

2012

AODA Annual Report

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

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins,
Minister of Economic Development, Trade
and Employment

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Message from the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment



Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Economic
Development, Trade
and Employment

I am pleased to present the 2012 annual report on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

When it was passed in 2005, the AODA represented groundbreaking legislation that aimed to proactively embed accessibility into important aspects of life and business in Ontario. Seven years later, having reached many milestones, the fundamental goals of the AODA continue to steer our progress towards an accessible, inclusive Ontario by 2025.

Accessibility benefits all of us.

It makes good sense to create a province where every person who lives or visits here can participate fully — good sense for our people, our businesses and our communities. The changes we are making not only remove barriers for people with disabilities, they create greater opportunity for everyone in our province. This means more people will be able to participate in the workforce and businesses will increase their competitive edge, building a prosperous Ontario.

This past year we marked several important milestones:

- As of January 1, 2012 more than 360,000 private and not-for-profit businesses and organizations in Ontario were required to provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

- Of those, organizations with 20 or more employees had to report on their progress by submitting accessibility reports by December 31, 2012.
- The Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment) was completed in 2012 and became law on January 1, 2013. It will improve accessibility in our public spaces and will make it easier for everyone in our province to access the places where they work, travel, shop and play.

As we continue to promote accessibility across the province, I encourage you to visit us on the web at ontario.ca/AccessON, take a look at our videos on YouTube and engage with us on Facebook and Twitter.

Our collective commitment and work has made Ontario a world leader in accessibility and we can all be proud of what we have accomplished so far. Together, we are helping to create inclusive, accessible communities throughout the province that benefit all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Hoskins", with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Our goal:
An accessible
Ontario by
2025

Accessibility standards set rules for identifying, removing and preventing barriers.

June 5, 2005
AODA is passed



45 days public review period to provide feedback on proposed accessibility standards

- SDC revises the proposed standard to incorporate public input and submits a final proposed standard to the government for consideration as law.
- Once becoming law, standards include the steps and timelines that businesses and organizations will have to follow.

We'll reach our goal by developing, implementing and enforcing mandatory accessibility standards in

5 key areas:

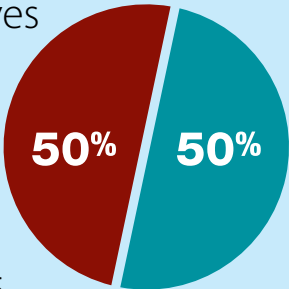
- Customer service
- Employment
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Public spaces (built environment)



Standards Development Committees (SDCs) develop accessibility standards:

50% People with disabilities or representatives of people with disabilities

50% Representatives of business and industry



We're Working to Make it Easier

The Government of Ontario continues to make meaningful change for people with disabilities across the province. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act laid the foundation for improving accessibility in Ontario. It aims to improve activities that we all do in our daily lives – like going to work, browsing the Web, shopping, taking a bus or taking a walk through a park in our community.

This past year our focus was on making it easier for organizations to find out what they need to do and for businesses to report on their progress. We updated our website to include a new set of resources on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. We also launched the AODA Wizard, an easy-to-use online tool that takes the guesswork out of accessibility requirements and timelines.

This year's annual report highlights what we have done throughout 2012 to make sure Ontario businesses have everything they need at their fingertips. We've had a busy year. From creating useful and easy-to-read resources, to promoting the AODA across Ontario, our focus has been letting employers know that we're here to support them in making their organizations accessible.

Ontario is a world leader in accessibility.

- First in the world to mandate accessibility reporting.
- First in the world to require staff to be trained on accessibility.
- First in Canada with a clear goal and a time frame by which to meet that goal.

Ontario's Accessibility Standards

Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service sets out the requirements that organizations must follow to make sure they are providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

2012 Highlights

As of January 1, 2012 all private and not-for-profit businesses and organizations were required to provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities. By the end of the year, those with 20 or more employees had to report on their progress by submitting accessibility reports to government.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation brings together the accessibility standards for employment, information and communications, and transportation, and harmonizes requirements that are common to all of them.

- **General Section** – Includes the requirements that apply across all three standards, such as developing accessibility policies and plans as well as training employees on accessibility.
- **Information and Communications** – Requires organizations to make their information and the way they communicate it accessible for people with disabilities.
- **Employment** – Removes barriers to joining the workforce and promotes inclusive workplaces that accommodate disabilities.

- **Transportation** – Supports barrier-free travel for work and leisure.
- **Compliance Section** – Brings penalties into force, allows organizations to request a review of penalties and designates the Licence Appeal Tribunal to handle appeals under the AODA.

