "disability"?

The AODA uses the Ontario Human Right Code's definition of "disability." This definition includes physical, mental health, developmental and learning disabilities. A disability may be visible or not visible.

What is a barrier?

A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from participating fully in society because of his or her disability. A barrier can be visible or invisible. An example of a visible barrier is a building with steps but no ramp. An example of a barrier that is invisible is a policy that sets a time limit for completing a test for employment or for training or promotion opportunities.

What is an accessibility standard?

An accessibility standard is a rule that persons and organizations have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers.

Who develops accessibility standards?

People with disabilities, people from different industries and sectors, and Ontario government ministries work together on committees called Standards Development Committees. The committees recommend proposed accessibility standards to the Ontario government cabinet minister who is responsible for the AODA.

The committees set goals to keep Ontario on the path to becoming barrier-free. The goals include what needs to happen to remove barriers and a timetable for achieving the goals. The committees have flexibility. They can set different proposed timelines to achieve standards for different kinds of organizations. Economic conditions or costs are two reasons why a committee might set different proposed timelines. Some requirements will be easier to implement, others may take longer.

The Minister responsible for the AODA reviews the proposed accessibility standards. The Minister decides whether to recommend making the proposed standard a regulation ("rules to follow") under the AODA.

For more information or to get this document in an alternate format, contact the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario at:

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