

Report CCR-AAC-27-15

To: Chair Burley and Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee
From: Robert Hatten, Communications Officer
Meeting Date: November 13, 2015
Subject: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan
Status: Recommendation adopted by the AAC per Resolution AAC08-15;
Adopted by the Corporate Services Committee January 12, 2016 per
Resolution CS04-16; Endorsed by County Council February 2, 2016;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS 2015 marks the 10th Anniversary of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and the halfway point towards the goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025;

AND WHEREAS the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure has released a new action plan to build on the progress made through the AODA;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the report on the Accessibility Action Plan be received for information.

Background

This year 2015 is the 10th anniversary of the introduction of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and it also marks the halfway point in Ontario's goal of achieving an accessible Ontario by 2025. To mark the milestone anniversary, the Ministry of Economic Development initiated "The Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan", a plan created to ensure Ontario remains on track with its accessibility goals. The plan incorporates recommendations made by Mayo Moran in a comprehensive review of the AODA that was released in February 2015 (known as the Moran report). Ms. Moran, the Provost and Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College at the University of Toronto, reviewed the AODA and conducted consultations from 2013-2014. The recommendations in the Moran report include providing more guidance on accessibility requirements, publicly promoting enforcement and compliance efforts, and identifying gaps and barriers in the current AODA standards as well as healthcare.

Summary of Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan

There are three main components to action plan: Engaging employers, strengthening the foundation of the AODA, and promoting a cultural shift in society.

Engaging employers

The action plan identifies that Ontario is facing a growing skills shortage in many sectors and people with disabilities are ready and willing to work. According to the plan, the biggest hurdle is helping businesses overcome misconceptions about employees with disabilities and understand the benefits of hiring them, such as better retention and productivity rates. The province will be seeking advice from former Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley and the Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities to find ways to increase engagement. The ministry has also partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to establish a one-year, \$1.8-million Abilities Connect Fund. The fund is made up of three programs focusing on training and employment opportunities for students with a disability, helping employers build inclusive workplaces, and promoting best practices and success stories.

The government will also launch a \$9-million pilot program – Valuing Ability – to:

- address barriers businesses face in hiring people with disabilities
- promote the business case for hiring people with disabilities
- encourage inclusion, and to complement efforts with key partners to continue helping people with disabilities secure employment.

Strengthening the Foundation of the AODA

The Moran Report recommended amendments to streamline and strengthen the implementation of standards. The action plan will address these recommendations by:

- Removing sections of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*(ODA) that are duplicated by the AODA
- Working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to review gaps and barriers in the delivery of healthcare
- Introducing new legislation addressing barriers to accessibility in government legislation
- Amending and clarifying the Customer Service Standard of the AODA
- Reviewing the Transportation Standard to ensure requirements are enabling Ontarians to travel where they need to go

Promoting a Cultural Shift

This section of the action plan reinforces the ministry's commitment to promoting the

value of accessibility and helping businesses realize the economic advantages inclusion creates. Accessibility will be promoted by:

- Consulting with businesses and people with disabilities to develop a voluntary third party certification program to recognize businesses that champion accessibility
- Creating pilot projects to enhance compliance and outreach activities
- Building on the success of past awareness campaigns
- Releasing an annual compliance enforcement plan including audit blitzes
- Exploring the possibility of a social media presence to expand the conversation
- Working with the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario to launch a resource for municipal best practices
- Making it easier for businesses to find the tools and resources they need on the ministry website.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

At this time there are no additional financial or staffing considerations other than those contained within approved operating budgets.

There are no IT or legal considerations related to this report.

Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

One of the goals on the Corporate Strategic Plan is to “achieve excellence in governance and service.” One of the key actions for achieving this goal is to “Ensure that county services and programs are inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the diversity of the population.”

Attachments

The “The Path to 2025: Ontario’s Accessibility Action Plan” has been attached to the end of this report.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rob Hatten
Communications Officer

Director Sign Off: *Sharon Vokes*

The Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan

A Message from the Minister

People across Ontario are coming together to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Thanks to this groundbreaking legislation, which was introduced in 2005, organizations and businesses have been removing barriers to make it easier for people with disabilities to participate in their workplaces and communities.

