



An Open and Accessible Ontario

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Annual Report 2019



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Table of Contents

4	A Message from the Minister
6	Legislative Requirements
9	Compliance and Enforcement Activities
12	Intersections – Seniors and Accessibility
13	Employment and Accessibility
16	Outreach and Education
21	EnAbling Change Program
24	Built Environment
26	Accessibility in 2020

A Message from the Minister

An open and accessible Ontario

I'm proud to present the 2019 Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) Annual Report.

This report looks at the implementation and effectiveness of the AODA and is a requirement under the Act. The report also serves as an important tool to communicate on the progress of the implementation of the AODA, and to show the government's commitment to transparency and accountability.

In Ontario, approximately 2.6 million people have a disability. This means roughly one in four Ontarians live with a disability and face various types of accessibility challenges in their everyday life. As the aging population is expected to grow in the next 25 years, it is projected that the number of people living with a disability is also expected to grow in our province. That is why it is critical to remove all barriers that impede accessibility for all.

One of the key commitments our government made in dedicating its efforts towards an accessible Ontario was to form the first ever Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility in 2018.

In the 2018 Annual Report, we stated that we would continue to review Ontario's accessibility legislation in 2019, with the assistance of people with lived experience and the expertise of municipalities and sector representatives.



We made significant progress in this area through the important efforts of the Standards Development Committees (SDCs).

These committees provide valuable recommendations to government through developing and reviewing accessibility standards in Ontario. They also do meaningful work in identifying solutions to barriers to accessibility within their respective sectors.

Existing accessibility standards include those in the areas of Employment, Information and Communications, Customer Service, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces. The SDCs have also been working on developing recommendations for proposed new standards in the areas in Education (K-12 and post-secondary) and Health Care.

In 2019, we resumed the Health Care and Education SDCs, and the Information and Communications SDC received public feedback on its initial recommendations. Also, recommendations made by the Honourable David C. Onley in the third legislative review of the AODA helped inform our work in developing the [Advancing Accessibility in Ontario framework](#).

I continue to engage with stakeholders regularly to ensure my ministry is in tune with the varied and often complex issues that impact people with disabilities and seniors. We listened and learned from people living with disabilities, as well as partners within the disability community, non-for-profit organizations and the public and private sectors.

As always, we are committed to working with Ontarians to make our province open and inclusive for all.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the countless stakeholders, organizations and individuals that are championing this effort as we continue on our journey to make Ontario more accessible and inclusive for all.

When communities and businesses are open to everyone, we all benefit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond Cho". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raymond Cho,
Minister for Seniors and Accessibility

Legislative Requirements

Response to the 2019 Legislative Review of the AODA

Making Ontario a province where communities and businesses are accessible for everyone benefits us all. That is why the Government of Ontario is required to appoint a reviewer to examine the effectiveness of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), and its standards every three years. The Honourable David C. Onley, Ontario's 28th Lieutenant Governor, was appointed in 2017 and his report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 7, 2019. This was the third legislative review of the AODA since it was enacted into law.

In response to the 2019 legislative review, Ontario developed a new across government framework that was informed by the recommendations made by the Honourable David C. Onley, as well as input from key partners, organizations and people with disabilities. The Advancing Accessibility Framework will make a positive difference in the daily lives of people with disabilities.

This cross-government framework will help focus the province's work in four key areas:

- breaking down barriers in the built environment;
- government leading by example;
- increasing participation in the economy for people with disabilities; and
- improving understanding and awareness about accessibility.

Ontario is committed to making a tangible impact through the Advancing Accessibility Framework for people with disabilities and their families.

Legislated Committees

Accessibility Standards Advisory Council

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Council (ASAC) provides expert advice on accessibility to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. A majority of ASAC members are people with disabilities. Its membership also includes sector/industry representatives from municipalities, non-profits, and private and designated public sector organizations. Thank you to everyone who served on ASAC in 2019.

Standard Development Committees

In 2019, four Standard Development Committees (SDCs) continued their work providing advice to the Minister on ways to address, reduce and remove accessibility barriers in key areas of daily life.

The public can follow the progress of all SDCs through meeting minutes posted [online](#).

To ensure that Ontario's accessibility laws are working as intended, there is a legislated process for regular review of each standard. People with disabilities and industry representatives work together to provide recommendations on ways to address, reduce and remove accessibility barriers in the review of existing standards and in the development of new standards, with support from the government.

Information and Communications Standards Development Committee

The Information and Communications Standards ensure that organizations make information accessible for people with disabilities. In 2019 the Information and Communications Standards Development Committee made 33 initial recommendations to the Minister which were posted for public review and feedback from July 24, 2019 to October 18, 2019. The committee will review all feedback in 2020 in order to finalize their recommendations and submit them to the Minister.



Information and Communications Standards Development Committee: (left to right) Third Row (back): Kim Adeney, Louise Bray, David Berman. Second Row: James Roots, Gary Malkowski, Kevin Shaw, Jennifer Cowan, Diane Wagner, Jutta Treviranus, Pina D'Intino, David Best. Front Row: Richard Watters, Rich Donovan (chair). Resigned: Matthieu Vachon. Not Pictured: Louie DiPalma, Chantal Perreault.

