

Frequently Asked Questions – Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Q1. What is the goal behind the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005?

A1. With this legislation, the government is acting to transform Ontario into an accessible society for people with disabilities. Every Ontarian should have the opportunity to learn, work, play and otherwise participate in society to their fullest potential.

Q2. How will this legislation make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities?

A2. Every Ontarian should have the opportunity to work, learn, play and otherwise participate in society to their full potential. People with disabilities should be able to move around from place to place, go shopping, attend school, visit their doctor or get a job – without facing barriers that people without disabilities would not face. That’s what we mean by an accessible society. And that’s our goal.

Q3. Why will the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 take 20 years to implement?

A3. Twenty years is an end point, not a starting point. We will ensure change begins right away, while allowing time to do it right.

Working together, we will identify, remove and prevent barriers. We will achieve real results in stages, with milestones every five years or less.

Making Ontario accessible requires fundamental change. Despite what we might all desire, that can’t happen overnight.

Other jurisdictions have reached the same conclusion. For example, Australia has five-year timeframes over a 30-year period for removing transportation barriers. And the United States has transportation timeframes ranging up to 30 years.

Q4. What happens now that the act has received royal assent?

A4. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, received royal assent on June 13, 2005, and is now the law.

The government is beginning to implement the new act by launching the recruitment process for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council.

Q5. What are some of the changes that we can expect to see as a result of the new legislation?

A5. Standards will be set 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.

Q6. What is the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council?

A6. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, requires that the minister establish the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council. The council will play an important role in moving Ontario towards its vision of an accessible society. The council is an advisory agency that provides the minister ongoing information and/or advice on:

- the progress of the standards development committees in the development of proposed standards
- accessibility reports
- public information programs and other matters.

We currently are recruiting members, including chair and vice-chair, for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council. Individuals interested in the position of chair or vice-chair, or membership on the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council, are invited to submit an application to the Public Appointments Secretariat. The deadline for chair and vice-chair applications is July 29, 2005. The deadline for applications for council membership is August 19, 2005. Please see the Public Appointments Secretariat website at <http://www.pas.gov.on.ca/scripts/en/advertPositions.asp>

Q7. How long will the appointments be for?

A7. Members of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council will be appointed by the minister for up to a three-year term that is renewable.

Q8. What are the selection criteria for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council?

A8. Appointment descriptors that outline the criteria for the chair, vice-chair and members of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council will be posted on the Public Appointments Secretariat Website. Selection criteria may include:

- Knowledge of current disability issues and legislation, and knowledge in a related field
- Commitment and dedication to negotiating and building consensus with other council members towards establishing and achieving goals
- Preparing/participating in discussions/deliberations at council meetings
- Effective communication skills; relationship building and team player skills in order to foster a positive working relationship with council members and other key contacts.

Q9. Will members of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council be eligible to receive payment? How much?

A9. All appointments are considered part-time and appointees are not in an employment relationship with the Government of Ontario. An element of public service is implied in any appointment by the Government of Ontario and therefore, any remuneration that may be paid is not expected to be competitive in the marketplace.

The minister may pay council members the remuneration and the reimbursement of expenses that the Lieutenant Governor of Council determines.

The ministry will cover costs related to accommodation supports for individual members, as required.

Q10. How often will the council meet?

A10. Unless the minister directs otherwise, the council will meet on a quarterly basis.

Q11. What if I am not a resident of Ontario? Can I still apply to be on the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council?

A11. Participation on Accessibility Standards Advisory Council is limited to Ontario residents. This is because we are looking for council members who:

- Have a stake in the implementation of standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005; and
- Will be able to participate in Accessibility Standards Advisory Council meetings.

Q12. How does the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council differ from the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario established under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001?

A12. The mandate of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council will be to advise the minister on the progress of the standards development committees, public information programs and other matters.

The mandate of the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario, established under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, is to educate the broader public sector on accessibility planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Q13. Where do I send my completed application to be a member of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council?

A13. You may fill out and submit your application online, or in any of the alternate formats.

Hard copies of applications can be sent to the following address:
Public Appointments Secretariat
Room M2-70 Macdonald Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1
Fax: 416-327-2633

Q14. Where can I get more information if I have a question about the application process for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council?

A14. If you have any questions about the application:

Phone: 416-326-0207 or Toll-Free: 1-888-520-5828
TTY/TDD: 416-326-0148 or Toll-Free: 1-888-335-6611
E-mail: accessibility@mci.gov.on.ca

Q15. How long will the Ministry keep my application on file?

A15. The ministry will keep your application information confidentially on file for a period of up to five (5) years. At any time, you may ask us in writing or by e-mail to withdraw your application or accept an updated application that would replace the original.

Q16. What is the deadline to apply?

A16. The application deadline for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council is as follows:

- Chair and vice-chair - Friday July 29, 2005 (TBC)
- Members – Friday August 19, 2005 (TBC)

Q17. What are Standards Development Committees?

A17. Standards are the building blocks of accessibility, helping to ensure real, measurable and effective change takes place in a timely manner. Meaningful, realistic standards will be developed collaboratively by standards development committees, made up of members of the disability community, business and sector representatives, and government. Accessibility standards would set out what must be done to prevent and remove barriers – and when.

Each standards development committee will be responsible for:

- developing long-term accessibility objectives and proposed accessibility standards (taking into account economic and other considerations) for the respective industry, sector or class of persons/organizations;
- further defining the persons/organizations that are to be covered by the standard in question;
- submitting a proposed accessibility standard to the minister for public review within prescribed timelines;
- considering the input received from the public review; and
- formally submitting a proposed accessibility standard to the minister.

Accessibility standards approved by the minister and cabinet will become regulations, and will be enforceable as law.

Q18. When will the ministry begin recruiting standards development committee members?

A18. The ministry is currently finalizing its approach to implementation and will begin recruitment for standards development committees shortly.