



2008

Annual Report

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



Message from the Minister of Community and Social Services

It is my honour to present our 2008 Annual Accessibility Report. This report outlines the government's progress to bring the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to life.

When we passed this act in 2005, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to commit to setting out mandatory accessibility standards. Through these standards, our goal is to break down barriers for people with disabilities and make Ontario accessible to everyone by 2025.

And we are well on our way to making this vision a reality. Over the last year, we have made real progress to develop accessibility standards in the most important areas of everyday life.

The start of 2008 saw our first accessibility standard — for customer service — come into effect. Under this standard, businesses and organizations in Ontario will have to provide service that is accessible to every customer, regardless of their ability.

Designated public sector organizations will need to comply with this standard on January 1, 2010. Private businesses and non-profit organizations with one or more employees will need to comply on January 1, 2012.

We are working hard to help businesses and organizations understand the requirements of the customer service standard. This year, we created a new section of our website — www.AccessON.ca/compliance — where organizations can find accessibility tools and resources. This website and our resources will continue to grow with our accessibility legislation.

We also partnered with non-profit organizations to create tools tailored to help specific sectors comply with the customer service standard. Partnerships this year resulted in successful projects, including the Retail Council of Canada's 'How May I Help You?' training resource. We will continue our partnership initiatives in the coming year.

Standards development committees have been busy working on the remaining four standards; information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment. The committee's proposed standard for information and communications was released for public review in November 2008. Accessibility standards for employment and the built environment will be released for public review in 2009.

As we work to improve accessibility in businesses and organizations, we also want to help break down the attitudinal barriers that exist for people with disabilities. That's why, in March 2008, we launched our first province-wide AccessON transit ad campaign. Plans are now underway to expand our AccessON program, which aims to increase awareness about barriers and accessibility.

We all have a role to play to break down barriers for people with disabilities. By continuing to work together, we can make Ontario more accessible to people with disabilities and inclusive for everyone.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services
Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs





Introduction:
Momentum is building
towards an accessible Ontario

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is groundbreaking legislation that will improve life for all Ontarians. The AODA makes Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to set out a comprehensive goal of accessibility by 2025. This is being achieved, step by step, by the development and enforcement of accessibility standards that will cover important areas of everyday life. These new standards aim to break down the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society.

This year marks a new chapter for accessibility in Ontario. The first province-wide standard – for customer service – came into force on January 1, 2008. Beginning on January 1, 2010, designated organizations in the public sector will need to comply with this standard and provide service that is accessible to every customer. Beginning on January 1, 2012, private sector and non-profit organizations with one or more employees will need to comply.

And more change is coming.

The standards development committees have been hard at work on the four remaining AODA accessibility standards:

- The transportation standard has been completed
- The proposed information and communication standard was released for public review in November 2008
- The proposed employment standard was released for public review on February 18, 2009. The fourth remaining proposed standard for built environment will also be released for public review in 2009.

This year, the implementation of the AODA has been improved. Half of the members of standards development committees are now people with disabilities or their representatives.

Public education and awareness about the AODA and the new customer service standard continued to promote accessibility this year. In March 2008, a successful transit advertising campaign ran across the province. Ontario's Accessibility Directorate staff attended a broad range of conferences and events to spread the word about the AODA and to help organizations begin to prepare for compliance with the new customer service standard.

Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, also travelled across the province to promote the customer service standard and to visit with those who were already serving as leaders in accessibility. The minister toured an accessible municipal office in Thorold and an accessible winery in Jordan Station, hosted a regional accessibility exposition at Queen's Park, and even attended a conference in Paris, France to discuss Ontario's accessibility goals and achievements with other countries.

As well, the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council (ASAC) played an important role reaching out in their communities and organizations to promote the significance of the AODA.

A new section on the AccessON.ca website was launched with resources for communities to help remove barriers in areas such as recreation and travel, community events and in the home.

The new customer service standard means that obligated businesses and organizations will have to comply with its requirements. The Accessibility Directorate is developing a comprehensive strategy to reach out to organizations, including:

- provincial government ministries
- municipalities and other public sector organizations
- private businesses
- non-profit sectors.

