

Landmark legislation marks new era of accessibility in Ontario



The McGuinty government is moving forward to make Ontario a world leader in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

On June 13, 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, received royal assent and is now the law.



“Our government has delivered on its commitment to bring in strong and effective legislation promoting increased accessibility,” said Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Dr. Marie Bountrogianni. “Improving accessibility is fundamental to reaching the full human, economic, social and cultural potential of our province.”



Under the new law, meaningful, realistic standards will be developed collaboratively by standards development committees, made up of members of the disability community, sector representatives and government. Standards will be set in stages of five years or less, in both the public and private sectors to address the full range of disabilities – including physical, sensory, mental health, developmental and learning. New standards could include:



- Accessible pedestrian routes and entrances into buildings
- Lower counter heights at cash registers to accommodate wheelchairs
- Large print menus in restaurants for the visually-impaired
- Staff training in serving customers with learning disabilities.

The government is now recruiting for the chair, vice-chair and members of the new Accessibility Standards Advisory Council created under the act. This is a great opportunity for those who are committed to issues of accessibility to have a voice in the implementation of this new legislation.

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Council will advise the minister on progress made on standards development, public information programs and other matters. Membership of the council will be drawn from the broader public and private sectors. The majority of council members will be people with disabilities.

Those interested in applying for chair or vice-chair of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council can submit an application to the Public Appointments Secretariat by July 29, 2005. The deadline for applications for members is August 19, 2005. Please see the Public Appointments Secretariat website at <http://www.pas.gov.on.ca/scripts/en/advertPositions.asp>

Additional information and application packages in alternate formats are available by calling 1-888-520-5828 or toll-free TTY 1-888-335-6611.

“The new accessibility legislation will benefit our province enormously,” said Bountrogianni. “It will improve the quality of life for 1.5 million people with disabilities. We are firmly on the path to creating an accessible Ontario, where our quality of life is enriched by the inclusion of all, and our economy benefits from the contribution of all.”