BY THE NUMBERS

Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

This standard applies to:

1-19

Small organizations that have between **1-19** employees.

20+

Large organizations that have **20 or more** employees. These organizations must submit accessibility reports.

60k

Approximately **60,000** businesses had to submit accessibility reports by December 31, 2012.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

This regulation applies to:

1-49

Small organizations that have between **1-49** employees.

50+

Large organizations that have **50 or more** employees. These organizations must submit accessibility reports.



2012 Highlights

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation covers many areas and touches on several different sectors.

Two key requirements came into effect for all organizations – regardless of their size. As of January 1, 2012 organizations across Ontario have to make emergency and public safety information accessible to people with disabilities when requested. That means that things like emergency plans and procedures, evacuation routes and warning signs need to be made available in a way that meets the person's needs. All workplaces must help employees stay safe in an emergency by providing them with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

Design of Public Spaces (Accessibility Standard for the Built Environment)

We finished the year with a significant accomplishment. The government approved the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces in the built environment. It came into force on January 1, 2013.

This standard will improve accessibility in public spaces like playgrounds, recreational trails and along sidewalks. The standard has been included in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and harmonized with existing requirements.

There are seven areas of focus in the standard:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public-use eating areas, like rest stops or picnic areas
- Outdoor play spaces, like playgrounds in provincial parks and local communities
- Exterior paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
- Accessible parking (on and off street)
- Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines, and waiting areas
- Maintenance



The Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces will only affect new construction and planned redevelopment.

Enhancing accessibility elements related to buildings may happen at a later date through changes to Ontario’s Building Code, which governs new construction and renovations in buildings.

2012 Highlights

In August, we invited the public to review the draft Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces. We posted the draft on three government websites, including the Environmental Registry, so that we would reach a cross-section of interested stakeholders. We reviewed and analyzed all comments and feedback from the public, to help government make decisions about what would become law and when.

BY THE NUMBERS

Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces

45

Draft posted for public review for **45 days**.

3

Draft posted on **3 government websites** to reach a cross-section of interested stakeholders.

133

133 submissions received from municipalities, broader public sector, disability communities, private organizations and individuals.

Better, Faster, Easier Compliance Support

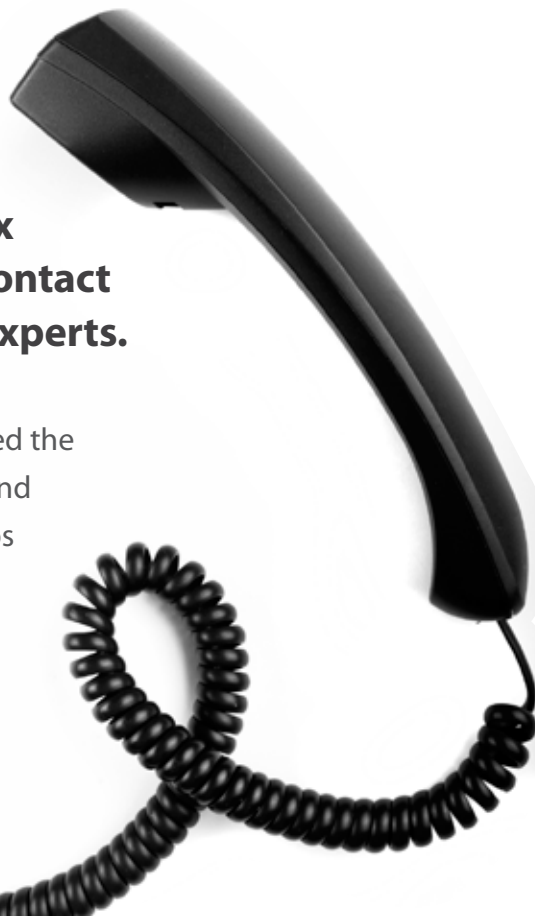
Throughout 2012, we took a hands-on approach to help organizations comply. We made phone calls to 1,100 large businesses and not-for-profit organizations to remind them to submit their compliance reports on the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. We also provided one-on-one compliance support if needed.

In-house training was an important part of improving compliance support. We worked closely with our ServiceOntario Contact Centre staff to let them know about new business and service-delivery improvements. We also trained operators on how to respond to questions that come in through email from the public and organizations. Our contact centre operators are now equipped to respond to both telephone and email enquiries — ensuring a faster and more efficient response time.

The government also upgraded its helpdesk telephone system.