The Accessibility Directorate has developed materials to help organizations comply with the customer service standard, new partnerships under the Province's EnAbling Change Partnership program have been forged and the ServiceOntario AODA Contact Centre is ready to answer questions about the AODA and the accessibility standards.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress made in 2008 on AODA implementation, including details about the accessible customer service standard and the tools and projects that will help businesses and organizations comply.

Momentum is building towards an accessible Ontario.



Ontario's New Customer
Service Standard:
Countdown to Compliance

On January 1, 2008, the customer service standard under the AODA came into force. The customer service standard applies to all organizations that provide goods or services to the public, or other organizations in Ontario, and have at least one employee. This includes provincial and municipal governments, universities and colleges, hospitals, school boards, public transit organizations, private businesses and non-profit organizations.

This means approximately 360,000 organizations in Ontario must comply with the new customer service standard.

The customer service standard requires businesses and organizations to:

- Set up **policies, practices and procedures** on providing goods or services to people with disabilities
- **Communicate** with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability
- Let people with disabilities bring their **service animals** onto the parts of the premises open to the public or other third parties when accessing their goods or services except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law
- Let people with disabilities bring their **support people** with them when accessing goods or services on parts of the premises open to the public or other third parties
- If an organization charges an **admission fee**, let people know ahead of time what, if any, admission will be charged for a support person

- Let the public know when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to get goods and services are **temporarily not available**
- Ensure that **staff receive training** on how to serve people with disabilities, including staff involved in developing customer service policies, practices and procedures and people who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of the provider
- Set up a process to **receive and respond to feedback**, including what action will be taken on any complaints. Make the information about the feedback process readily available to the public.

Timelines for organizations to comply with the customer service standard:

- Public sector organizations that are named or described in the standard must comply by January 1, 2010, and file an accessibility report in 2010.
- Private sector, non-profit and non-designated public sector businesses and organizations must comply with the standard starting January 1, 2012. Those with 20 or more employees must also file accessibility reports starting in 2012.



Ontario Public Service
Leading the Way

The Ontario Public Service is committed to creating an accessible Ontario by 2025. As a leader in accessibility, we have made a strong start. For the past six years, the Ontario Public Service has been required to prepare accessibility plans. These plans show how government ministries improve opportunities for people with disabilities by identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility. This year, ministry accessibility planning involved concrete steps to move towards compliance with the new customer service standard. Here are some highlights:

- A customer service e-learning module has been developed specifically for Government of Ontario staff: “May I Help You? – Welcoming Customers with Disabilities”
- Ministries are reviewing their customer service policies, practices and procedures to ensure that they will meet the requirements of the customer service standard
- Ministries will continue to build on resources already in place to communicate with people who have a disability, including the increased use of TTY lines, braille and sign language interpretation
- Ministries are creating processes to receive feedback on their customer service to people with disabilities, including public websites, blogs, mail and telephone.

Given the number of ministries that make up the OPS, the OPS Diversity Office, Ministry of Government Services, established the OPS Accessibility Leadership Strategy to ensure that the Ontario Public Service is achieving Ontario’s accessibility vision. This strategy outlines a government-wide, multi-year, phased plan to implement accessibility standards and good practices, moving from separate ministry accessibility plans to one comprehensive OPS plan.

Examples of Ontario Public Service initiatives to support ministries in their accessibility journey to create a barrier-free OPS include:

- Establishment of the OPS Accessibility Leadership Committee, made up of Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers to steer accessibility in all government ministries
- Launch of an internal government website that provides key information and resources to support staff in their accessibility compliance and leadership efforts.

These initiatives demonstrate Ontario's commitment and leadership in implementing and planning for new standards under the AODA. Collectively and individually, government ministries are leading the way to a barrier-free Ontario.



Helping Businesses and
Organizations to Comply

There is a lot to learn when it comes to accessibility and customer service. What works for one organization might not work for another. To help organizations and businesses succeed in complying with all of the requirements of the customer service standard, the government is:

- building public awareness
- implementing a comprehensive compliance assistance strategy
- forging partnerships with key umbrella organizations
- moving forward with a new compliance framework.