I'm excited by the progress we're making. Standards related to information and communications, transportation, public spaces, customer service and employment have been taking effect for the last several years and will be fully rolled out by 2021.

I'm proud of how far Ontario has come on its accessibility journey. But there's still a long way to go to reach our goal of becoming an accessible province. This will require a sustained and collaborative effort.

As we reach the halfway point of this 20-year journey, it's time to review our progress, renew our commitment and mobilize for another 10 years of action.

The release of The Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan marks the first of many steps we are taking to ensure we remain on track to creating an accessible province in the decade ahead.

Over the coming months and years, we will continue to seek advice and new ideas from the many partners who play an essential role in helping realize this shared vision.

The plan builds on our strengths, sharpens our focus, and outlines our path forward. It describes the actions we are taking to engage businesses, strengthen our foundation, and promote a culture shift.

It will help the one in seven Ontarians who have a disability to better access their communities and employment opportunities.

And it will help employers — and all Ontarians — embrace accessibility as an exciting business and community-building opportunity. Combine that with legislative improvements, accessibility champions, and new compliance strategies and we have a formula for success.

In order to truly be successful in achieving our goal, we need to reach higher, to go beyond the requirements of the AODA and its standards. We need to integrate accessibility into everything we do, until it becomes second nature.

Working together, we'll arrive at the destination we set out for 10 years ago: an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Brad Duguid
Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure

A Bold Vision

In 2005, the AODA passed into law with unanimous support from all three political parties. This landmark legislation started Ontario on a journey to create an accessible province within 20 years. We knew that changing the focus from disability to ability was

necessary for our future prosperity, but would present a formidable challenge — one that would require a culture change.

Embracing the business case for accessibility is a win-win proposition for organizations of all sizes and for people with disabilities. The bottom line is that an accessible province means more opportunities for all Ontarians.

For Ontario's 1.8 million people with disabilities, it means being able to actively participate in our communities, workforce and economy.

For business, it means tapping into an underused talent pool, creating new products and services based on universal design, and harnessing the buying power of more people, both in-store and online.

For our economy, it means up to a \$600 a year per capita increase in the gross domestic product.

That makes becoming accessible and promoting accessibility not just the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do for businesses and organizations of all sizes.

FACT: Ontario is the first jurisdiction in the world to require staff to be trained on accessibility.

There are five accessibility standards in place under the AODA to support the creation of an accessible province by 2025:

- Customer Service
- Employment
- Information and Communications
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

FACT: Ninety per cent of Canadians believe that people with disabilities are not fully included in society.

The standards aim to ensure that all Ontarians can take part in everyday activities — working, shopping, taking public transit, using the Internet, attending sporting and cultural events, and enjoying parks and other public spaces.

They were developed by committees comprised of people with disabilities and sector representatives.

The standards set out the requirements that businesses and organizations with one or more employees must meet between now and 2021.

FACT: Penalties for non-compliance range from \$200 to \$2,000 for individuals and unincorporated organizations; and from \$500 to \$15,000 for corporations.

Businesses, not-for-profits and public sector organizations must all file accessibility compliance reports on a regular basis.

Municipalities and their accessibility advisory committees continue to do the on-the-ground work implementing the standards that will make accessibility a reality in communities across Ontario.

The standards we have regulated — and our systematic approach to implementing them — are ensuring accessibility is both a guiding principle and a daily practice throughout Ontario.

Timeline chart:

Chart detailing the Timelines for full implementation of the Accessibility Standards from 2006 to 2025.

