

## About the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)



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Breaking Barriers Together

[www.AccessON.ca](http://www.AccessON.ca)

# **Accessibility For All Ontarians**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law on June 13, 2005. Under this landmark legislation, the government of Ontario will develop mandatory accessibility standards that will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The standards will apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario.

The province is now working with representatives from the disability community, as well as public and private sector organizations to develop accessibility standards.

Standards will be developed to achieve real results in stages. They will set milestones that must be reached every five years or less, so that Ontario is accessible to people with disabilities by 2025.



# **We All Need Accessibility**

Disability impacts the lives of many Ontarians, and the numbers of people with disabilities is increasing. Today, 15.5% of Ontario's population has a disability and this number will continue to grow as the population ages.

Improving accessibility is the right thing to do. It's also the smart thing to do. According to the Royal Bank of Canada, people with disabilities have an estimated spending power of about \$25 billion annually across Canada. People with disabilities also represent a large pool of untapped employment potential. When we make Ontario accessible to people with disabilities everyone benefits.





# **Think Of The Broad Range Of Disabilities**

When we think of disabilities, we tend to think of people in wheelchairs and physical disabilities – disabilities that are visible and apparent. But disabilities can also be non-visible. We can't always tell who has a disability. The broad range of disabilities also includes vision disabilities, deafness or being hard of hearing, intellectual or developmental, learning, and mental health disabilities.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) uses the same definition of "disability" as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes both visible and non-visible disabilities.

