

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN ONTARIO

July 14, 2009

Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in 2005, becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to commit to breaking down barriers through mandatory standards by 2025. These accessibility standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario will have to follow to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Ontario is developing accessibility standards in key areas of everyday life, including:

- customer service, which came into force January 1, 2008
- transportation, which was submitted to the government for consideration
- information and communications, which was submitted to the government for consideration
- employment, which is being finalized following public review that ended in May 2009
- the built environment — a proposed draft is being released today for public review.

Committees of people from the disability and business communities:

- develop proposed accessibility standards
- submit an initial proposed standard for public review
- revise the proposed standard to incorporate public input
- submit a final proposed standard to the government for consideration as law.

ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The committee's proposed built environment accessibility standard — the fifth proposed standard to be released under the legislation — is [available online](#) for the public to review until October 16, 2009.

The committee's initial proposed standard aims to make the built environment in Ontario accessible, including all new construction and extensive renovations. The standard proposes requirements for various categories of buildings and other structures in Ontario, including:

- Common access — entrances, doorways, ramps, stairs
- Exteriors — curbs, crossings, street furniture
- Plumbing — washrooms, showers, drinking fountains
- Communication — signage, telephones
- Buildings — air quality, acoustics, lighting.

The committee proposes the following timelines:

- New construction to follow the standard within 12 months of it coming into force
- Substantial renovation to follow the standard 12 to 36 months of it coming into force.

Visit www.AccessON.ca for more information on accessibility.