Selection of SDCs - Customer Service and Transportation (General)

What has happened with the establishment of the standards development committees for transportation and customer service?

Following a public recruitment process in Fall 2005, members were selected for both the Transportation and Customer Service Standards Development Committees. Committee members underwent mandatory training and orientation and both committees started meeting in February 2006.

Timelines for the work of each committee were identified in the Terms of Reference, made public as part of the recruitment process. Each committee will be meeting to work on developing their respective proposed standards for submission to the Minister in Fall 2006.

How was the selection process conducted?

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the following persons must be invited to participate on standards development committees:

- Persons with disabilities or their representatives,
- Representatives of industries, sectors or classes of persons to which an accessibility standard applies,
- Representatives of ministries that have responsibility related to the industries, sectors or classes of persons to which an accessibility standard applies, and
- Other individuals and organizations that the Minister considers advisable.

A public recruitment process occurred in Fall 2005. Letters were sent out to interested parties and an online application service was established. Information and the on-line application were made available on the website of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

What are the sizes of the committees?

The Customer Service SDC has 26 voting members and the Transportation SDC has 27 voting members. In addition, a Chair was assigned to each committee.

How many people applied?

Over 150 people from across the province applied for the two committees. Many applicants applied for membership on both committees.

Are committee members being compensated?

Supports to accommodate people with disabilities will be provided as needed and any out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed (e.g., travel related expenses, accommodations for personal attendants or caregivers). Additional support may be

available for individuals who do not already receive compensation as part of their job or vocation or as required, and can be requested in writing.

Who is on the two committees and are you going to communicate to stakeholders to let them know?

Committee membership lists, including the chairs of the committees, are available at the following links:

Customer Service

Transportation

Are there going to be other standards development committees?

Other standards development committees will be established to develop proposed common standards that address barriers that are common to all sectors, and may apply broadly to all persons and organizations in Ontario . In addition to customer service, the intention is to develop common standards in the following areas:

- Built environment – Refers to access to, from and within buildings and outdoor spaces; and could include counter heights, aisle/door widths, parking and signs, as well as pedestrian access routes and signal systems;
- Employment – Refers to hiring and retaining employees; and could include employment practices, policies and processes;
- Information and communications – Refers to information processing and communication, and could include publications, software applications and websites.

These standards would apply across all sectors in Ontario . In addition, there may be a need to develop standards to address accessibility requirements that are unique to a sector. Transportation is an example of a sector specific standard.

Customer Service

Why a standard on customer service?

In the case of customer service, the ability to access services, whether in the public or private sector, is critical to daily living for all people with disabilities. Customer service involves attitudes, which are often cited as the biggest barrier to people with disabilities. A customer service standard will address how service is provided across all sectors in Ontario.

What will be the scope of the proposed customer service standard?

Customer service is a common standard that applies broadly to all persons and organizations in Ontario. The Terms of Reference for the committee require it to set out proposed requirements for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in customer service. This may include:

- Addressing training gaps in customer service,
- Addressing barriers in business practices, and
- Developing ways to build knowledge and awareness in meeting the customer service needs of people with disabilities.

To whom will the standard apply?

Proposed customer service standards would apply to Ontario industries and sectors of the economy that provide customer service. The committee will have the flexibility to create different requirements for different types of organizations and classes.

What are other jurisdictions doing in terms of implementing customer service standards for people with disabilities?

To our knowledge, Ontario will be a leader in developing such a standard. In most jurisdictions, customer service standards are distributed among other standards dealing with employment, health services, etc.

How will we get access to the proceedings of the customer service committee?

Minutes are posted on the website of the Ministry of Community and Social Services: www.mcss.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html. If you do not have Internet access, please call the Directorate's general inquiry line for copies of minutes: 416-326-0207 (local) or 1-888-520-5828 (toll-free). TTY numbers are 416-326-0148 (local) and 1-888-335-6611 (toll-free).

Transportation

Why a sector-specific standard in Transportation?

During the development of the AODA the government heard that accessible transportation is a critical area. Transportation has far reaching and significant impacts on daily living activities of persons with disabilities, such as going shopping, getting to school or getting and keeping a job.