Building Public Awareness

The standards being developed under the AODA will impact organizations and businesses across the province. This year, significant effort was made to build and maintain public awareness of accessibility and the new customer service standard under the AODA. Initiatives included:

- Launch of an Ontario-wide transit advertising campaign in March 2008
- Distribution of information material about the AODA, such as pamphlets and DVDs. Some examples include:
 - o Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service – A free and interactive online course on serving customers with disabilities
 - o Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 – This manual provides practical ideas and tips about how an organization can meet the requirements of the customer service standard
 - o An Accessible Ontario: It's Just Good Business! – This DVD includes videos, animations and photos depicting accessible customer service in various settings.

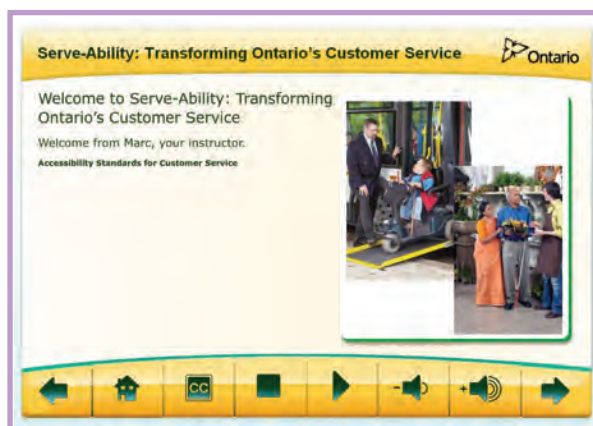
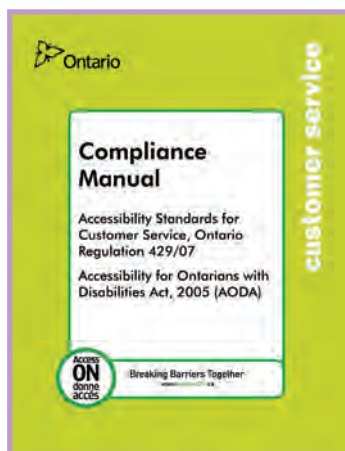
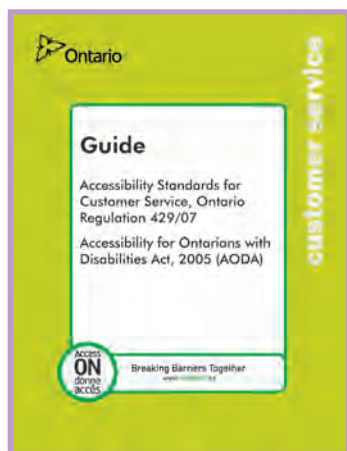
- Attendance at many key events and conferences to inform obligated organizations about the AODA and the customer service standard. Some examples include:
 - o 2008 Association of Municipalities of Ontario Annual Conference
 - o Ontario Hospital Association AODA Conference
 - o Canadian Franchise Association Annual Conference
 - o Community Living Ontario Conference.
- Launch of a new section on **AccessON.ca** focused on resources for communities to help them become more accessible in:
 - o Recreation and travel
 - o Community events
 - o Public services
 - o Daily life
 - o Home.

Compliance Assistance Strategy

Organizations want to do the right thing but don't always know what to do. The compliance assistance strategy is designed to make sure obligated organizations are aware of the standards, know how they can improve accessibility in readiness for the standards and finally, know what they must do to comply with the standards. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario is reaching out to obligated organizations through the development of compliance assistance tools and resources.

This year, the following products were launched:

- **Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07**
 - This guide is designed to help people or organizations understand their obligations under the customer service standard.
- **Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07** – This manual provides practical ideas and tips about how an organization can meet the requirements of the customer service standard. The manual includes checklists and steps to consider, with suggestions on ways an organization might comply with the standard.
- **Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service** – This is a free and interactive online course on serving customers with disabilities. This e-learning course supports organizations with the training requirement of the customer service standard. It can be found on www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/serve-ability/splash.html



- **About the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07** – This booklet provides information on the customer service standard and is aimed at the general public, obligated organizations and customers with disabilities.
- **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Summary of Requirements** – This pamphlet lists the requirements of the customer service standard in a short, easy-to-read format.
- Success stories have been written to highlight the strides made by businesses and organizations in Ontario to break down barriers. These profiles show best practices and everyday solutions that businesses have adopted to make their goods and services more accessible. These stories are posted on **AccessON.ca** regularly and distributed to stakeholders for print in their publications.