This newer version allows for better and faster transfers of complex questions from our ServiceOntario Contact Centre staff to our AODA Help Desk experts.

To make reporting easier, we upgraded and simplified the online ONe-Source registration process for private and not-for-profit organizations by streamlining the steps involved in setting up their profiles.



Tools and Resources

Making sure that businesses understand what they need to do is a crucial part of our work. This past year we updated our AccessON website with new fact sheets, guides and general information about the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. We developed and published guidelines to make it easier for organizations to understand the meaning and intent of the newest accessibility requirements so they could get started on what they need to do.

Some of these resources included guides to:

- providing emergency response information to employees
- making emergency and public safety information accessible
- providing accessible formats and supports
- considering accessibility in procurement
- making websites more accessible

BY THE NUMBERS

Compliance Support

21,000

Contact centre operators responded to over **21,000 phone calls.**

We also created new tools to help both smaller and larger organizations develop their accessibility policies and multi-year plans.

2012 Highlights

As in the past, our EnAbling Change partners played a key role in developing resources to help organizations across Ontario meet accessibility standards. This year, some of our partners focused on specific parts of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation:

- Curriculum Services Canada developed a multi-media suite of training resources, **AccessForward.ca**, to help small and large organizations train employees, volunteers and other staff.
- Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments created detailed tools and guides to help organizations meet the requirements

of the Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications. These also included two resources that focused on web accessibility and design.

- Human Resources Professionals Association produced a series of videos to promote accessibility and help Ontario's employers meet the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Employment.

The AODA Wizard

In the summer we launched the AODA Wizard, an interactive tool that makes it easier for businesses to find out what they need to do and by when. It's accessible, user-friendly and simple to use. After answering a series of questions about their organization, the user gets a list of requirements and deadlines tailored to them, as well as links to available resources.

ONe-Source for Business

This year we entered into an agreement with ServiceOntario to simplify the reporting process. Private sector businesses can now file their accessibility reports securely and electronically using the ONe-Source for Business portal.

Streamlined Compliance Enforcement

Using our experience with compliance in the public sector, we streamlined and strengthened our processes so that we are ready to audit, inspect and enforce compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service in the private and not-for-profit sectors.

Throughout 2012 we moved ahead with many initiatives so we would be ready for overseeing compliance in 2013. We have a process established to collect monetary penalties if needed, and we have a body in place to hear appeals.

2012 Highlights

Administrative Monetary Penalties

The AODA gives government the authority to set monetary penalties to enforce compliance with accessibility standards. In 2012, we received approval to begin putting penalties into practice. Penalties will only be issued after all efforts to help an organization comply have been exhausted. Amounts range from \$200 to \$15,000, depending on the size and type of organization, its compliance history and the impact of the violation. In the most serious of cases, daily amounts can also apply.

A Director's Order to pay an administrative penalty that is not paid and not appealed within the specified timeframes, may be filed with the Superior Court of Justice and may be enforced as if it were an order of the court.

Licence Appeal Tribunal

In 2012, we finalized arrangements with the Licence Appeal Tribunal so it will be ready to hear appeals from organizations that wish to dispute any enforcement action. We determined that the Tribunal has the most experience with similar types of appeals and it is well known by the business community.

BY THE NUMBERS

Compliance Assurance Framework

Our framework is designed to help organizations meet their accessibility requirements. It includes:



Education and awareness building to help organizations understand and comply with accessibility standards.



A self-certification program for organizations to register and file reports online.



A strategy to help organizations meet accessibility requirements when they are having problems.



Inspections and enforcement actions to address contraventions of the act and accessibility standards.

Dec 31, 2012

December 31, 2012 was the deadline for private and not-for-profit organizations to file their report on accessible customer service.

Audits and Inspections

In 2012 we began exploring partnership agreements with other ministries who regulate legislation in Ontario. Working with them will allow us to implement a streamlined, government-wide approach to overseeing compliance with the AODA and its accessibility standards.

To ensure integrity in AODA reporting, we audit a range of obligated organizations each year. In 2012, we strengthened and improved business practices when it comes to audits. We analyzed data and applied lessons that we learned in 2011. As a result, we increased our capacity to carry out audits through improved procedures and protocols.

In 2012, we audited 200 randomly-selected public sector organizations including municipalities, hospitals, colleges, universities, and school boards. We asked these organizations to send us documents related to accessibility requirements they reported on in 2010. Nearly all of the organizations provided documents that met the requirements. For those who needed additional guidance, we worked one-on-one with them to bring their organizations into compliance.