Health Care Standards Development Committee

The Health Care Standards Development Committee continues their work on developing recommendations for government to remove, prevent, and reduce barriers in the delivery of health care in Ontario by starting this work in hospital settings. Their areas of focus are administration and accountability, education and training, and communication. The Committee members include people with disabilities and representatives, and health sector representatives.



Health Care Standards Development Committee: (left to right) Third Row (back): Serge Falardeau, Yona Lunskey, Sue Anderson, Seble Makonnen, Gord Kyle. Second row: Diane Quintas, Marianne Park, John McDonald, Rick Welland, Lorin MacDonald, Raj Chopra, Jennifer Schipper, Barbara Collier, Melanie Marsden. First row: Sam Savona, Peter Athanasopoulos, Sandi Bell (chair), Crystal Chin (member in absentia). Not pictured: Natalie Spagnuolo, Carol Anderson, Jacqueline Silvera. Resigned: Uppala Chandrasekera, Gurwinder Gill, Gord Kyle, Toni Lemon, Seble Makonnen, Jennifer Schipper.

The Health Care Committee is working to submit their initial recommendations to support accessibility in hospitals to the Minister for the purposes of public feedback in 2020.

Education Standards Development Committees

The Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) Standards Development Committee and the Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee are working on developing recommendations for government to remove, prevent and reduce barriers in the delivery of publicly funded education in Ontario, from K-12 and postsecondary education provided by colleges and universities.

Both committees are expected to submit their initial recommendations to the Minister for the purposes of public feedback in spring 2021.

In order to ensure that the work of both the Kindergarten to Grade 12 and Postsecondary Education committees remains aligned, the Minister asked both Chairs to form a joint technical subcommittee representing members from both sectors and from the disability community. This subcommittee is responsible for sharing information across the two committees and for considering areas of commonality, in addition to considering the area of transition planning as a priority.



Kindergarten to Grade 12 Standards Development Committee: (left to right) Second Row (back): Stephen Andrews, Angelo Tocco, John (Jack) Stadnyk, Lynn Ziraldo (chair), Donna Edwards, Rita-Marie Hadley, Mike Cyr, Jane Ste. Marie, Jon Greenway, Ben Smith. Front Row: Doug Mein, Wendy Lau, Sheila McWatters, Michelle Longlade, Alison Morse, Rana Nasrazadani. Not Pictured: David Lepofsky, Ashleigh Molloy, Victoria Nolan, Lindy Zaretsky. Resigned: Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague, Claude Deschamps, Mary Linton, Adam Peer.



Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee: (left to right) Back Row: Marie-Claude Gagnon, Joseph Gillis, Tory Bowman, Jim Kyte, Ben Poynton, Marc Wilchesky. Second Row: Karen Csoli, Jennifer Curry Jahnke, Anne Pottier, Carolyn Hepburn, Janice Fennell, Meri Kim Oliver, Mahadeo Sukhai (alternate member for Ainsley Latour), Jeanette Parsons. Front Row: Tina Doyle (chair), Minister Raymond Cho, Sambhavi Chandrashekar, Ashton Forrest. Not Pictured: Ainsley Latour, Elizabeth Mohler, Julia Kowal, Olga Dosis. Resigned: Alex Wilson, Fady Shanouda, Jodie Glean, Jodi Afonso.

Compliance and Enforcement Activities

This section outlines activities undertaken by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility to oversee compliance with the AODA. In 2019, the ministry continued to work with organizations that must comply with the requirements of the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Building awareness

Each year, the ministry conducts a number of targeted outreach and education campaigns to provide organizations with tools, resources, and information to help encourage compliance.

Ensuring compliance

The ministry's Compliance and Enforcement Branch is responsible for ensuring compliance with the AODA and accessibility standards. It achieves this by:

- Providing tools and resources to help organizations comply;
- Auditing organizations to verify that they are in compliance; and
- Enforcing the requirements, where appropriate, if an organization is found to be non-compliant.

The ministry conducts 2 types of audits to oversee compliance:

- **Attestation audits** are used to facilitate accessibility compliance reporting among organizations that had reported previously but failed to meet the most recent reporting deadline, that submitted a report indicating non-compliance, or that have never filed in the past.
- **Verification audits** are used to ensure that organizations that indicated compliance in their report are, in fact, meeting requirements. Verification audits are conducted every year to obtain and verify evidence of compliance.

The branch also carries out a variety of projects as part of its multi-year operational plan that advance compliance with the AODA and the standards. In 2019, the ministry began preparing to conduct website audits to confirm compliance with the accessible website requirement under the IASR.

Self certified accessibility compliance reporting

The AODA requires certain organizations to submit accessibility compliance reports. These reports include questions that ask organizations to confirm that they have met their legal requirements. As outlined in the AODA, each organization must make their report available to the public.

Each sector has a different schedule to submit these reports:

- The provincial government reports every year.
- All other designated public sector organizations (DPS) are required to report every two years. The latest reporting year was 2019.
- All private and non-profit sector organizations with 20 or more employees are required to report every three years.