- **Talk to Me DVD: Serving Customers with Disabilities DVD** – This is a series of five instructional videos on providing good customer service to customers with a range of disabilities (including mobility, vision, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning). These videos target the tourism, hospitality, retail, arts, culture and recreation sectors.
- **An Accessible Ontario: It's Just Good Business!** – This DVD includes videos, animations and photos depicting accessible customer service in various settings.
- In addition to these tools, a new compliance assistance website was launched – **www.AccessON.ca/compliance**. This site:
 - Provides information to help organizations understand their obligations under the AODA
 - Offers compliance assistance tools and resources to help obligated organizations comply with the customer service standard.





ServiceOntario has also opened the AODA Contact Centre.

The centre is a dedicated contact point and a primary distribution centre so the public can find general information on the AODA, and accessibility standards, as well as other tools and resources. Prior to launching the centre, the Accessibility Directorate delivered accessibility awareness and accessible customer service training to 1,800 ServiceOntario staff, preparing them to handle questions on compliance from obligated organizations and the public.

Toll-free: 1-866-515-2025

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

Fax: 416-325-3407



EnAbling Change Program: Partnerships to Achieve Accessibility

Making Ontario accessible by 2025 requires the work of all Ontarians, including government and the private sector. There are thousands of organizations that must soon comply with the new customer service standard. The government has been successful in reaching out to many organizations through its EnAbling Change Partnership program - forging partnerships with umbrella organizations and non-profit agencies.



Some examples are:

Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO)

The multi-year partnership produced the Accessibility Toolbox, which includes an online resource, a training video and a manual. Under the partnership, training on the AODA and the customer service standard was delivered to municipalities across Ontario. The toolbox can be found at www.accessiblemunicipalities.ca.

Retail Council of Canada (RCC)

Retail-specific compliance tools include tip sheets on serving customers with disabilities, sample customer service policies and the “How May I Help You?” training resource. This tool is an innovative, accessible and interactive training module available to RCC members across Canada as well as to the public. This training module can be found at www.redwoodlearning.com/rcc. Following in the footsteps of these and several other successful partnerships, fourteen new EnAbling Change partnerships have been launched. The following organizations have been selected to develop innovative tools and resources to support compliance with the customer service standard in their sectors.

Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (Colleges Ontario)

This project will develop an e-learning training resource (English and French) to assist Ontario’s 24 provincially funded colleges and a comprehensive tool kit which will outline how the resources can be implemented, tracked and sustained.

Council of Ontario Universities

This project will develop and deliver an e-learning training resource (English and French) to assist Ontario’s 18 provincially funded universities, including the Ontario Colleges of Art and Design and Royal Military College, that are obligated to comply with the customer service standard by 2010.

Ontario Education Services Corporation

This project will develop customized bilingual resources such as templates for policies, procedures and tip sheets to support compliance assistance among Ontario school boards and schools. These products will affect 2.1 million students and their parents, 160,000 staff and large numbers of volunteers and community users of schools.

Ontario Hospital Association

An e-learning module (English and French) will be developed on serving patients with disabilities for the 150 hospitals and health care facilities that must comply with the customer service standard by 2010.

Ontario Public Transit Association

Training will be developed for taxi drivers to fulfill the training requirements of the customer service standard. Included are a guide for those who deliver the in-class training, a participant manual and a self-study guide for participants who are unable to attend an in-class training session.

Ontario Community Support Association

Home and community support workers will be provided with templates, tips and tool kits for compliance with the customer service standard along with a series of training workshops.

Reena

The pilot project will create a model for providing accessible services to people with disabilities and their families. The project will include the development of a needs assessment, workshops, training resources, good practices, templates and guidelines to support the movement towards a more inclusive community.