Our audits and inspections team developed tools to better support our work. Putting them into practice is helping us ensure that we apply our inspections and enforcement strategy in a consistent and fair way. The lessons we learned from the public sector audits we conducted in 2012 will help us in 2013 when we audit the private and not-for-profit sectors.

Business Directory

Working with ServiceOntario, we fully integrated our Accessibility Compliance Reporting system with the Ontario Government Business Directory. The directory holds information about Ontario businesses that already have relationships with government. This database will be updated regularly with current and reliable information.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public Sector Audits

200

200 public sector audits in 2012.

Targeted Outreach and Strategic Partnerships

Getting the Word Out

One of our main priorities throughout 2012 was making sure that private and not-for-profit businesses were ready to submit their compliance reports by the end of the year. We attended many events across the province and continued to work with our partners to spread the message.

We also made sure that we kept in touch with public sector organizations, whether in person, at events or through webcasts. We held sessions to let them know what they need to do under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and we shared tools and resources to make it easier for them to meet their requirements.

“Meetings like yesterday – with so many representatives around the table from school boards, hospitals, police services and municipalities – are great reminders that implementing the legislation is work we are doing together, not in isolation.”

— Kim Adeney, The Regional Municipality of York

2012 Highlights

Private Sector Outreach

We sent emails and letters to thousands of organizations across Ontario throughout the year to make sure they knew about the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service and the December 31 reporting deadline.

BY THE NUMBERS

Reminders to Ontario Businesses

169k

169,000 emails

60k

60,000 letters

89k

89,000 inserts in
Ministry of Finance
mailings

Youth Ambassadors Reaching the Public

16

16 summer
weeks

28

28 festivals

11k

11,000 local
citizens engaged



Youth Ambassadors

Over the summer, we hired university students to raise awareness about accessibility and the AODA. In 2012 our students travelled to community outdoor festivals and events throughout Southwestern and Eastern Ontario. They engaged visitors and handed out educational information and resources on accessibility standards to thousands of local citizens.

Webcasts

Since we always aim to reach as many organizations as we can, we try to make it easier for people to hear directly from us by hosting webcasts. This way, we can reach people all over Ontario and they can be sure that they are getting accurate and useful information about accessibility standards. This year we held a number of webcasts for various organizations, including three for MPP constituency offices. We also partnered with the Public Health Agency of Canada to provide updates to public health units across Ontario on the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

Events

We continued face-to-face outreach at industry events and conferences. We set up exhibits, delivered presentations and co-hosted workshops. We also hosted events for specific audiences, such as Ontario agencies, boards and commissions and our EnAbling Change partners.

BY THE NUMBERS

2012 Events

74

74 presentations

61

61 trade
show exhibits

5

5 webinars

Health Care Sector

- Association of Ontario Health Centres 2012 Primary Health Care Conference
- Health Equity Impact Assessment Forum
- Ontario Hospital Association Conference
- Partners in Prevention Conference
- Primary Care Today Conference

Private Sector

- Human Resources Professionals Association Annual Conference
- Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals Conference
- Conference Board of Canada Council of CIOs Meeting

Public Sector

- Ontario Good Roads Association/Rural Ontario Municipal Association Annual Conference
- Association of Municipalities of Ontario Annual Conference
- Association for Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario Annual Conference

Disability Community Support

- Parasport Games in Huntsville
- 9th Annual Parasport Sport Festival at Carleton University
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Conference

Partnerships

EnAbling Change Program

We rely on our partners to help us inform organizations and champion accessibility. Through the EnAbling Change Program, we work with leading umbrella organizations and not-for-profit associations to help us connect with businesses and organizations all over Ontario.

Through the program, we provide funding for strategic projects that support and promote compliance with the AODA and accessibility standards throughout an industry or sector, or across several sectors.

EnAbling Change Program

21 partners reaching **9** sectors.

2012 Highlights

Our 2012/13 EnAbling Change Program continued focusing on creating one consistent set of AODA resources for all sectors. Some of our partners created unique resources and programs promoting:

- accessibility awareness among children and youth
- the importance of accessible sports and recreation
- universal design

2012/2013 EnAbling Change Partnerships

University of Toronto is developing a web application that locates and downloads accessible digital books, as well as a multi-media information toolkit for librarians and library administrators.

Association of Ontario Health Centres is providing information, resources and training on the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation to 75 of Ontario’s Health Centres.

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association is developing a best practice guide to consulting people with disabilities. The guide will be useful in helping organizations consult people with disabilities when implementing accessibility requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. They are also producing a guide on how to make meetings inclusive and will host forums for Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees in 2013.