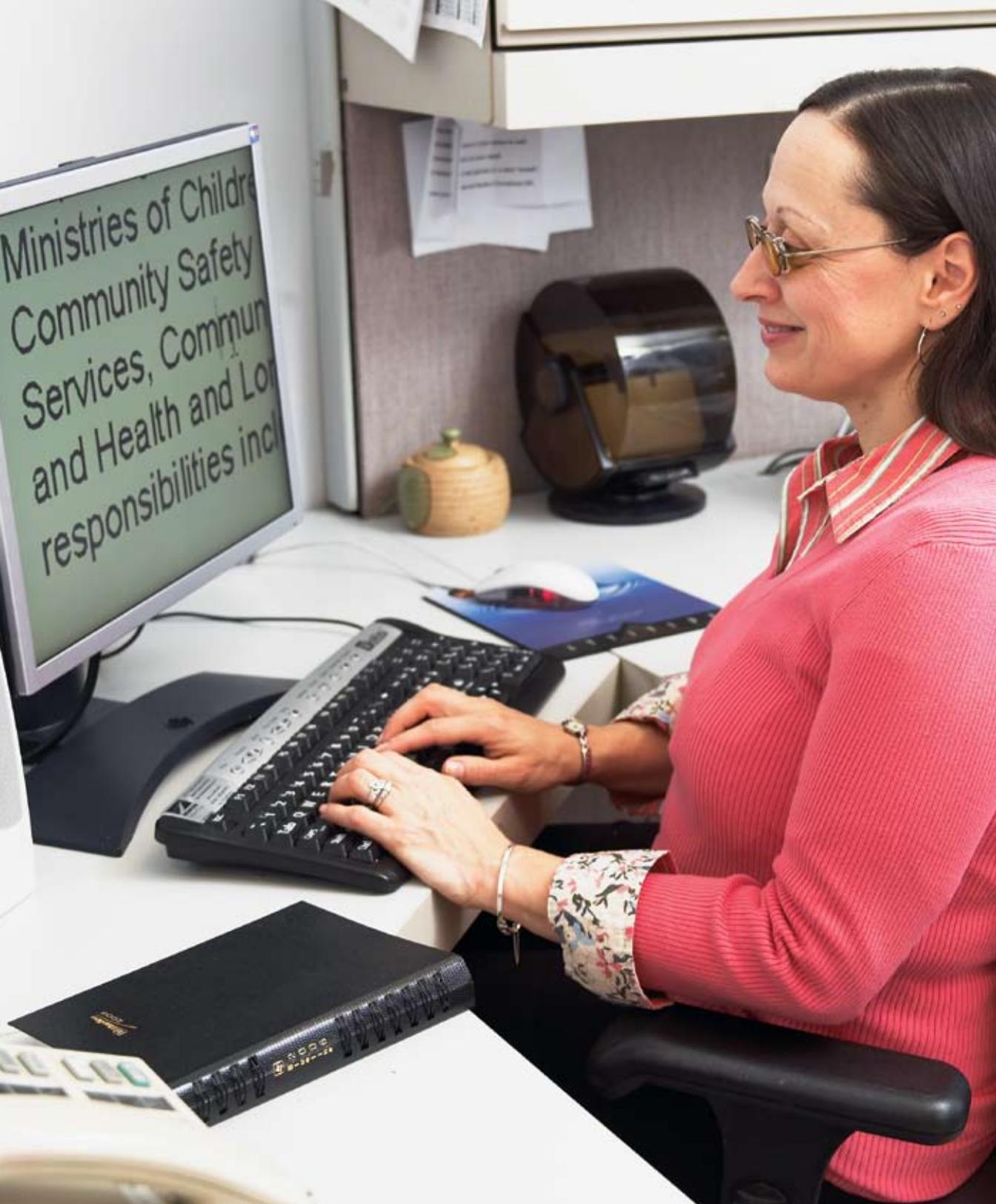
## **Making Progress**

The AODA builds on progress made under earlier legislation. The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) requires the Ontario government and broader public sector, which includes municipalities, public transportation organizations, colleges and universities, hospitals and school boards, to develop annual accessibility plans. These obligations under the ODA remain in effect as accessibility standards are developed under the AODA.

# Creating Standards

Accessibility standards are the building blocks Ontario will use to make real, measurable and effective changes to accessibility. Standards Development Committees are responsible for developing proposed standards that could become regulations under the AODA. Committee representatives are selected through a public recruitment process and the successful applicants are invited to sit on the committee by the Minister of Community and Social Services. The committees include people with disabilities or their representatives, as well as representatives from the business community, the broader public sector and the Ontario government.

Ministries of Children  
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# Focus On Five Key Areas

Standards Development Committees are developing proposed standards in five key areas.

1. The **Accessible Customer Service** standard is the first standard developed to become a regulation. It came into force on January 1, 2008 and is now the law. Public sector organizations will be required to comply by January 1, 2010. Private sector organizations will be required to comply by January 1, 2012. The standard addresses business practices and training needed to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.
2. **Accessible Information and Communications** standards to address the removal of barriers in access to information. The standards could include information being provided in person, through print, a website or other means.
3. **Accessible Built Environment** standards to address access into and within buildings and outdoor spaces and are expected to build on Ontario's Building Code. The standards could include things like counter height, aisle and door width, parking, and signs.
4. **Employment Accessibility** standards to address paid employment practices relating to employee-employer relationships, which could include recruitment, hiring, and retention policies and practices.
5. **Accessible Transportation** standards have been identified as crucial for people with disabilities. Access to transportation is needed for going to work or school, shopping and other aspects of daily life. This standard is to address aspects of accessible public transportation.