2019 Compliance and Enforcement Activities

Self-certified Compliance Reporting

As of November 6, 2020, 100 per cent of government organizations and 100 per cent of DPS organizations have filed reports.

Audits

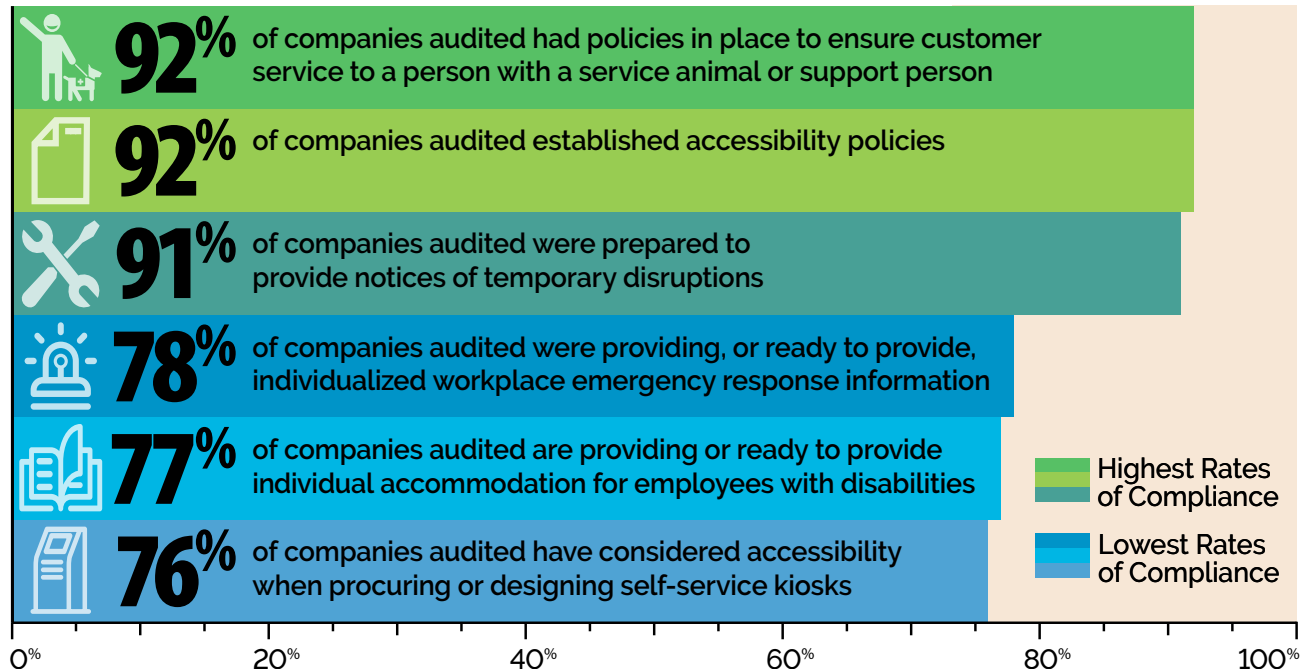
In 2019, the ministry launched 532 attestation audits (515 completed by December 31, 2019) and 600 verification audits (387 completed). An additional 427 audits that were carried over from previous years were also completed.

The ministry verified compliance with 55 requirements from the Customer Service Standards, the Employment Standards and the General Requirements section of the IASR in the 387 organizations. Of the requirements verified from completed audits only, the following trends were revealed:

The highest rates of compliance were found with:

- Section 80.46 – Establishment of policies: 92 per cent in compliance
- Section 80.47 – Use of service animals and support persons: 92 per cent in compliance
- Section 80.48 – Notice of temporary disruptions: 91 per cent in compliance

MSAA Completed 387 Verification Audits In 2019



The lowest rates of compliance were found with:

- Section 6 – Self-service kiosks: 76 per cent in compliance¹
- Section 28 – Documented individual accommodation plans: 77 per cent in compliance
- Section 27 – Workplace emergency response information: 78 per cent in compliance

Enforcement

When audited organizations are found to be non-compliant, the ministry works with those organizations to establish compliance. Persistent non-compliance can trigger an escalation to a ministry inspector who will determine appropriate enforcement measures.

In 2019, 95 per cent of verification audits were resolved as compliant without needing to be escalated to an inspector for enforcement measures. Of the 172 cases escalated to an inspector, 21 Director's Orders and 5 Director's Orders with Administrative Penalty were issued. Organizations that receive a Director's Order can appeal their order to the License Appeal Tribunal. No cases were brought before the tribunal in 2019.

¹ Section 6 is applicable to a limited number of organizations.

Intersections – Seniors and Accessibility

The ministry invests in initiatives to support persons with disabilities who are aging, as well as older adults and seniors who develop age-related disabilities.