Canadian Paralympic Committee is expanding awareness of parasport for people with disabilities. By engaging schools, health professionals and the general public, they are attempting to increase participation in sports and physical activity for people with disabilities.

Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario) is providing resources and pilot training to support recreational organizations in providing accessible customer service to people with mental health disabilities.



McMichael Canadian Art Collection is designing and delivering programs to seniors, children and youth with disabilities. McMichael is also developing a best practices guide in various accessible formats. The guide will outline the development, implementation and resulting success of art programs for youth with developmental disabilities and seniors with dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. It will help other museums, organizations and associations to offer programs to audiences with disabilities.

Canadian Mental Health Association (Toronto) is producing a multi-media training package for the justice sector to help in providing accessible communications to people with disabilities.

Other EnAbling Change partners include:

- Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario
- CNIB
- Design Exchange
- Epilepsy Toronto
- Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario
- MaRS
- Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association
- ParaSport Ontario
- Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

EnAbling ExChange

We hosted an “EnAbling Exchange” event in the fall to make it easier for our partners to network. The event encouraged new and previous EnAbling Change partners to continue being accessibility champions and to share their experiences, lessons learned and information on their upcoming projects.

Other New Partnerships

This past year we began working closely with the Pan/Parapan Am Games Secretariat and Toronto2015 to make sure the Games meet all accessibility standards that will be in place by 2015 and to make sure accessibility is a key legacy of this world event.

Accessibility Standards Advisory Council (ASAC)

Throughout 2012, ASAC continued to help us with our outreach efforts. Members gave presentations across the province on the AODA and the accessibility standards. Audiences included the broader public sector, private sector businesses and the disability community.

Accessibility Standards Advisory Council

- Established when the AODA was enacted in 2005
- Council advises the Minister of Community and Social Services on the implementation of the act, including the development of accessibility standards and public education campaigns
- Members 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

2012 Highlights

We made a significant change to ASAC's role. The council's mandate was expanded to include the function of a standards development committee. Putting in place a single body will streamline how accessibility standards are developed and reviewed and will help to achieve harmonized accessibility solutions in a shorter amount of time. This approach is in line with the recommendations made in the Charles Beer Report – the first independent review of the AODA.

The Charles Beer Report

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 was to determine if we are moving towards our goal of an accessible Ontario in an effective, efficient, flexible and fair manner.

One of the areas of focus in Mr Beer's review was the Standards Development Committee process. He recommended that the process for developing future accessibility standards and reviewing existing standards under the AODA be revised.



Outreach and EnAbling Change partner events across Ontario.

Looking Ahead to 2013

Outreach and Compliance Support

- In 2013 we will continue our outreach efforts to the not-for-profit, private and public sector to help them meet their accessibility requirements under the AODA. We will work with our partners – both internal and external – to promote the message of accessibility across Ontario.
- We will keep raising awareness through our participation in events and speaking engagements, and increase focus on all the standards:
 - Customer Service
 - Employment
 - Information and Communications
 - Transportation
 - Design of Public Spaces
- Over the next year, our attention will turn to developing and distributing educational resources to help organizations understand and prepare to implement the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces.

Compliance

- To ensure that the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service is being implemented, we will follow up with the private and not-for-profit organizations that missed the reporting deadline of December 31, 2012.

- We will begin pilot programs with partner ministries who have agreed to assess compliance on our behalf.

Accessibility Standards Advisory Council

- The new expanded council will begin its work in 2013. This will include a review of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. The council will form technical subcommittees as needed. In next year's annual report, we will provide an update on the new council's work to date.



Left and Top Right: Youth Accessibility Ambassadors

Lower Right: Design Exchange Connect 2012 Awards Night

Ontario has made many significant achievements in 2012. All organizations with one or more employees in Ontario should now be providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

Public sector organizations began the journey in 2010, and private businesses and not-for-profit organizations followed this past year. That means that now anyone – regardless of ability – will receive service in a way that respects their individual needs at any government office, school, hospital, store or restaurant.

Our aim this year was to support businesses and not-for-profit organizations in becoming accessible. We made our tools and resources shorter, clearer and easier to understand so they are appropriate for all employers, no matter their size. We simplified the online reporting process so that businesses have fewer steps to go through when submitting their compliance reports. And we created the AODA Wizard, so that organizations can quickly and easily find out what they need to do and by when.

Organizations all over the province are taking steps to help make our province accessible to everyone. And with each standard, we are moving closer to our goal: an accessible Ontario by 2025.

December 2013

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