1. The Design of Public Spaces Standard began in 2007.
 - a. The Standard was enacted in 2013.
 - b. Full Implementation in Government is 2015.
 - c. Full Implementation in the Public Sector will be in 2016.
 - d. Full Implementation in the Private Sector will be in 2018.
2. The Employment Standard began in 2007
 - a. The Standard was enacted in 2011.
 - b. Full Implementation in Government was 2013.
 - c. Full Implementation in the Public Sector is 2015.
 - d. Full Implementation in the Private Sector will be in 2017.
3. The Information and Communications Standard began in 2007
 - a. The Standard was enacted in 2011
 - b. Full Implementation in Government will be in 2020.
 - c. Full Implementation in the Public Sector will be in 2021.
 - d. Full Implementation in the Private Sector will be in 2021.
4. The Transportation Standard began in 2006
 - a. The Standard was enacted in 2011.
 - b. Full Implementation in Government will be in 2017.
 - c. The Full Implementation in the Public Sector will be in 2017.
 - d. Full Implementation in the Private Sector will be in 2017.
5. The Customer Service Standard began in 2006
 - a. The Standard was enacted in 2008.
 - b. Full Implementation in Government was 2010.
 - c. Full Implementation in the Public Sector was 2010.
 - d. Full Implementation in the Private Sector was 2012.

Spotlight article - Compliance Awareness Campaign

In November 2014, the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure launched a five-week marketing campaign to increase awareness of the importance of complying with the accessibility requirements and filing a compliance report. It worked. The number of reports filed increased by 150 per cent compared to

the 2012 reporting deadline. We will build on this momentum with continued outreach and education to further increase compliance reporting rates.

Chart

This chart is entitled: Getting to Compliance – A Progressive Approach.

It details 3 ways compliance can be achieved:

1. Awareness – Communicating to business on requirements and benefits
2. Improvement – Supporting business with compliance
3. Enforcement – Taking action on intentional non-compliance

Ontario Public Service Leadership

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) is committed to leading by example and serving as a role model to other employers on how to build an accessible organization.

The OPS has consistently demonstrated its leadership in the area of accessibility as an employer, policy-maker and service provider.

The OPS as Employer

In 2012, the OPS became the first organization to release a multi-year accessibility plan as required under the AODA. Developed by the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services' Diversity Office, the plan — Leading the Way Forward — outlines the key milestones planned and underway to achieve an accessible public service by 2025.

This includes providing training to Ontario's 63,000 public servants to ensure they understand their obligations under the act. Annual status reports track progress and compliance with legislative requirements.

The Diversity Office provides vision and leadership to achieve an accessible, diverse and inclusive public service.

FACT: The OPS has been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers for eight consecutive years (2008-2015).

Spotlight article - The OPS Inclusion Lens

Launched in January 2011 by the OPS Diversity Office, the Inclusion Lens has become a game changer in how the Ontario Public Service does business. It's a user-friendly, online tool that helps OPS employees become more knowledgeable about diversity, inclusion and accessibility, identify barriers in policy, program or service development processes, and develop strategies to remove barriers. "The lens helps us ask the right questions so we can get the right results," says Virginia Hatchette, Chief Inclusion and Accessibility Officer, OPS Diversity Office. "It is helping embed inclusion and diversity considerations into all of our business activities and decision-making processes." And it's also attracting attention from businesses and organizations outside the OPS that are looking for ways they can become more inclusive and responsive as employers, as well as to the needs of their increasingly diverse customer base.

The Ontario Government as Policy-Maker

The Ontario government has programs in place to prepare people with disabilities who are looking for work, and support them once they secure jobs.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has made employment a priority for the Ontario Disability Support Program, with initiatives to encourage and support clients who can and want to work.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is helping to create a new Centre of Excellence for Employment Services in partnership with the Ontario Disability Employment Network. This service will provide agencies with better resources and training to prepare individuals for employment, provide effective employment supports, and reach out to employers to develop new job opportunities.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Employment and Training Services Integration initiative is ensuring people with disabilities can access programs and services particular to their needs that prepare them for jobs in all sectors of the economy.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy includes a strong focus on supporting employment and income security for Ontario's most vulnerable, including people with disabilities.

In addition to accessibility standards under the AODA, Ontario's Education Act provides an overall framework for special education programs and services. School boards province-wide are required to provide special education programs and services to students with special education needs. School boards must also establish a Special Education Advisory Committee to inform their annual special education planning and budgeting.

