

Expanding your customer base. Making it easier to find information. Helping everyone get around more easily. Creating spaces for everyone. Giving everyone the opportunity to work.

AODA 2010

Annual Report

**Accessibility for Ontarians
with Disabilities Act, 2005**

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services
Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

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Message from the Minister of Community and Social Services



Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community
and Social Services

I am pleased to present the 2010 annual report on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

In 2005, we set out to make Ontario accessible for everyone. In 2010, we celebrated our five-year journey with the success of our first accessibility standard – for customer service – throughout the broader public sector. We are now moving forward with the tools necessary to reach out to over 360,000 organizations in the private and non-profit sectors.

By the end of the year, 100 per cent of the broader public sector had filed compliance reports. That's an extraordinary achievement. It shows Ontarians that change is happening and sets an example for the private and non-profit sectors that must make their customer service accessible in 2012.

In 2010, we also completed the bulk of our standards development work for the next three accessibility standards – for Information and Communications, Transportation, and Employment. And in response to public feedback, we have been working to combine these three standards into one streamlined regulation to make them easier to implement while minimizing both cost and regulatory burden.

Also on the standards development front, we received the final proposed Built Environment standard from the committee in fall 2010. It is now being reviewed and analyzed before moving to the next stage in the standards development process.

Two major reports were released on the AODA in 2010. The first was an independent review carried out by Charles Beer. The second was released by the Martin Prosperity Institute and is an in-depth look at the potential social and economic benefits of accessibility in Ontario.

This year, we continue to focus our efforts on supporting organizations that are implementing the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service in 2012. We also look forward to finalizing the next three accessibility standards and moving forward on our fifth and final standard following more public consultation.

It has been an active year in our accessibility journey, and we are moving forward with strong momentum in 2011. Together, we are turning our vision of an accessible Ontario into reality.



Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services

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The non-profit forum in June 2010 was a gathering of 150 key umbrella organizations. The event launched outreach to this important sector.

An Accessible Ontario: Moving the Vision Forward

When it was first enacted five years ago, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) presented an ambitious task: to make Ontario accessible for everyone who lives in and visits the province by 2025.

This task has been undertaken with dedicated enthusiasm. And the results of our efforts are beginning to show.

Through the development and implementation of province-wide standards on accessibility, considerable progress is being made in bringing the vision of an accessible Ontario to life. We are pleased to report on our accomplishments of the past 12 months and to provide a more detailed look at both the milestones we've reached and the headway we've made towards achieving our goal.

Accessibility standards are being developed, implemented and enforced in five key areas of daily living: customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and built environment. Standards Development Committees composed of people with disabilities, members of the business community and representatives from the public sector have been working to develop the accessibility standards. After a standard in a particular area is drafted, the public has the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed standard and the committee can revise it to incorporate those suggestions. The final proposed standard is then submitted to the government for consideration as law. Once passed by the government, the standard includes the steps and timelines that businesses and organizations in Ontario have to follow to comply.

Accessibility across the province is being attained through a phased-in approach. The first accessibility standard – addressing the area of customer service – became law in January 2008 and imposed compliance deadlines of January 1, 2010, for public sector organizations, and January 1, 2012, for organizations in the private and non-profit sectors. Impressive results have been achieved in reaching each of those deadlines. Work is also well under way in the development of the Integrated Accessibility Regulation, which will streamline three of the remaining standards: information and communications, employment, and transportation. The final proposed built environment standard is now with the government for consideration.

Under the AODA, an independent review of the legislation must be undertaken four years after the act came into force and every three years after that. In June 2009, Mr. Charles Beer, who was appointed by the government, began the first independent review of the AODA. The government tabled his report in May 2010. More detailed information about the review and Mr. Beer's recommendations can be found later in this report.

Accessibility standards are being developed, implemented and enforced in five key areas of daily living: customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and built environment.

Soon after Mr. Beer's report was tabled in the legislature, The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services, delivered a house statement that, among other things, celebrated the 5th anniversary of the AODA.

We look forward to many more milestones as we work together to break down barriers to ensure the province is accessible to people with disabilities. The foundation is firmly in place and we'll continue to build on the progress we've made towards an accessible Ontario.