The ministry's Seniors Community Grant (SCG) Program provides older adults and seniors with the opportunity to connect, contribute, learn, and lead active lives within their communities. Several projects that were funded in 2019 focused on increasing engagement for older people with disabilities. Highlighted below are projects that supported older adults and seniors living with disabilities:

- H'art Centre delivered the *Deaf Senior Theatre Project* in Kingston, Ontario, which engaged culturally deaf seniors as actors and stagehands in the production of humorous and educational theatrical vignettes that illustrate daily barriers they face.
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind is implementing the *Volunteer Capacity Building in GTA Blindness Programs Project*, which will develop the volunteer capacity of its programs in the Greater Toronto Area to support growing numbers of residents with blindness and sight loss due to age-related eye diseases.
- Heartland Forest in Niagara Falls delivered the *Senior-Led Adults 55+ Wood Shop Nature-Based Volunteer Program*, which provided nature-based programming and



The ministry's Seniors Community Grant (SCG) Program can include inter-generational programs that can help bring people of all ages together.

volunteering opportunities for seniors, including those who are isolated and living with a disability.

Example 1: Senior volunteers constructed habitat structures like bat houses, bird houses and squirrel feeders for use outdoors and for sale in the Nature Shop.

Example 2: Seniors made kits to build habitat structures for use in inter-generational community events, and Heartland's work experience program for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Employment and Accessibility

Employers Partnership Table Update

The Employers' Partnership Table supports the Ontario government's approach to improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities and helps promote business-to-business dialogue. This professional group is comprised of 17 members representing a range of small, medium and large businesses from across the province.

In October 2019, a series of examples of how businesses of all sizes recognize the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and dispel common myths and misperceptions employers have were highlighted and made available on the [DiscoverAbility Network](#) and the [ministry website](#).

The success stories provide sector specific examples (i.e., retail, manufacturing, professional services and skilled trades) where persons with disabilities are successfully working and meeting employers' needs. They also illustrate the business needs of employers and how people with disabilities have the skills and abilities to help employers address those needs.

For example, Deloitte Canada is working to develop and maintain a recruiting process that will help it hire the best candidate for any given job. As part of these efforts, Deloitte partnered with the CNIB Foundation's Come to Work program to hire interns who bring a new perspective to the firm. Deloitte hired a full-time employee

named Amari through the program to work on its recruiting team. Amari's skills have helped greatly improve Deloitte's recruiting process. She also helped Deloitte recognize several accessibility issues in its head office building. Amari's insights and perspectives have allowed Deloitte to create and maintain a more accessible workplace that benefits all employees.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

As part of Ontario's recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October 2019, Minister Cho addressed the importance of workplaces being more accessible and inclusive in a video the ministry posted on social media. Minister Cho spoke of celebrating the valuable contributions that people with disabilities bring to the workforce and recognizing employers that are champions of hiring people with disabilities in Ontario.

Working with the Employers' Partnership Table, the ministry developed and published online case studies of several businesses in Ontario that recognize the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. These success stories were also published on the [DiscoverAbility Network](#) and the [ministry website](#), and illustrate the value of hiring people with disabilities, including increased innovation and business growth.

For example, companies like Loblaw, finding, hiring and keeping the right talent to fill vacancies and grow the company is a major busi-

ness challenge. For many of the company's stores, hiring qualified people with disabilities has helped address this issue. George is one of 6,000 people with disabilities employed through Loblaw stores across Canada. He is not just an example of the company's strategic recognition of talent, but also highlights the company's commitment to inclusivity. George has been a Loblaw employee since 2008 and is seen as one of the best employees at his store by managers and colleagues alike. George is a person with Asperger's Syndrome. George is a two-time recipient of the annual President's Pin—the highest honour given to Loblaw employees for their exemplary service. The company's commitment to being diverse and inclusive is widely recognized in the business community, and this has helped Loblaw make its mark as an innovative retailer and national business leader.

Another successful business in recognizing the benefits of hiring people with disabilities is ROCKWOOL, a global manufacturer of stone wool insulation. In 2016, demand for ROCKWOOL's product grew dramatically, who was having a very hard time finding the right employees to work at its plant in Milton, Ontario. The company took a new approach to recruitment. After teaming up with the Ontario Disability Employment Network and the Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf, ROCKWOOL made a few changes to make its hiring practices more accessible. By learning more about people with disabilities who are looking for work, the company tapped into a skilled and dedicated labour force. The company held interviews with candidates from the Deaf community and ended up hiring six new staff for its Milton location. By changing its recruitment strategies and bringing on talented new employees, the company has boosted its bottom line.

On October 24, 2019, Minister Cho promoted the government's free online resources and guides to make it easier for businesses to get the information they need to be more accessible and inclusive for all. He delivered the information at the Ontario Disability Employment Network's Rethinking Disability Conference in Richmond Hill. The resources are available on the [Accessibility in Ontario: Information for Businesses](#) web page and cover a range of topics such as inclusive hiring and how to remove barriers for customers and employees.

OPS Connexions Mentoring Day

As part of the commitment to a future without barriers, the ministry welcomed 150 postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities, mentors and other supporters to Toronto in person and virtually for Connexions Day on October 31, 2019.

Connexions is an annual information session where postsecondary graduates with disabilities can prepare for the job market by practising job-search skills and expanding their professional networks.



Captioners transcribe proceedings at OPS Connexions Mentoring Day 2019 event.