Through the Accessibility Directorate and partners, the government has supported the development of model lesson plans, training plans for educators, and other tools and resources to help schools be accessible and inclusive for all students.

Spotlight article - High Impact Legislation Review

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services' Diversity Office recently collaborated with the Ministry of the Attorney General to review legislation that has a high impact on members of the public — and specifically people with disabilities — with a view to identifying barriers to accessibility. The review looked at 51 statutes related to

health, education, seniors and social services. The review identified opportunities to address barriers, and we have included these in our action plan.

Spotlight article - Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program

Launched in November 2014, the Ministry of Transportation's Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program is helping Ontario municipalities to partner with community organizations to better leverage and coordinate existing local transportation services. The overarching goal of the \$2-million pilot program is to ensure more rides are available to help people get to more destinations. Twelve of the 22 funded projects target transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. Funding is being used for a broad range of initiatives, including acquiring fully accessible vehicles, supplementing existing specialized transit service, providing a better level of service to those in need of assistance to complete their trips, and providing cross-boundary trips to people with mobility restrictions or those who find it difficult to make transfers.

The Ontario Government as Service Provider

As a service provider to millions of Ontarians, the government is committed to providing barrier-free customer service and seeks to continuously improve access for everyone.

For example, the Ministry of the Attorney General's Courthouse Accessibility Coordinator Service offers a single point of contact for court users with disabilities to ask questions and request accommodations. Coordinators are in place at all 166 provincial courthouses across Ontario.

At ServiceOntario, brochures, signs and postings follow accessibility and inclusion guidelines, while websites and online services have been upgraded to make them more accessible and user-friendly — including all driver and vehicle services and accessible parking permit applications. Other accessibility offerings by ServiceOntario include a signature guide designed for clients with vision loss and new procedures to support people who use sign language interpreters.

Spotlight article - Ontario Arts Council

The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians have access to the arts and that its programs are open to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities. When the council realized that artists with disabilities were facing barriers applying for grants and/or participating on juries, it kicked into action. In October 2014, the OAC launched Vital Arts and Public Value, a new strategic plan for 2014-2020 that identifies Deaf artists and artists with disabilities as a new priority group. Initiatives introduced in the plan include: support for those who need it to help complete their applications and funding for successful applicants who need help covering accommodation expenses in the course of their work. A new funding program is being launched in spring 2015 dedicated to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

The Path to 2025

This year marks a significant milestone on our path to an accessible Ontario. At the halfway mark to 2025, accessibility is increasingly becoming a part of day-to-day life across the province.

Across the broader public sector, organizations that provide vital services to Ontarians — including hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations — have been leading the way.

Businesses and organizations are developing and implementing multi-year accessibility plans to ensure they meet the needs of Ontarians of all abilities. Accessibility leaders are emerging and serving as role models for others who want to learn about best practices. And more people with disabilities are getting jobs and taking on active roles within their communities.

But there is still important work to do in the decade ahead, which is why we have developed this accessibility action plan. The plan is designed to ensure we develop and implement the critical next steps towards building an accessible Ontario.

The plan incorporates many of the recommendations made by Mayo Moran in her comprehensive review of the AODA released by government in February, 2015. These include providing more guidance on the accessibility requirements, publicly promoting our enforcement and compliance efforts, and identifying gaps and barriers in current standards as well as health care.

FACT: Improving accessibility can create up to \$9.6 billion in new retail spending and \$1.6 billion in new tourism spending in Ontario over five years.

FACT: By 2035, 40 per cent of our consumer base will be people with disabilities.

Spotlight article - Accessible Beach Pathways at Wasaga Beach

Wasaga Beach, Ontario is home to some of the province's most beautiful beaches. Thanks to a partnership between the Town of Wasaga Beach and Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, residents and tourists with disabilities are now able to enjoy them too. Accessible beach pathways featuring portable, durable and safe roll-out mats provide a walkway across the sand to access the water. Signs and designated accessible parking have been installed to provide direct access to the pathways. Local resident Frank Nunnaro, who has lived in the town for 35 years and used a wheelchair for the past 19, is thrilled. "To see and hear and feel the breeze and the water again is a great experience," Nunnaro says. He also appreciates seeing how the pathways work for a range of people of all abilities, including people using walkers, parents with strollers, and people using service animals. As a member of the Town accessibility advisory committee for the past seven years, Nunnaro is continuing to work on new projects to make Wasaga Beach even more accessible for everyone.