Focus on Accessibility Standards Development

The accessibility standards play a critical role in putting the AODA into practice. They define the requirements that businesses and organizations must meet as part of our goal to improve and enhance accessibility in the province. The standards focus on five key areas: customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment.

Customer Service Standard

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service was the first standard to be enacted. The customer service standard became law on January 1, 2008, and sets out the steps organizations must take to ensure accessible customer service for people with disabilities. Public sector organizations (such as municipalities, colleges, universities, hospitals and public transportation providers) were required to comply with the standard by January 1, 2010, while the compliance deadline for private businesses and organizations in the non-profit sector is January 1, 2012.

Highlights from 2010:

- Obligated public sector organizations were required to file their accessibility report with the government indicating compliance with the standard by March 31, 2010.
- On January 4, 2010 the Ontario Public Service was the first organization to file an accessibility report for the standard.
- **100%** of obligated public sector organizations have filed an accessibility report for the standard.



Integrated Accessibility Regulation

The development of an Integrated Accessibility Regulation was announced by the government on May 31, 2010. Its goal is to align and streamline the information and communications, employment, and transportation standards under the AODA. The proposed regulation will also include **compliance** and **enforcement initiatives**.

Accessibility requirements

The proposed regulation will include requirements that will apply to the following accessibility standards:

- **Information and Communications** provisions will describe how businesses and organizations will be required to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Employment** provisions will set out the processes for ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities across the paid employment life cycle, including recruitment, retention and returning to work.

- **Transportation** provisions will set out requirements that prevent and remove barriers to public transportation so that everyone can more easily travel in Ontario.

The development of an Integrated Accessibility Regulation was announced by the government on May 31, 2010. Its goal is to align and streamline the information and communications, employment, and transportation standards under the AODA.

Compliance enforcement initiatives

The regulation will include:

- A model for administrative monetary penalties for non-complying organizations, and
- The designation of the Licence Appeal Tribunal for hearing appeals relating to the AODA.

Highlights from 2010:

- A summary of proposed **requirements was posted for public comment** from September 2, 2010 to October 16, 2010.
- The government received **more than 950 comments** that were considered while drafting the proposed Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

Recognition for Innovative Standards Development Process

The Accessibility Directorate, jointly with the Ministry of Transportation, was a finalist for the 2010 IPAC/Deloitte Public Sector Leadership Award for working horizontally to develop a transformative initiative on accessible transportation. The nomination from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) recognized the innovative approach used in the development of the accessible transportation standard that demonstrated effective collaboration, meaningful engagement and a policy approach that drives societal change.

Accessible Built Environment

The Accessible Built Environment Standard will break down barriers in buildings and the external environment for people with disabilities by requiring that areas such as entrances, doorways and ramps, parking spaces, signs and displays, and recreation spaces be made accessible.

Highlights from 2010:

- The Accessible Built Environment Standards Development Committee submitted their **final proposed standard to the government** for consideration on July 19, 2010.
- The standard was **posted for public information** from September 9, 2010 to November 12, 2010.

Moving forward, the government is now considering what will become law and when.

The Accessibility Lens

The Accessibility Lens was an initiative undertaken in support of Premier Dalton McGuinty's 2007 pre-election commitment to review all Ontario laws to find any accessibility barriers that need to be removed. Under this initiative, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Government Services, Cabinet Office and the Ministry of the Attorney General to develop a tool that would support drafting legislation and regulations that remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

In April 2010, the **Accessibility Lens tool was finalized** and was integrated with the government's Inclusion Lens. The Inclusion Lens tool is a step by step guide through the critical factors in developing, implementing and evaluating a policy, program or service, and helps broaden thinking, identify potential or existing barriers, and spark insights about how an initiative can be made more inclusive with respect to diversity, equity and accessibility.

On January 13, 2011, the government launched this streamlined tool for identifying and removing unintended barriers to accessibility and inclusion in all areas of legislation, regulation and policy. This will result in policies, programs and services that better respond to the needs of all Ontarians.

The AODA Review: Charles Beer Report

When making a journey of any kind, it's always a good idea to check in with a roadmap from time to time, just to make sure you're still headed in the right direction.