Participants heard from a panel of Ontario Public Sector employees with disabilities, received tips on preparing resumes and how to interview successfully from volunteer mentors from the designated public and private sectors, and networked in a session co-facilitated with LinkedIn.

EnAbling Change Program: Employment Projects

Disabilities Mentoring Day

Disabilities Mentoring Day, a day-long mentoring event, was hosted by the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work in Oshawa and Toronto, along with a session that was held virtually, with 110 employees and 21 employers attending in total. The mentoring day was a shared learning experience between people with disabilities seeking employment and individual employee/mentors in the workplace. The initiative helped employers increase their knowledge and capacity to integrate people with disabilities into workplaces. By working with mentee matches, employers identified skills, provided opportunities for networking, and enhanced soft skills needed to succeed in a workplace.

Mentor Comments:

"I received a great fit with my mentee. I truly think that we were both mentors — I learned so much from my mentee. I also think accommodation is a universal concept and the more we learn to advocate for others we are also ultimately advocating for ourselves. I learnt a lot about the unconscious biases we have in our workplace and how we need to keep communicating with colleagues and a diverse community to do better."

Mentee Comments:

"The day was superb! It eliminated all the stress I had about starting new jobs and meeting with people. I had the very best mentor who made sure all my needs were taken care of and taught me so much. I thank you so much for the opportunity and matching me up with such a good mentor!"

Arthritis Society

[The Arthritis Society](#)'s EnAbling Change project, Making Joints Matter at Work, focused on educating employers about accommodations for employees and employee candidates living with arthritis, an invisible disability. The initiative also provided guidance to people living with arthritis about disclosing their health information to an employer. Downloadable videos and podcasts were created to support this awareness along with a [fact-sheet](#) to educate businesses about the Employment Standards under the AODA,

Accessful

The [Accessful Project](#), a partnership with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, brought together students with disabilities, teachers, parents, employers and service agencies with the goal of strengthening employability skills and access to community-connected paid employment for students with disabilities in Grades 11 and 12. The project engaged more than 30 schools and reached 300 students with disabilities. In the end, over 70 students with disabilities found summer employment or a co-op placement – in some instances – their very first job. Jobs were found in a variety of sectors including the City of Brampton, Peel Region, the City of Mississauga (Parks and Recreation), as well as service opportunities in the food and retail sectors as well as the construction sector.

Outreach and Education

Accessibility Outreach and Education Initiatives

Increasing awareness of Ontario's accessibility standards to reduce barriers for people with disabilities means reaching stakeholders across all sectors and providing meaningful information using a variety of approaches. The ministry's accessibility outreach activities include delivering webinars, publishing e-newsletters, creating and distributing

resources and conducting outreach at professional conferences and events.

Webinar Highlights:

The ministry offered 11 webinars in 2019 and connected with over 1,400 webinar registrants which were well received on a variety of accessibility topics including:

On the Move: Accessible Transit in Ontario, featured information about the accessibility services offered by Metrolinx, the Toronto Transit Commission and York Region Transit and how members of the public can be engaged in accessibility planning. Participants learned about conventional and specialized transit as well as cross-boundary travel including ways that transit



The public can engage in accessibility planning of services offered by municipal transit systems such as Metrolinx, the Toronto Transit Commission and York Region Transit.

agencies ensure seamless transition from one mode of transportation to another particularly for customers with disabilities.

Accessibility Compliance Reporting: What You Need to Know, assisted the designated public sector who were obliged to report on their compliance with the AODA in 2019. The webinar provided an overview of the sector's obligations under the AODA, as well as easy-to-follow guidance on how to complete the accessibility compliance report form.

Accessibility Projects in the Education Sector, highlighted initiatives that increased students' awareness of accessibility, and supported students with disabilities find their first job. Participants were engaged by presenters sharing program successes from [ReelEducation](#) (the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre) and the Accessful Project (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation). ReelEducation is a free program that uses film as a tool for discussion about accessibility, inclusion, empathy and more with primary and secondary school students.

Remembrance Day and Memorial Services Accessibility Toolkit

On Remembrance Day, communities across Ontario plan events to honour the brave people who have served and continue to serve our country. Memorial ceremonies are also held year-round for first responders who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Creating Accessible Remembrance Day and Memorial Ceremonies

November 11 is a day to honour the men and women who have served and continue to serve our country. Across generations, Ontarians have fought and died to make our world a safer place. They have defended the Canadian values of freedom and democracy.

A memorial ceremony can pay tribute to heroic first responders who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Numerous police officers, firefighters, paramedics and others have died while protecting their communities and keeping Ontario safe.

Holding these ceremonies shows our appreciation of Ontario's veterans, first responders and their families.

When planning a commemorative ceremony, take the time to consider accessibility. By considering accessibility from the start of planning, you can ensure that everyone can fully participate.

This package contains information on how to:

- make the physical space where the ceremony will take place more accessible
- provide accessibility and customer service training to staff and volunteers
- communicate information in an accessible way.

You will find an "[Accessible Events Checklist](#)" on page 4.

Ontario

A wide range of Ontarians attend these events, including veterans, people with disabilities, and seniors with accessibility requirements. A toolkit of accessible practices was created to use at these events explaining how to include everyone who attends.