Spotlight article - Jason Tung – Focused on Ability

While attending university, Jason Tung developed a physical disability from a pre-existing medical condition. He graduated with an honours degree in engineering and was hired at Toronto-based Crossey Engineering Ltd., where he went through the company's graduate engineering training program and became a valued employee. Several years later, Tung resigned for personal reasons and travelled outside Canada. Upon his return, Tung's physical challenges prevented him from getting a full-time job elsewhere. He reapplied to Crossey as a mechanical designer and decided to participate in the company's flex time program. The program enables him to meet both his personal and professional commitments. Today Tung is a highly skilled and productive member of an interdisciplinary team delivering innovative and sustainable solutions in building design. "I learned that having a disability is no reason to accept inferiority," Tung says. "I regained my value and confidence and can again contribute to society. I think that this type of uplifting environment can turn challenges into strengths and rather than giving up on myself I will always strive for the best."

Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan

Ontario's accessibility action plan has three pillars, which include initiatives and commitments from across government.

Engage employers

Ontario is facing a growing skills shortage in a number of important sectors, including the trades, mining, financial services, information and communications technology, and hospitality and tourism. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the province could face a shortfall of 364,000 workers by 2025.

FACT: More than 40 per cent of Ontarians with disabilities have some type of postsecondary credential.

People with disabilities are ready and able to work. The challenge is getting business – particularly small- and medium-size firms that are largely responsible for new job creation – to step up and give qualified candidates with disabilities a chance to compete on a level playing field.

The biggest hurdle we need to overcome is the misconceptions businesses hold about employees with disabilities. Contrary to widely held beliefs, workers with disabilities generally have better retention and productivity rates.

FACT: Seventy per cent of small businesses say they have never hired a person with a disability.

A recent study shows that 20 per cent of employees with a disability require no accommodation at all, with the average cost for those who do being just \$500.

Workers with disabilities also provide a different perspective, which can lead to innovative product and service design.

The disability community — including people with disabilities and their families — represents a \$25 billion a year market in Canada alone.

To promote the hiring of people with disabilities, we are seeking advice from experts, including:

- Former Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley, our government’s Special Advisor on accessibility and a strong champion for opportunities for people with disabilities in both the private and public sectors.
- The Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities. It presented its first set of recommendations to Minister Duguid in May 2015. Among the recommendations:
 - Heighten business awareness of the value of employing people with disabilities.

- Involve business in addressing the challenges they face in hiring people with disabilities.
- Engage youth with disabilities to ensure they gain labour market attachment at an early stage.

We have also:

- Partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) to establish and deliver a one-year, \$1.8-million Abilities Connect Fund pilot project with three program streams:
 - Valuing Ability Employment — provides training and employment opportunities for college/university students and graduates with a disability.
 - Valuing Ability Workplace Solutions — helps employers build inclusive workplaces.
 - Valuing Ability Champions Network — promotes best practices and success stories through OCC’s communications network.

FACT: Seventy-five per cent of small business employers who have employees with a disability report that they meet or exceed their expectations.

Going forward, our government will launch a \$9-million capacity-building pilot program – Valuing Ability – to:

- Address barriers and challenges businesses face in hiring people with disabilities.
- Engage employers, promote the business case for hiring people with disabilities and encourage a business culture of inclusion.
- Complement and coordinate efforts with key partner ministries, including the Ministries of Training, Colleges and Universities and Community and Social Services, to continue to help people with disabilities secure employment.

There are three parts to the pilot:

- Partnerships for Accessible Employment — a new initiative which aims to build employer awareness of the supports and resources available to business when

recruiting, retaining and supporting employees with disabilities by encouraging partnerships between business, not-for-profits, social enterprises, postsecondary institutions, associations and/or service providers.