In essence, that's what the review provision contained in Section 41 of the AODA ensures by requiring an independent review of the act four years after it came into force and every three years after that.

In keeping with this provision, in June 2009, the government appointed former Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services, Charles Beer, to conduct the first independent review of the AODA. The goal of the review was to determine whether the objective of an accessible province is being met in an effective, efficient, flexible and fair manner. Or, put simply, are we still heading in the right direction?

Mr. Beer held consultations from September to December 2009 with a wide range of individuals and groups from across the province, including public meetings in Toronto, Ottawa and London; videoconferences with northern communities; and online sessions in English and French.

In particular, Mr. Beer's review focused on the Standards Development Committee process, the functions of the Accessibility Directorate and the role of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees, as well as recommendations for the repeal of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

After receiving and reviewing input from many different perspectives, Mr. Beer drafted his final report and recommendations. *Charting a Path Forward: Report of the Independent Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

was tabled in the Legislature on May 31, 2010, during National Access Awareness Week.

The government provided its official response to Mr. Beer's report on August 16, 2010, and is already in the process of implementing many of his recommendations. For instance:

- The report identified the need to **harmonize the accessibility standards** in an effort to streamline the requirements and prevent duplication. This is being addressed by aligning the requirements of the information and communications, employment and transportation standards into one Integrated Accessibility Regulation. A strategy will also be developed to streamline the requirements of the customer service and built environment standards and make implementation more effective.
- The report identified the need for **outreach and awareness**. The focus of our outreach and awareness-raising efforts has been shifting to the private and non-profit sectors that will be obligated to comply with the customer service standard by January 2012. The government has already made some tremendous strides that are outlined later in this report.
- The report identified the need to **strengthen ties with Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs)**. To that end, a new section of the Ministry of Community and Social Services website dedicated to "Accessibility in your Community" is helping to facilitate the sharing of local best practice and success stories. In addition, a series of regional forums is planned for 2011 to keep AACs informed of the progress being made under the AODA.

Moving forward, Mr. Beer recommended that the process for developing future accessibility standards and reviewing existing standards under the AODA be revised. His report suggests establishing an Ontario Accessibility Standards Board. The government will address this issue once the remaining four accessibility standards have been implemented, along with developing a strategy to repeal the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Ultimately, Mr. Beer's report offered valuable independent insight into the journey under the AODA so far, and his recommendations will help provide further guidance and direction going forward.

A Simplified Compliance Process

Enacting the AODA was the crucial first step in paving the way for an accessible Ontario. However, encouraging – and ensuring – compliance with the legislation is just as important.

To help organizations become compliant in a fair and transparent manner, a compliance assurance framework was designed and was approved by government in May 2008. The framework consists of four elements:

- 1 Education and awareness** campaigns to help organizations understand their obligations under the standards.
- 2 A self-certification electronic reporting program** that allows organizations to enrol, complete, certify and file accessibility reports online.
- 3 A compliance improvement strategy** to assist non-compliant organizations in meeting their legal obligations, including a Help Desk for complex enquiries and access to compliance staff for individual assistance.
- 4 Inspection and enforcement actions** as a result of contraventions of the act and accessibility standards.

The framework places emphasis on compliance assistance and improvement efforts with the goal of helping organizations to achieve compliance before inspection and enforcement mechanisms are required.

In 2010, two major projects played pivotal roles in implementing this framework — both designed to simplify the compliance and enforcement processes.

Accessibility Compliance Reporting (ACR) Project

The ACR project is an innovative initiative that allows organizations to certify and file accessibility reports online.

The ACR is an electronic program that enables the Accessibility Directorate to

- access and track reporting details
- gauge accessibility compliance levels
- communicate with obligated organizations, and
- target inspection and enforcement for easier identification of serious repeat violators

The ACR project consists of two phases. In **Phase One**, organizations in the Broader Public Sector (BPS) obligated to comply with the customer service standard by 2010 were required to report their compliance. They did so by enrolling online using the ACR program, accessed through the



ServiceOntario website, which is a single entry point for interaction with the provincial government.

To ensure accessibility, the ACR program complies with international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.