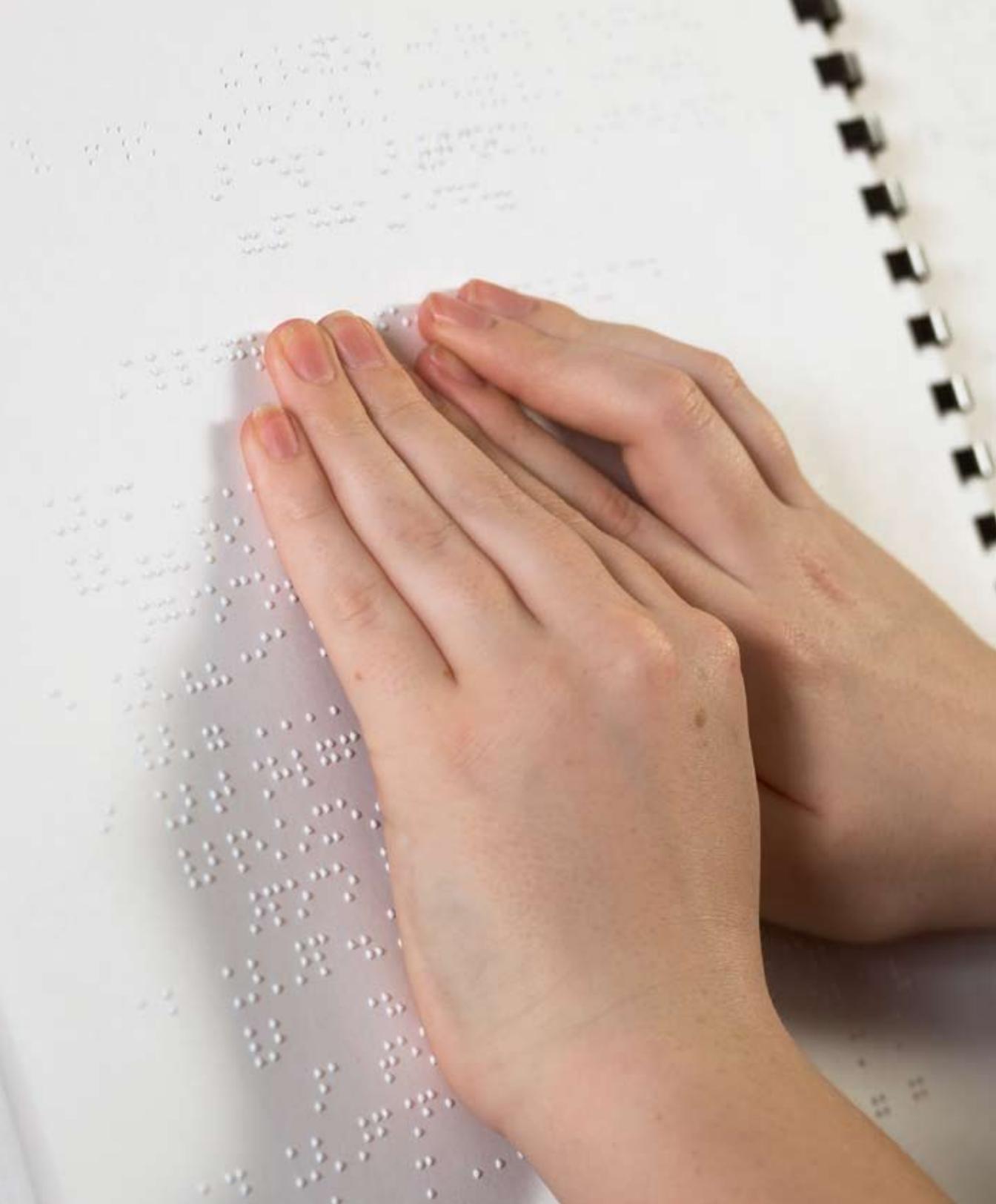
## **Look To The Future. Act Now.**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 lays out the goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025. To reach this goal, the Standards Development Committees are asked to set out a series of proposed targets for what needs to happen and when, in increments of 5 years or less. The act provides for standards to be developed so that organizations, both public and private, can spread out their accessibility investments over time, and they can plan ahead and incorporate capital expenditures into their normal business plans and strategies.

## **How The Standards Become Law**

Once a Standards Development Committee develops its initial proposed standard, the proposed standard will be put forward for public review. After public review is complete, the committee will consider this feedback as it works to finalize its proposed standard for submission to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Once the minister receives the final proposed standard, he or she must decide within 90 days whether to recommend that it be enacted as a regulation in whole, in part, or with changes. When the standard is enacted as a regulation, it becomes law.



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## **Who Must Comply**

Each standard will outline who would be covered by that standard and when they would need to comply. Each Standards Development Committee may propose different requirements and timelines for different types and sizes of organizations.

Each committee must also consider economic realities and other factors in developing the proposed standards. Once the government has approved a standard and it becomes a regulation, all organizations identified in the standard must comply within the timelines that have been set out.

## **Implementing The Standards**

Organizations covered by the standard will file accessibility reports. Non-compliance with an order, filing false reports and other infractions may result in penalties.

# Be Alert To Barriers To Accessibility

When you think about making your organization accessible it is important to be alert to both visible and invisible barriers.

A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from participating in the social or economic life of our communities.

**Architectural or structural** barriers may result from the design of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.

**Information and communications** barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear or plain can all cause difficulty.

**Technology**, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers.

**Systemic** barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities – for example, denying access to a person with a service animal.

**Attitude** is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or non-visible disabilities. Or they simply discriminate against them because of stereotypes. They may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help or they ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.



**FOR OUR  
VALUED  
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who would like a lift...  
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# **Raising Awareness**

We all need to be aware of accessibility. Raising awareness is an important part of reaching the goal of an accessible Ontario. Under the act, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will develop and conduct programs of public education on the purpose of the act and implementation of its requirements. The Directorate will also provide tools and other resources to help organizations comply with the standards once they become regulations in law.

## More Information

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

### **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Contact Centre (*ServiceOntario*)**

Toll-free: 1-866-515-2025

TTY: 416-325-3408 / Toll-free: 1-800-268-7095

Fax: 416-325-3407

Or, visit our websites at: **[www.AccessON.ca](http://www.AccessON.ca)** and **[www.mcss.gov.on.ca](http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca)** (click on "Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities")

### **You'll Find**

- Frequently asked questions about the AODA
- A plain language guide to the AODA
- Updates on standards development
- Announcements on public review of proposed standards
- And much more.

## To Read The Act

Visit the e-laws website of the Ontario government:

**[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)**

Let's work together to make Ontario a leader in accessibility.  
It's the smart thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

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