- Community Loans — will build on the existing Social Capital Partners Community Loan Program by expanding low interest commercial loans for small businesses that demonstrate a commitment to hiring people with disabilities.
- Mentoring opportunities — to expand on the successful Dolphin Digital Technologies Disabilities Mentoring Day initiative. The existing program connects potential employers to qualified candidates through an annual one-day event and builds a strong business network to champion the hiring of people with disabilities.

Spotlight article - The Employment Standard

Many Ontario businesses have experienced first-hand that greater accessibility leads to a better bottom line. With the rollout of the Employment Standard for large businesses in 2016 and for small businesses in 2017, more Ontarians will start to see how the AODA standards work together to create an environment that leads to a positive and tangible culture change. The Employment Standard requires that any business with one or more employees provide for accessibility across the employment cycle, from recruitment to hiring to on-going support. Employers will benefit from a diversified workplace by making their hiring processes, workplace information and career development more accessible. In turn, this will empower more people to participate in our economy and enjoy all the opportunities this province provides. An awareness campaign is planned for later this year so companies of all sizes will understand what's required of them — and when.

Spotlight article - Ontario Community Loans Program

The Ontario Community Loans Program will give small- and medium-sized business owners discounted rates on financial products, such as loans, when they commit to hiring people facing barriers to employment — including people with disabilities. Under the program, the interest rate will decrease for each person hired and retained for the required period of time. The Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and

Infrastructure will partner with leading Canadian financial institutions to deliver this first of its kind pilot program, modelled on the pioneering work of Social Capital Partners. “I know this pilot program will result in a win-win scenario, with disadvantaged job seekers finding opportunities for meaningful employment and small businesses gaining access to attractive financing terms and motivated employees,” says Bill Young, founder of Social Capital Partners. The pilot program aims to support up to 500 small businesses in creating up to 1,100 new employment opportunities.

Spotlight article - Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day

In 2011, Kitchener-based ICT consulting firm Dolphin Digital Technologies, under the leadership of Scott and Jamie Burton, founded an annual Disabilities Mentoring Day. The first of its kind in Canada, the one-day event matches mentors from the business community with qualified people with a disability. “The goal is to get employers to tap into this largely underused talent pool and to realize that it’s a candidate’s ability that counts,” says Dolphin vice president Jamie Burton. “The success of Dolphin is the success of our employees, many of whom have disabilities.” Burton knows what she’s talking about, as Dolphin has been acknowledged internationally for its innovative use of technology and creation of barrier-free employment strategies. And businesses are starting to take notice. From four firms and seven mentees in 2011, Disabilities Mentoring Day 2015 will attract some 30 businesses and 65 mentees in Kitchener-Waterloo alone, with the program also being held in London and Brantford.

Strengthen the foundation

To realize the AODA’s bold vision and make Ontario accessible by 2025 we must take steps to create lasting change that ensures people with disabilities are able to participate actively in society. Stakeholder input and engagement is critical to our success.

Mayo Moran’s recent review of the AODA recommended a number of amendments to streamline and strengthen the implementation of the act and its standards. In response, we will:

- Work with stakeholders on the steps the government could take regarding the timing of ongoing reviews of the act and accessibility standards. This would allow for collaboration with key stakeholders and the collection of critical implementation and compliance data to inform future reviews.
- Start to repeal sections of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act duplicated by the AODA, reducing burden on municipalities and public sector organizations.
- Work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to review gaps and barriers in the delivery of health care as a first step toward illuminating barriers that will be overcome through education, outreach and new standards.
- Introduce legislation addressing barriers to accessibility identified through a government-wide review of high-impact legislation, ensuring that government documents and appeals processes are accessible for people with disabilities.
- Amend the Customer Service standard to clarify and streamline requirements based on advice from the Minister's Standards Development Committee.
- Review the Transportation Standard beginning in the fall of 2015 to ensure requirements are working as intended and enabling Ontarians to travel easily to where they need to go — including to their workplaces.