Highlights from 2010 for Phase One:

- The ACR **was launched** and Phase One **successfully completed**.
- The ACR **performed as expected**, allowing BPS organizations to report their compliance with the customer service standard commencing January 1, 2010.
- **100% of BPS organizations reported** their compliance.

Phase Two of the ACR project involves preparing the service for the private and non-profit sector organizations that will be required to comply with the customer service standard. Those organizations with 20 or more employees will also be required to file an accessibility report with the government starting in January 2012.

Highlights from 2010 for Phase Two:

- The **ACR team forged a number of key partnerships**, including actively working with other ministries to enable data sharing in preparation for reporting by private and non-profit sector organizations.
- The **AODA Contact Centre (ServiceOntario)** continued as the first point of contact for all enquiries from obligated organizations and the public, while the Accessibility Directorate's **Help Desk** addressed more complex enquiries.
- An **online e-Binder Knowledge Information Tool** was developed and is now fully operational to ensure that the most up-to-date information about the AODA and the accessibility standards is available to Accessibility Directorate staff, members of the Ontario Public Service and AODA Contact Centre agents for accurately answering enquiries from organizations and the public.

Going forward, the Accessibility Directorate will continue preparing the ACR for compliance reporting for private and non-profit sector organizations that will begin in 2012. To that end, we will continue fostering partnerships with other ministries to allow for additional data sharing, such as gathering of contact information for organizations, and will develop a self-serve online compliance wizard tool that will help organizations better understand their compliance requirements. We will also finalize elements of the compliance assurance framework to prepare for full inspections and enforcement of the AODA.

The ACR project is an innovative initiative that allows organizations to certify and file accessibility reports online.

Recognition and Awards

The ACR is a truly ground-breaking project. The efforts of the ACR project team in developing this flexible, scalable and effective government technology have been recognized in the following ways:

- Showcase Ontario Merit Award winner and Diamond Award nominee
- Canada's Government Technology Exhibition and Conference (GTEC) 2010 national Distinction Awards Medalist

Compliance Enforcement Strategy

In May 2010, the government approved:

- A proposed model for administrative penalties, and
- The designation of the Licence Appeal Tribunal to hear appeals of director's orders under the AODA.

The **model for administrative penalties** was developed to support enforcement activities and to act as a disincentive to non-compliance. Under this model, administrative monetary penalties will be used to encourage compliance and will be considered in cases where efforts to assist a non-compliant organization have been unsuccessful. The amount of the penalty will depend on the size

and type of organization, its compliance history and the impact of the violation on people with disabilities. The penalty is issued using a director's order and can be appealed.

The **Licence Appeal Tribunal (LAT)** has been designated as the tribunal to hear appeals of director's orders, such as orders for administrative penalties issued against organizations. The LAT was deemed to be a suitable choice as it has experience with similar types of appeals and is well known by the regulated community through its involvement with a variety of other regulations.

Martin Prosperity Institute Report

Making Ontario accessible to people with disabilities isn't just the right thing to do. It also makes good business sense.

As part of the overall goal of moving the vision of accessibility forward, the Ministry of Community and Social Services commissioned the Martin Prosperity Institute (MPI) to conduct a study examining the economic impact of achieving higher levels of accessibility in the province.

On June 14, 2010, MPI released its report, *Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario*. The report's findings suggest that through the implementation of accessibility standards, the opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in Ontario's economy could improve incrementally. As a result, Ontario could experience increased revenues as well as significant multiplier benefits across the economy.

Key Findings

The **retail sector** could benefit as AODA standards are projected to generate an increase in sales of between \$3.8 billion and \$9.6 billion over the next five years.

In the **tourism sector**, the implementation of the AODA standards could result in an increase in expenditures of between \$400 million and \$1.6 billion over five years.

Increased access to opportunities for **higher educational attainment** for people with disabilities could result in a potential increase of \$618 million to \$1.5 billion in their employment income.

Accessibility standards may result in increasing Ontario's gross domestic product per capita by \$49 to \$653 per year.

This is a market we cannot afford to ignore.

Outreach and Partnerships

Education, awareness and strong relationships are critical to the successful implementation of the accessibility standards. The Accessibility Directorate works to ensure that organizations are aware of and understand the requirements of the standards, and develops tools to facilitate compliance.