The *Making Remembrance Day and Memorial Services Accessible* toolkit was disseminated to municipalities and Lion's Clubs across Ontario, and can be found online at Ontario.ca.



Premier Doug Ford, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones and ministry summer students at an outreach booth.

Summer Student Outreach

The Student Outreach Initiative has been an effective way for the ministry to create widespread awareness of Ontario's accessibility laws to people across Ontario since 2012. Students attend various events and festivals across the province to answer questions from the public and distribute resources that inform Ontarians about accessibility for people with disabilities. This year, two student teams attended 30 events and interacted with over 7800 Ontarians at disability-related charity and awareness walks, Pride celebrations, family festivals, municipal accessibility advisory committee events, a seniors age-friendly community expo and a Tactile and American Sign Language (ASL) Tour of Upper Canada Village.

2019 Minister Outreach Events

The ministry provides public education and AODA expertise, in accordance with section 32(3) of the AODA, by participating in regular speaking engagements, presentations, stakeholder conferences, trade shows and events. Participating in regular events is a key way for the ministry to fulfill its legislative mandate and reach its main stakeholder groups: people with disabilities, accessibility stakeholders and organizations obligated to comply with the legislation.

ParaSport Games opening ceremony

Minister Cho participated in the opening ceremonies of the 2019 Ontario ParaSport Games at the Abilities Centre in Whitby, Ontario in February. He praised the people that made the games possible, including the sponsors, partners, fans and skilled athletes. Minister Cho also spoke of how, over the years, the games have encouraged accessibility improvements in host communities' sport and recreation facilities and created public awareness about parasports.

Heartwood House visit

Minister Cho visited Ottawa and presented the Heartwood House with a Champion Award for the David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility in April 2019. He applauded Heartwood House's commitment to making Ontario a better place for people with disabilities. Heartwood House and several of its member organizations operate social enterprise initiatives that provide opportunities for people with disabilities to gain work experience.

National AccessAbility Week

Throughout the last week of May, the ministry marked National AccessAbility Week by promoting the importance of making the province more accessible. During a statement to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Minister Cho spoke of the government's belief that Ontario should be built to work for everyone and that an accessible Ontario is open for jobs and for business. He also described the government's commitment to providing the support and resources that people with disabilities and their families need to be independent and to fully participate in their communities as consumers and employees.

During that week, Minister Cho also participated in the opening night of the ReelAbilities Film Festival, which was celebrating its fourth year in Toronto. He remarked that the films at the festival get people thinking about inclusion and accessibility in a new way, and that the ministry also works to do the same thing. Minister Cho explained that the government works with numerous partners to improve accessibility, and supports many organizations such as the ReelAbilities Film Festival through the EnAbling Change Program. He noted that businesses, communities and governments need to work together to make Ontario open for all.

Later that week, Minister Cho met with March of Dimes Canada executives in Newmarket to learn about how the organization supports stroke survivors. During the tour, Minister Cho praised March of Dimes as a leader in inclusion and accessibility, and applauded the services and support it provides to stroke survivors to help them recover and fully participate in their communities.

Abilities Centre tour

In August, Minister Cho toured the Abilities Centre in Whitby. The world-renowned facility is an accessible community hub that works on innovative initiatives that help enhance the quality of life of children, youth and adults with disabilities. During his visit, Minister Cho met with senior executives from the centre and spoke of the importance of the government creating momentum with people with disabilities, accessibility stakeholders and organizations to go beyond the requirements of the AODA. He praised the facility's welcoming and positive environment and its continued great work in supporting Ontarians with disabilities.

2019 Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference

In August, Minister Cho attended the 2019 Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference in Ottawa. Minister Cho and ministry staff met with several delega-



Minister Cho and ministry staff at 2019 Association of Municipalities of Ontario tradeshow.



Ministry staff conduct accessibility outreach at a variety of sector conferences and tradeshows.

tions from across Ontario to discuss current seniors and accessibility issues. The minister also delivered remarks about the importance of developing accessible main streets in Ontario during Building Blocks of Accessible Communities: What You Need to Know, a learning session that the ministry co-presented with the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association and the Canadian Urban Institute. The session provided city builders with case studies and tools to help with their efforts to make their communities accessible. Ministry staff interacted with over 500 delegates at the conference trade show distributing information and receiving feedback from stakeholders, as well as reminding municipalities that 2019 was a compliance reporting year.

Human Resources Professionals Association Conference

Accessible employment practices and workplaces are essential for creating an environment that allows people of all abilities to participate. The ministry attended the 2019 Human Resources Professionals Association annual conference and interacted with over 500 stakeholders providing accessibility information and resources to assist attendees in creating more accessible work environments.

EnAbling Change Program

The EnAbling Change Program provides funding for public education and awareness initiatives which promote accessibility in daily living for people with disabilities, and helps increase organizations' regulatory compliance with the AODA. In 2019, the ministry partnered with organizations with strong networks across the designated public sector, business and the non-profit sectors to reduce accessibility barriers in key areas of society, including employment, promoting cultural change and increasing awareness of Ontario's accessibility laws.