Many municipalities, transit providers and private transportation companies have made progress in the area of accessible transportation – we see low floor buses making it easier to board for everyone, wheelchair accessible taxis and drivers being trained on how to provide good customer service to passengers with disabilities.

While there has been progress in the area of accessible transportation, improvements have to be made. The standards development committee will be considering the progress made in Ontario as well as the remaining barriers. Through the development of the proposed standards the transportation committee will set out requirements and incremental timeframes to create accessible passenger transportation in Ontario over time.

What will be the scope of proposed transportation standards under the AODA?

The mandate of the transportation committee is outlined in its Terms of Reference. It specifies that standards should address barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities in the delivery of public and private transportation services. In this case, public and private transportation services refer to modes of passenger transportation within provincial and municipal jurisdiction (such as municipal transit and taxis).

The transportation standard is a sector-specific standard. It will not address barriers that would be common to a broad range of sectors, such as the built environment, customer service, employment and information and communication. The committee will focus on addressing barriers that would be unique to the transportation sector.

To whom will the proposed standard apply?

Proposed transportation standards would apply to organizations that are in the business of providing passenger transportation services in the public and private sectors. For example – municipal transit, commuter rail and bus services, and taxis.

The committee will specify the organizations to which the standards will apply. It will also have the flexibility to create different requirements for different types of organizations.

How will we get access to the proceedings of the transportation committee?

Minutes are will be posted on the website of the Ministry of Community and Social Services: www.mcss.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html. If you do not have Internet access, please call the Directorate's general inquiry line for copies of minutes: 416-326-0207 (local) or 1-888-520-5828 (toll-free). TTY numbers are 416-326-0148 (local) and 1-888-335-6611 (toll-free).

Built Environment

Why a potential standard in the area of the built environment?

We want all people with disabilities to have access to the same opportunities to participate in society as people who do not have disabilities. This would include key areas such as buildings, premises, facilities and structures and other components of the physical world we live in that make it possible for people with disabilities to access employment, education, transportation, and goods and services.

Will developers and owners of buildings and tenants have to meet two different sets of standards, one under the Ontario Building Code and one under the AODA, 2005?

We anticipate that standards for buildings will be contained in the Building Code and that other built environment standards will be harmonized with them .

What will be the scope or definition of a built environment standard?

A potential standard in the area of the built environment is a common standard that could apply broadly to persons and organizations in Ontario , and could include a range

of elements of the built environment in both indoor and outdoor spaces including access, egress, circulation, parking, signage, and security.

Employment

Why does the government intend on developing standards in the area of employment?

Employment is critical. People with disabilities should be able to get and maintain a job without having to face barriers that people without disabilities do not face.

The AODA sets a framework to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards applying to all sectors – covering a number of areas, including employment.

The purpose of the AODA is to benefit all Ontarians. Employers that have accessible employment practices will be able to tap into a larger pool of skills and talent that includes people with all types of disabilities. People with disabilities will have full opportunity to participate in the economic life of the province.

What would be the scope of a potential standard under the AODA in the area of employment?

A potential standard in the area of employment could address barriers in employment practices, policies and processes, that exclude people with disabilities from getting and maintaining a job – and participating fully in the economic life of the province.

Barriers in employment for people with disabilities include: interview practices, inaccessible workstations, and workplace practices, policies and training.

To whom and what types of organizations will the proposed standard apply?

A proposed standard in the area of employment would be a common standard that would apply broadly to employers across Ontario . In developing a proposed standard, the committee will have the flexibility to propose different requirements for different types of organizations.

Communications and Information Technology

What will be the scope of a potential standard in the area of communications and information technology?

Generally, a proposed standard in communications and information technology could deal with information processing and communication, and could include publications, software applications.

To whom will the standard apply?

Any potential standard in the area of communications and information technology would be a common standard that applies broadly to all persons and organizations in Ontario .

In developing a proposed standard, the committee will have the flexibility to propose different requirements for different types of organizations and classes.