Over the past several years, outreach efforts focused on public sector organizations and ensuring they were prepared to comply with the customer service standard by January 1, 2010. That goal was successfully achieved and, building on that success, the focus through 2010 shifted to engaging the private and non-profit sectors to support their compliance deadline of January 1, 2012.

The emphasis over the past year has been on connecting with several key sectors that have been identified as having the greatest impact on people with disabilities, including the non-profit, tourism and retail/business sectors.

There is an inherent challenge in reaching the thousands of organizations in the broad and diverse private and non-profit sectors. Therefore, a number of different channels are being used to reach organizations and distribute compliance assistance information and resources on the customer service standard, including:

- Strategic partnerships to reach and support obligated organizations
- Participation in key events and conferences throughout the year
- Compliance assistance training and information sessions



- The ministry website at ontario.ca/AccessON
- The inclusion of information in stakeholder websites, newsletters and publications

EnAbling Change Partnership Program

The EnAbling Change Partnership Program is a ground-breaking outreach initiative that enables the Accessibility Directorate to connect with businesses and organizations through the umbrella organizations and non-profit associations that know them best. Through the program, funding is provided for strategic projects that support and promote compliance with the AODA and the accessibility standards throughout an industry or sector, or across several sectors.

As part of this initiative, the Accessibility Directorate has established an advisory committee consisting of private and non-profit sector EnAbling Change partners. This committee builds on the relationships established

EnAbling Change Partnership Day provided an opportunity for current and former partner organizations to network and get an update on AODA implementation.

through the program, meeting quarterly to coordinate outreach initiatives and share ideas.

EnAbling Change Partnership Day

In September 2010, the Accessibility Directorate hosted an event for current and former EnAbling Change partners. Participants in the EnAbling Change Partnership Day benefitted from:

- An update on AODA implementation
- An orientation for new partners
- Networking opportunities with current and former partners
- Distribution of compliance tools and other available resources

EnAbling Change Partnership Projects for 2010-11

The new projects for 2010-2011 focused on outreach to the private and non-profit sectors to support compliance with the customer service standard by January 1, 2012.

Engaging the private sector

Human Resources Professionals Association is developing a bilingual, best practice e-learning system and series of in-person seminars explaining the AODA and the customer service standard that will reach out to approximately 20,000 Ontario businesses.

Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) is developing industry-specific resources, awareness presentations, a breakfast series and dedicating issues of ORHMA publications to support the hospitality and tourism industry in meeting the requirements of the customer service standard.

Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is providing awareness presentations to member organizations, training workshops for managers and information-sharing with members through articles and e-mail announcements that will assist the tourism and hospitality industry with its compliance efforts. In addition, TIAO and ORHMA are collaborating on a joint webcast presentation and the development of a micro-site for current information and resources on the AODA and standards.

MaRS is an organization that fosters and promotes Canadian innovation, and provides services to early, mid and mature-stage entrepreneurs to help them succeed. It is building on its existing business advisory services and resources for their project, which will feature an educational program and services for early stage entrepreneurs on compliance with the customer service standard.

Hamilton Training Advisory Board is piloting an outreach strategy focused on engaging small businesses with fewer than 20 employees in a range of service sectors to promote awareness and support compliance. The outreach model will then be made available to 22 boards across the province, along with webinars to facilitate implementation of the strategy.

The emphasis over the past year has been on connecting with several key sectors that have been identified as having the greatest impact on people with disabilities...

Engaging the non-profit and community services sectors

Ontario Non-Profit Network @ Centre for Social Innovation is creating a comprehensive outreach and education strategy (including regional information forums and webinars) that will assist non-profit organizations in Ontario with their compliance efforts.

Volunteer Toronto is building training tools for voluntary sector organizations to become compliant, and is developing an accessibility standards information portal and implementing a cross-sectoral engagement strategy for trainers in volunteer organizations.

Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association is assisting non-profit housing providers with sector-specific information on accessibility and compliance support material in the form of videos, webinars and workbook/web materials.

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto is developing an accessible and bilingual online course to meet the training requirements of the customer service standard that will be made available to all children's aid societies, mental health agencies and other agencies in Ontario's children's services sector – a total of approximately 25,000 staff at 150 agencies.