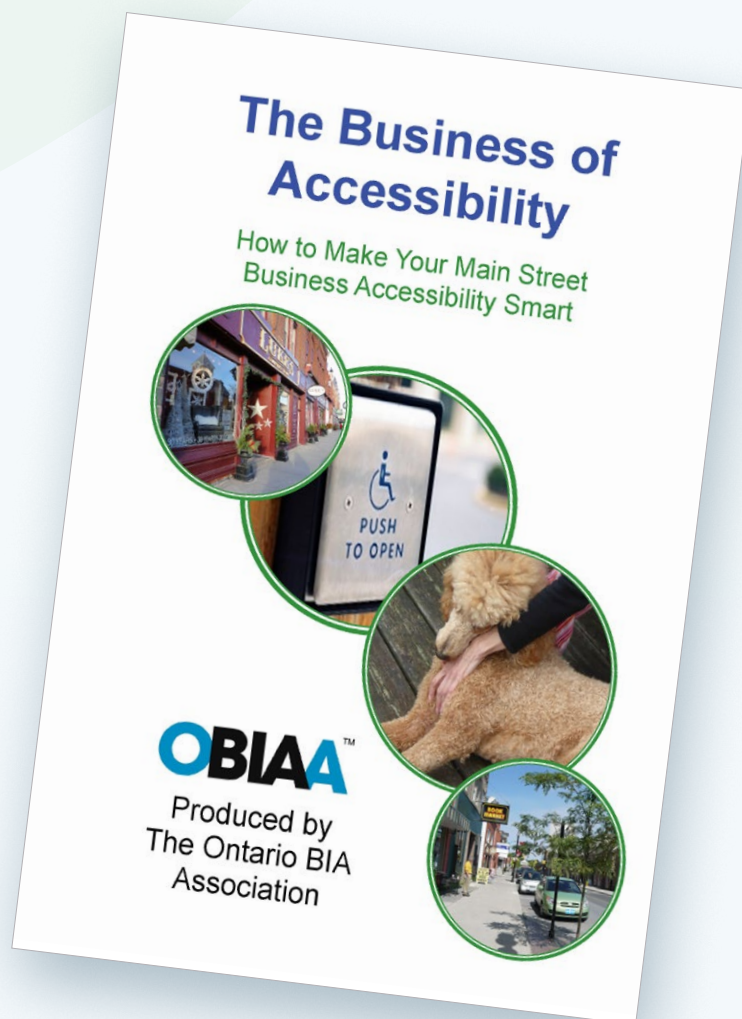
Project Highlights

Canadian Hearing Services

The Canadian Hearing Services worked with the ministry to create [Breaking the Sound Barriers at Work](#), an interactive website for employers with videos, presentations, resources, templates and infographics to help remove attitudinal barriers towards Deaf and hard of hearing job applicants and employees. These resources give personal insight into the experience of employees who are Deaf and hard of hearing, and practical guidance to employers so they can create inclusive practices in their workplaces and understand their legal obligations. This initiative was a collaborative effort with contributions from Deaf and hard of hearing consumers, employment experts and employers.

Ontario Business Improvement Area Association

The ministry partnered with the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association to promote accessibility and inclusion as smart and sustainable business investments for Business Improvement Areas and main street businesses. [The Business of Accessibility](#), provides free and inexpensive ideas for accessibility improvements based on firsthand experiences, and encourages businesses to use a range of straightforward solutions to common accessibility



challenges. The guide includes frequently asked questions, an accessibility checklist, a resource list, and information about accessible heritage and second floor businesses, customer service, service animals, space layout and design, lighting and information and communications.

Ryerson University – G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education

Ryerson University created two engaging learning resources to expand awareness of web accessibility. One of these resources was the online course, [Introduction to Web Accessibility](#), about the key requirements to making online digital content accessible. This course explains the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0), making it easy to understand for a general audience. Learners have an opportunity to experience barriers firsthand, then experience the content without barriers, developing a practical understanding of web accessibility.

Retail Council of Canada

To assist retailers in Canada with making their stores accessible for customers and employees, Retail Council of Canada developed [EnAbling Change for Retailers: Make your Store Accessible](#), a free guidebook for retailers. This guide focuses on

topics including customer service, recruitment and retention, and accessible communications for people with disabilities, as well as additional resources from accessibility community stakeholder organizations.

Ontario Retirement Communities Association

The Ontario Retirement Communities Association (ORCA) is a not-for-profit association supporting the retirement home industry in Ontario. Included in its mandate is the development of educational programs and resources for its 600+ member retirement homes. As part of its EnAbling Change project, ORCA developed tutorials for retirement home staff and management with supporting policies, reference guides and resources that provided an overview of how the AODA can impact both employers and employees. Ninety-two per cent of program participants

indicated an increased knowledge of the barriers that people with disabilities face, as well as an increased knowledge of accessibility standards and compliance requirements. Through this project, front line staff and management in retirement homes have learned how to effectively manage and support accessibility standards in the workplace and how to facilitate discussions related to accessibility in customer service, design of public spaces and employment standards.