Social Services Network

This project will assist the South Asian social services sector and multicultural community centres to comply with the customer service standard. Educational tools and resources will be distributed through interagency meetings, workshops and reports.

Community Living West Nipissing (Intégration communautaire de Nipissing ouest)

This project will reach out to Franco-Ontarians across the province, including northern and remote communities, by developing and delivering six regional presentations on the customer service standard to francophone organizations. Additional support materials will be adapted and distributed to francophone communities.

Adaptive Technology Resource Centre

This project supports compliance with the customer service standard and readiness for the information and communication standard. Organizations will be assisted with publishing accessible web content.

Ontario Federation of Community Health and Addiction Programs

This project will help mental health providers meet the requirements of the customer service standard by using research and focus groups to create relevant education and training material as well as developing workshops.

Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto

This project will develop and deliver a Chinese language and culture specific Accessibility Awareness Forum for Chinese businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the Chinese media. Resources will be developed to facilitate awareness, education and readiness for compliance with the AODA and the customer service standard.

Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce

An outreach program for South Asian small and medium-sized businesses and professionals will be developed to raise awareness about accessibility and to build readiness to comply with the customer service standard. This project will include customized resources, outreach and information sessions and the use of South Asian media to support public awareness and education.

Accessibility with Moxie Foundation

This project includes the development and delivery of training, a trainer's package, and participant materials for small and medium-sized businesses in the retail and hospitality sectors. These tools and resources, along with an interactive website, will help these organizations comply with the customer service standard.

A Modern Compliance Framework

The goal of an accessible Ontario is not achieved by the development of accessibility standards alone, but by ensuring that these standards are successfully implemented. In order to ensure that all organizations fulfil the requirements of the new customer service standard, the government has developed a compliance assurance framework for the AODA.

Components of the compliance assurance framework include:

- **Education, awareness and compliance assistance** activities are the first steps towards creating understanding among Ontarians about the new accessibility legislation
- **Self-certification accessibility reporting**
 - o Reports to be filed online, in a simple checklist format
 - o Links to compliance material to be included in the online report
 - o Automated assessment of reports by the Ontario government
 - o Obligated organizations make their accessibility reports available to the public as required by the AODA
- **Compliance improvement** will help obligated organizations meet the requirements of the AODA over time
- **Inspection and enforcement** will focus on organizations demonstrating the highest risk of non-compliance and the highest impact on people with disabilities.





Four New Standards
on the Horizon

The customer service standard is the first accessibility standard to be developed in Ontario, leading the way to an accessible province. Four other standards are under development for information and communications, transportation, employment and the built environment.

In each of these areas, a proposed standard is being developed by a standards development committee made up of people representing disability communities, the business community, the non-profit sector, provincial government ministries and other public sector organizations, such as hospitals and colleges.

The proposed standards are developed by committees inclusively and cooperatively, a theme that is central to the AODA. Committee members have been selected through an open and transparent process and the minutes of all committee meetings are posted online. Once each initial proposed standard has been drafted and agreed upon by the committee, it is posted online for the public to review and provide feedback. This way, everyone in Ontario can truly be involved in the standards development process.

This year, improvements were made to AODA implementation – a result of election commitments made by the Premier of Ontario. These enhancements will pave the way for greater accessibility:

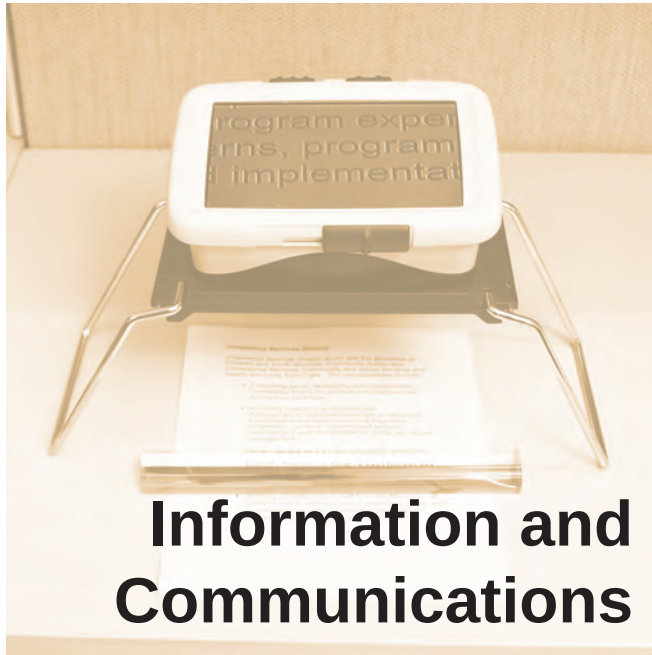
- ✓ Committee members may invite outside experts to present to their committee
- ✓ Committees may vote on individual clauses of a proposed standard rather than voting on an all-or-nothing basis
- ✓ Ministry representatives no longer vote on decisions; however, they continue to provide advice and expertise to the committees
- ✓ A full-time staff member is assigned to support members with disabilities on the committees

- and to help bring their voices to the table while proposed standards are being developed
- ✓ The committees were enhanced so that 50 percent of members are now people with disabilities
- ✓ Ministry of Education includes disability awareness in its Character Education Framework
- ✓ Professional bodies, as well as universities, colleges and trade schools have been advised by government of Ontario ministries to include accessibility education in their business processes and curriculums
- ✓ An audit will be conducted following the creation of the five AODA standards
- ✓ A tool is being developed, as part of a broader Diversity Lens, to identify and eliminate accessibility barriers found in Government of Ontario legislation and regulations
- ✓ An accessible elections action plan is under development to make elections fully accessible to voters with disabilities.

Information and Communications

The Information and Communications Standards Development Committee is chaired by Mary Kardos Burton, an independent consultant in the health and social services sector. Ms. Kardos Burton has held senior executive positions with the Government of Ontario as well as other committees and organizations.

The Information and Communications Standard Development Committee posted a proposed standard for public review in November 2008. The committee will come together in the spring of 2009 to review the public comments.



Information and Communications



Transportation



Employment



Built Environment

Transportation

The Transportation Standards Development Committee is chaired by Al Cormier, a consultant with a long history in the transportation sector.

The committee reconvened in the spring of 2008 to consider comments received during the public review process of its proposed standard that took place June 27 to September 28, 2007. The committee revised its proposed standard and submitted it to the minister in November 2008. The revised standard will be posted online in January 2009.

Employment

The Employment Standards Development Committee is chaired by Dr. Robert Kostnik. Dr. Kostnik has taught occupational and environmental medicine at the University of Toronto and the University of California in San Francisco.

The committee has approved an initial proposed standard for public review. The public review will take place early in 2009.

Built Environment

The Built Environment Standards Development Committee is chaired by Ron Meredith-Jones. Mr. Meredith-Jones brings with him over 30 years of executive experience in the insurance industry and was also on the board of the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute for over a decade as director, treasurer and board chair.

The committee will be submitting its initial proposed standard for public review by Spring 2009.



Update on the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council

The council was established by the AODA in 2005. The council's mandate is to advise the Minister of Community and Social Services on the implementation of the AODA, including the development of accessibility standards and public education. The council plays a key role in achieving the vision of an accessible Ontario.

The council is currently chaired by **Tracy MacCharles**. Ms. MacCharles is a human resources professional and an active volunteer and board member for various charities. The council has 15 members and includes a cross-section of leaders from the private sector and disability communities. Members are appointed by the minister for a term of up to three years.

During the June 2008 quarterly meeting, the council said goodbye to four of its distinguished members: **Uzma Khan, Tyler Campbell, Ric McGee and Mike Murphy**.

Four new members joined the council in the fall of 2008. The council welcomed **Faelyne Templer, Dr. Terry McQuaid, Jeffrey Preston and Stuart Kidd**.