Cross-sectoral engagement

Le Phénix is a French-language community development organization working for the social integration of people living with disabilities. It is engaging French-speaking organizations in the non-profit, private and municipal sectors and in the disability community to share information about accessibility, and is developing and distributing compliance assistance tools through workshops on the customer service standard and other avenues for exchanging information (e.g. networks, online).

The Inclusive Design Institute, OCAD University is creating easy to understand and accessible how-to guidelines for the production of digital office documents in common formats and from a cross-disability perspective, including word processing, document authoring, web content and web content authoring tools.

Other Outreach Initiatives

In addition to the EnAbling Change Partnership Program projects, through 2010, a wide range of other outreach initiatives were geared at raising awareness of and facilitating compliance with the customer service standard, including everything from the launch of a YouTube channel, to live events, to videos and webinars.

Highlights of these 2010 initiatives include:

- A **campaign to increase awareness** of the requirements of the customer service standard and to direct private sector organizations to the ministry's website. This campaign included sending letters to 316,000 businesses and e-mails to 116,000 businesses; breakfast information sessions in Sudbury, London, Ottawa and Toronto; a webinar in French and English for those who could not attend a breakfast session; and an inspirational video called "How



Can I Help You?” which aims to break down attitudinal barriers and which can be used as a staff training tool.

- The province’s **first YouTube channel on accessibility** was launched in June 2010 at www.youtube.com/accessontario and is used to profile businesses, communities and organizations that are champions of accessibility.
- The Accessibility Directorate launched **webcasting as a virtual meeting option** to deliver its message on accessibility standards across the province. Through iCast, a government service to ministries, live presentations can be broadcast to over 300 sites across Ontario and viewed on individual computers. Sign language interpretation and closed captioning are also available through this webcasting option.
 - A pilot webcast session on the customer service standard was successfully completed with staff at the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.
 - A webinar was produced and distributed to 1,000 private and non-profit organizations, and was subsequently posted on the ministry’s website.
 - A webinar was made available to MPP constituency staff following a series of in-person training sessions.
- In cooperation with 27 stakeholder organizations (including emergency responders and people with disabilities), **Emergency Management Ontario** and the Accessibility Directorate developed EM 131 – Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders. This targeted training program was designed to help first responders (i.e., fire, police and medical services) to improve their interactions with people with disabilities and was launched on December 3, 2010, to coincide with International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- A **forum for the non-profit sector** launched the Accessibility Directorate’s non-profit strategy in Toronto in June 2010. Representatives from 150 key umbrella organizations from a range of non-profit sectors (including social services, health, recreation, culture and the arts) obtained information about the customer service standard and were encouraged to provide compliance information and resources to their member organizations.

The Accessibility Directorate launched webcasting as a virtual meeting option to deliver its message on accessibility standards across the province.

- **Participating in large conferences and events** offered the Accessibility Directorate opportunities to disseminate information and resources to a broad range of target audiences in the public, private and non-profit sectors. **Compliance assistance training and information sessions** across the province also continued to support outreach to obligated organizations in all sectors. Events attended in 2010 included:
 - Human Resources Professionals Association conference
 - Ministry of Revenue Tax Forums across the province
 - Ontario Business Improvement Areas Association conference
 - Ontario Chamber of Commerce conference
 - Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference
 - Ontario Hospital Association conference
 - CNIB conference
 - Tourism Summit
 - JOIN Employer Conference
- In total, the Accessibility Directorate participated in 97 events and sessions in 2010: five for the Ontario Public Service, 28 for the Broader Public Sector, 32 for the private sector, 26 for the non-profit sector and six for cross-sector organizations.

Getting feedback

The Accessibility Directorate conducted an online survey of broader public sector organizations to gather feedback on satisfaction and usage of the customer service resources developed to help organizations with compliance. Overall, the feedback was very positive. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with all the resources and also provided valuable suggestions for improvement. Going forward, these results will be used to help guide the development of future resources.

A presentation on the AODA and the customer service standard was made at the Toronto breakfast information session in November 2010 for private sector organizations.