EnAbling Change Partner Organizations 2019

The ministry appreciates the commitment and contributions of all the 2019 EnAbling Change Partners:

- Arthritis Society
- ArtsBuild
- Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
- Canadian Hearing Services
- Canadian Urban Institute
- Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation
- Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
- City of Pickering
- Courageous Companions
- Design Exchange
- Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
- March of Dimes
- One World School House Foundation
- Ontario Building Officials Association
- Ontario Business Improvement Area Association
- Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- Ontario Public Transit Association
- Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association
- Ontario Retirement Communities Association
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
- Parkinson's Foundation of Canada
- Retail Council of Canada
- Ryerson University
- Springtide Resources Incorporated
- Sports Information Resource Centre
- University Health Network
- Variety Village

Built Environment

Rick Hansen Certification Program

In the 2019 Budget, the Government of Ontario committed to making Ontario more accessible, including partnering with the Rick Hansen Foundation to launch the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program.

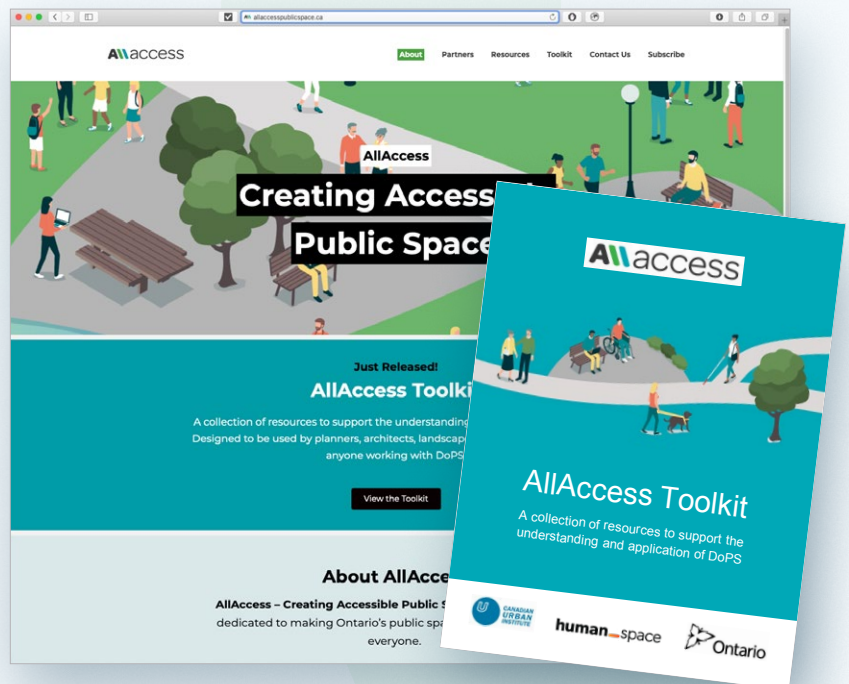
Ontario is focusing on what matters most to people with disabilities and seniors by helping to remove barriers in buildings and making communities more accessible.

The Government of Ontario is investing \$1.3 million through a new transfer payment agreement with the Rick Hansen Foundation. The certification program will provide accessibility ratings of businesses and public buildings by trained professionals to help property managers and owners determine ways to remove identified accessibility barriers. Through this investment, the Rick Hansen Foundation is planning to undertake ratings of 250 facilities.

EnAbling Change Program – Built Environment Projects

Canadian Urban Institute

The Canadian Urban Institute's [All Access](#) project sought to increase awareness and compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard for a host of design professionals including planners, engineers, architects, community organizers, developers and academics. The Canadian Urban Institute engaged its networks through an online campaign, collaborative learning workshops and the [All Access Toolkit](#), an online Design of Public Spaces resource.



Arts Build Charitable Organization

Arts Build led the development of a six-part webinar series designed specifically for art facility personnel to better understand the Accessible Design of Public Spaces Standard and universal design principles. Over 250 organizations learned about accessible design principles, best practices for architects and designers as well as how safety, fire codes and accessibility work in creative spaces with over 950 individuals viewing the recorded webinars. [Accessibility Toolkit for Creative Spaces](#), a key project guide, has important links, tools and resources to assist arts organizations comply with the AODA.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Webinars

Accessibility Advisory Committees advise municipal councils about how to best meet Ontario's accessibility standards. Under the law, most committee members must be people with a disability.

The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility engaged municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees through a series of nine webinars with the goal of connecting, engaging and supporting them in their mandate. Webinar topics included committee members' and municipalities' roles and responsibilities under the AODA, the IASR, and how to read municipal site plans.

Close to 400 people from across Ontario attended the webinars, which were delivered through an accessible online platform with live captioning. The webinar series received positive feedback and the ministry looks forward to continuing it in 2020.



Accessibility in 2020



As we move forward in 2020 on our journey to improve accessibility in Ontario, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility will continue to engage with its partners to make real changes that will help people with disabilities and their families. These changes will make a positive difference today and for generations to come.

Our goal is to make Ontario open and accessible for everyone by building on our successes in order to help improve how people live and how businesses operate. When Ontario is accessible and inclusive, it is a better place for everyone.