Faelyne Templer is the founder of a Durham-based non-profit organization called Avocation that offers free vocational training and job support. She is also the Business Co-chair of the Durham Region Local Training Board, Executive Board Member of the ACTEW (A commitment to Training and Employment for Women), a member of the Ajax Pickering Board of Trade, Whitby Chamber of Commerce, Durham Region Employment Network and a former member of the YWCA's Women of Distinction Committee.

Dr. Terry McQuaid is a Registered Clinical Psychologist and consultant in Richmond Hill, Ontario. She has been providing psychological services to hospitals, university counselling centers, private clinics and corporations. Currently, she holds positions with York University and the Traumatology Institute (Canada) where she works as an instructor and as a clinician. She is

a member of the Board of Directors of Tropicana Community Services.

Jeffrey Preston of London is completing a master's degree in Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario, returning this year as a Doctoral candidate in Media Studies. He won Ontario Graduate Scholarships, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant and Teaching Assistant Award for the 2007 term. He has sat as chair of the Provincial Council and vice-chair on the Board of Directors with Easter Seals Ontario.

Stuart Kidd retired from a career in municipal planning and was later involved in property development, sales, leasing and management for a provincial crown corporation. In the past, Stuart has been Vice Chair of the Physically Handicapped Adults Rehabilitation Association, Chair of the North Bay Police Services Board and a board member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. He is currently a board member of the Ontario Conservation Review Board and a member of the North Bay Drug Awareness Committee.

The council had another productive year. Some members participated on standards development committees, as well as providing advice to the minister on the overall evolution of the AODA. The council participated in a focus group on public education and provided feedback for the AccessON public awareness campaign and the products found on the website.

Council members conducted information and outreach sessions on the AODA and the customer service standard to several municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs) throughout the province. As well, council members acted as AODA ambassadors at regional accessibility expos throughout the province in May 2008.

In 2009, the members of the council will continue to advise the minister on the next critical phase of the AODA, including providing input on public education and compliance initiatives for the accessibility standards.



Looking Ahead to 2009

ur work will continue to improve accessibility for Ontarians. One important example is a government plan to make elections more accessible to voters with disabilities. As we have seen, there has been great progress during 2008 to fulfill the requirements of the AODA and the new customer service standard. There is much more to come.

Four New Standards

As the remaining four standards are finalized in 2009 – transportation, information and communications, employment and the built environment - we will build even more momentum to make the province more inclusive for every Ontarian. These new standards will represent a giant step towards an accessible province by 2025.

Compliance Assistance

During the next 12 months, the government will continue to build awareness, promote tools and resources, and engage in strategic partnerships with businesses and organizations as Ontario counts down to compliance with the new customer service standard.

Here are some of the highlights to look forward to in 2009:

- Tools and Resources - The government will continue to develop compliance assistance resources and tools for obligated organizations including:
 - o Customer service training resources
 - o Compliance and training tools for small business
 - o An easy-to-read guide for the customer service standard

- The EnAbling Change Partnership Program – Fourteen new strategic projects have been initiated with organizations that have the vision, leadership and commitment to improve accessibility across their sector. The tools and resources produced by these partnerships will assist thousands of organizations across the province as they learn how to comply with the customer service standard.

Review of the AODA

As set out in the AODA, an independent reviewer will be appointed in 2009 to conduct a review, in consultation with the public, on the effectiveness of this act and its regulations. The findings will be presented to the Minister and then presented to the Legislative Assembly.



Conclusion

This past year has been filled with activity to finalize standards, help businesses comply with the customer service standard and make a difference in the lives of all Ontarians.

The need for accessibility is growing. Today, about one in seven (1.85 million) Ontarians has a disability. As our population ages, the number of people with disabilities will increase. In 2025, it is anticipated that one in five Ontarians will be 65 years of age or older – that’s nearly 6.7 million people. But people with disabilities still lack equal access to services, employment, transportation, information or buildings that others in Ontario enjoy.

Ontario truly is Canada’s leader in accessibility. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada to have legislation that sets out a comprehensive 2025 goal of accessibility in areas that impact the daily lives of people with disabilities.

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We have made a lot of progress this year to make Ontario more accessible to people with disabilities. And 2009 will take us even further as we strive to build a province that is inclusive to everyone by 2025.

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

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