

An Introduction to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

An Introduction to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a summary only. It is not legal advice. If there is a conflict between this introduction and the AODA, the Act prevails.

Why does Ontario have this legislation?

Ontario needs to be more accessible to people with disabilities. It is 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 a way for Ontario to become barrier-free.

Who is included?

The AODA covers both the public and the private sectors.

What is a “disability”?

The AODA uses the Ontario Human Rights 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.

How long will it take to make Ontario accessible?

The goal is to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities in Ontario by 2025. The standards development committees will set a series of proposed targets for what needs to happen to reach this goal. The length of time to reach a specific target must be no more than five years.

How will we know if Ontario is making progress in becoming barrier-free?

Persons and organizations must comply with the accessibility standards that apply to them. It is the law. They must also send a report to the government to provide the information that the

government will require to determine if the person or organization is complying with the standards. They must send the reports every year or when the director, under the AODA, requests the report. These reports must be available to the public. There could be reviews to check the accuracy of the reports and to check if the person or organization is complying with the standards. Individuals or organizations that do not comply with the requirements of the Act could face an order to take an action to comply with a standard, or financial penalties.

Every year, the government must write a report that tells how well Ontario is doing in becoming barrier-free.

In 2009, the government must appoint a person to look at the effectiveness of the AODA and its regulations. That person may recommend changes that could make the Act or its regulations more effective. After this first review, there will be reviews of the Act every three years.

For more information or to get this document in an alternate format, contact:

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
Ministry of Community and Social Services
400 University Avenue, 3rd Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2R9
Tel: 416-326-0207 / Toll-free: 1-888-520-5828
TTY: 416-326-0148 / Toll-free: 1-888-335-6611
Fax: 416-314-7307
E-mail: accessibility@css.gov.on.ca

To read the Act, visit the e-law website of the Ontario government:
www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/05a11_e.htm.

© Queen's Printer for Ontario 2006