Accessibility Innovation Showcase

On August 7, 2015, 1,600 athletes from 28 countries will assemble in Toronto to compete in the largest ever Parapan Am Games. With all eyes on the city, Toronto will also welcome the first Accessibility Innovation Showcase. Hosted by the Ontario government, the five-day event will showcase the latest advances in accessibility technologies and assistive devices. The public will be able to experience and learn about accessibility technologies first-hand. Innovators will have a chance to pitch their ideas to angel investors, with a view to accelerating the development of leading-edge accessibility technologies and stimulating growth in the industry.

Promote the cultural shift

To be successful in creating a society where everyone can reach their full potential, accessibility must become a way of life for all Ontarians, including business.

There is a solid business case to be made for employing people with disabilities, especially in today's competitive global business environment where it's been shown that leveraging diversity and inclusion leads to a better bottom line.

Between now and 2025, we will continue to promote the value of accessibility and support business in realizing the economic advantages that accessibility confers.

We will also continue to engage with people with disabilities and other partners and bring affected sectors together to keep moving forward and going beyond the requirements of the AODA.

To do this, we will:

- Consult and partner with businesses and people with disabilities to develop a voluntary third party certification program — inspired by the success of “LEED” designation in promoting excellence in green building — to recognize businesses and organizations that have championed accessibility within their sector or community.
- Collaborate with service delivery partners both within and outside of government on pilot projects to enhance our compliance and outreach activities.

We will also:

- Build on the success of the 2014 marketing campaign to create public awareness campaigns focusing on raising awareness of the AODA and the Employment Standard.
- Release an annual compliance and enforcement plan — which will include audit blitzes — and report back to inform the public on our efforts, and monitor compliance trends among obligated organizations.

- Explore opportunities through social media or online platforms to expand and strengthen the conversation on accessibility between businesses and people with disabilities.
- Work with the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario to launch a repository of municipal best practices, with input from local accessibility advisory committees.
- Make it easier for businesses and other organizations to find the tools and resources they need on our website.

Spotlight article - Access Orangeville

The Town of Orangeville and its accessibility advisory committee are embracing accessibility and ensuring it is a key municipal priority. Under Access Orangeville's innovative portable ramp subsidy program, the town is offering residents, caregivers, organizations and businesses that reside or operate in Orangeville a subsidy to assist with the purchase of portable 'suitcase' ramps. These ramps will enable access to places that may otherwise remain inaccessible to people with disabilities. "Orangeville is working hard to remove barriers to accessibility so that everyone can enjoy and participate in everything our community has to offer," says Gail Campbell, Town Councillor and chair of the accessibility advisory committee.

Spotlight article - 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games

This summer, more than 7,000 athletes from across the Americas and Caribbean will put their years of intense training, perseverance and sacrifice to the test at the Toronto 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. Ontario is committed to hosting games that are inclusive. All 31 competition venues will meet accessibility requirements; ensuring people with disabilities can access and enjoy these facilities, either as participants or spectators. And for the first time in the history of the Games, all medals will be embossed with Braille. Our accessibility investments will leave a legacy of benefits for all Ontarians and support the development of future para-athletes. The more than 23,000 volunteers will be accessibility trained based on their role and assigned venue. The live broadcast of selected events will provide the largest Parapan Am Games'

coverage ever – exposing millions of viewers to parasport and the abilities of people with disabilities.

A Call To Action

Creating an inclusive Ontario — a place where everyone can participate, contribute and succeed — requires leadership from government, the broader public sector, business and not-for-profit organizations.

The AODA and its standards could not have been created without the input and support of so many Ontarians. As we continue our journey over the coming decade, your ongoing efforts and continued participation will ensure we are successful in achieving our goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

We all have a stake in this journey, from the people with disabilities who want to be valued for their abilities, to the business community that needs their diverse talents in order to succeed.

We invite all Ontarians to embrace this challenge and join us in championing accessibility and inclusion in every aspect of daily life.

For more information on accessibility in Ontario, please visit www.ontario.ca/accessibility.