As we continue moving the vision forward, reaching out to organizations to raise their awareness and assist them with meeting requirements remains paramount. To that end, the Accessibility Directorate is planning on maintaining its outreach activities, including participation at key events, speaking engagements and ongoing collaboration with EnAbling Change partners. Webcasting will continue to be incorporated as a key information and training approach, including sessions customized for specific audiences and sectors.

In addition, the Accessibility Directorate will be disseminating information about the proposed Integrated Accessibility Regulation. In particular, a series of forums for members of Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees is planned for the spring of 2011 to keep them informed on the progress being made under the AODA.

Update on the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Council of Ontario was established with the enactment of the AODA in 2005. The council plays a key role in achieving the vision of an accessible Ontario by advising the Minister of Community and Social Services on the implementation of the AODA, including the development of accessibility standards and public education.

The 15 members of the council are appointed by the minister for a maximum three-year term and represent a cross-section of leaders from the private sector and disability communities.

In 2010, James W. Sanders continued his term as chair. Mr. Sanders is the former President and CEO of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and is currently CNIB Vice President of the North America/Caribbean region and member of the executive committee, World Blind Union. This year, Peggy Taillon was appointed as the Council's new Vice-Chair. Ms. Taillon is currently the President of the Canadian Council on Social Development, Canada's longest established social policy and research organization.

Highlights from 2010:

The council continued its outreach and advisory activities, including:

- Sitting as advisory members on Standards Development Committees;
- Collaborating with the Accessibility Directorate to provide feedback and assistance in developing compliance assistance resources and public education and awareness campaigns;

- Reaching out to municipalities, private and public sector organizations, associations and institutions to raise awareness of the AODA and the customer service standard; and
- Conducting information sessions on the AODA and the customer service standard at conferences and events, such as:
 - Network of French Workers in Literacy
 - Ontario Public Service (OPS) Annual Accessibility Expo
 - North Bay Area Human Resources Association

A shot from the awareness raising video, "How Can I Help You?" now posted on the province's first YouTube channel on accessibility.

Through 2011, council members will continue to advise the Minister on the next steps in the implementation of the AODA and its standards, including providing input on public education, outreach and compliance initiatives.



Looking Ahead to 2011

Through 2010, significant strides were made in making Ontario accessible. The customer service standard – the first accessibility standard to be developed – has been implemented by the public sector, with the private and non-profit sectors on their way to becoming compliant. In 2011, our focus will broaden somewhat.

Standards Development

- The proposed Integrated Accessibility Regulation, covering the areas of information and communications, employment, and transportation has been drafted, with public review of the draft regulation occurring from February 1 to March 18, 2011.
- The final proposed Accessible Built Environment Standard is with the government for consideration about what will become law and when.

Compliance

- Compliance support will continue for the private and non-profit sector organizations that are obligated to comply with the customer service standard by January 1, 2012.
- Preparing for compliance reporting for private and non-profit organizations will also continue.
- The inspection and enforcement strategy will continue to be developed and integrated to include an inspection framework and curricula and training for inspections staff.

Continued Outreach and Support of Obligated Organizations

- Outreach and awareness-raising activities will stay focussed on the private and non-profit sector organizations that will be obligated to comply with the customer service standard by January 2012.
- The Accessibility Directorate will continue to forge strategic partnerships through the EnAbling Change Partnership Program that will help raise awareness and support compliance among obligated organizations.
- The Accessibility Directorate will be developing policy guidelines and free resources to assist organizations to understand and meet the requirements proposed in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.
- The Accessibility Directorate will strengthen ties with Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees through regional forums planned for 2011.

Though much of the journey still lies ahead, step by step, we are getting closer to our final destination: an accessible Ontario where everyone who lives here or visits the province has the opportunity to participate fully.

Moving this vision forward has required the determination, insight and tenacious efforts of many different stakeholders. Members of the disability community, businesses in the private sector, non-profit organizations, representatives from the public sector and Accessibility Directorate staff have partnered to develop the best ways of implementing the accessibility standards – fairly, effectively and efficiently. The shift in public perception and attitudes is already beginning to be felt across the province.

Through this type of collaborative approach, we are confident that truly great things can – and will – continue to be accomplished.



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