

# Member Bulletin

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## Opening Ontario Business for all Customers

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has been actively involved in developing accessibility standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). The goal of the act is to make the province accessible by 2025 by developing standards in key areas including customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment, the built environment.

The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Standard* (O. Reg 429/07), also known as the customer service standard, came into effect on January 1, 2008 and is the first standard developed under AODA. It applies to all businesses and organizations that provide goods or services to the public or other organizations and have at least one employee in Ontario.

### Compliance dates and reporting requirements for organizations in the private sector, including non-profit are as follows:

- Businesses with **20 or more employees** must comply by **January 1, 2012, and report in 2012**;
- Businesses with **one to 19 employees** must comply by **January 1, 2012, but are exempted from reporting**.

*Accessibility Works* is a new initiative of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), in partnership with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The OCC will work collaboratively with the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade to help businesses in Ontario become aware of and comply with the customer service standard.

Key resources and tools of the project will include:

- Web-based information and an online training module designed specifically to help business implement and comply with the customer service standard;
- Facilitators information kit to help the OCC's 160 affiliated local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade disseminate information to their corporate members;
- Up to 40 information sessions held with local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade.

## KEY FACTS

Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in 2005, becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to legally commit to breaking down barriers by 2025.

The customer service standard is one of five that will form part of the AODA.

These accessibility standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Ontario is developing accessibility standards in areas such as:

- customer service;
- transportation;
- information and communications;
- employment ;
- built environment.

Did you know?

- 1.85 million Ontarians have disabilities;
- Spending power of Canadians with disabilities is approximately \$25 billion;
- Embracing Accessibility in customer service has proven to increase customer loyalty.

For more information about the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act visit:

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