



Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: June 12, 2025

FROM: Clerk's Department

DATE: June 3, 2025

SUBJECT: **Update on Ontario's Progress Toward an Accessible Province by 2025**

LOCATION: Town-wide

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report dated June 3, 2025, entitled Update on Ontario's Progress Toward an Accessible Province by 2025, from the Clerk's Department, be received for information.
2. That the draft Notice of Motion, attached as Appendix A to the report dated June 3, 2025, entitled Update on Ontario's Progress Toward an Accessible Province by 2025, from the Clerk's Department, be considered by Council.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this item:

- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted in 2005 with the goal of creating a barrier-free Ontario for all people with disabilities by January 1, 2025.
- The AODA covers customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation, and built environment.
- The province's "Path to 2025" action plan focused on education, innovation, enforcement, and engagement.
- Every four years, an independent reviewer is appointed to assess the effectiveness of the AODA.
- Challenges and inconsistencies have been identified with respect to AODA progress.
- Advocacy continues, with recommendations for a comprehensive provincial action plan to support AODA implementation, for the Province to set clear timelines, define measurable progress, and commit to regular public reporting—efforts that align with Council's strategic priority of fostering community belonging.

Purpose:

This report provides an update on the Province of Ontario's progress toward the goal of creating a barrier-free Ontario for all people with disabilities by January 1, 2025, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). It includes background on the AODA, findings from legislated reviews, and an update on the town's intergovernmental request submitted in 2024.

Background:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted in 2005 with the purpose of identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility in key areas of daily life, including customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation, and the built environment. The legislation set a goal for Ontario to be barrier-free by January 1, 2025.

To support this goal, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility released a multi-year action plan titled "Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan", which focused on education, engagement, innovation, and enforcement.

Every four years, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario appoints someone to review the AODA. This reviewer spends time meeting with the public, including people with disabilities, discussing possible improvements the AODA might need. Based on public feedback, the reviewer writes a report about how effective the AODA and its mandates are and provides recommendations to improve the Act.

- [First Review](#) (2010): Charles Beer recommended stronger enforcement and better awareness of the AODA, and to harmonize the accessibility standards prior to releasing the remaining proposed standards as regulations
- [Second Review](#) (2017): Honourable David C. Onley, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario – called for bold leadership, stronger enforcement, and a fundamental shift in attitude. It was recommended that the Province treat accessibility as a human rights priority by embedding it across all sectors, increasing accountability, and removing systemic barriers through coordinated, measurable action.
- [Third Review](#) (2019): Honourable David C. Onley, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario – Identified persistent barriers and emphasized the need for more systemic action, especially in the built environment.
- [Fourth Review](#) (2023): Rich Donovan, CEO of The Return on Disability Group – Focused on economic and social impacts of inaccessibility, and recommended measurable accountability frameworks.

Accessibility Standards

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), public sector organizations are required to submit accessibility compliance reports every two years, while private sector organizations with 20 or more employees must report every three years. In support of improved compliance, the AODA Information and Communications Standards Development Committee has recommended consolidating accessible feedback requirements across all standards into a single section of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), helping to reduce confusion and improve clarity.

Although the AODA currently includes standards for areas such as customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and the design of public spaces, it does not include standards specific to housing or education. The third legislative review of the AODA recommends the development of accessibility standards for both housing—ensuring new and existing housing is inclusive of people with disabilities—and the education sector. Two separate standards development committees have drafted recommendations to address accessibility in Ontario's kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education systems.

Recent developments also highlight efforts to harmonize accessibility standards across jurisdictions. While provinces such as Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Newfoundland have their own accessibility legislation, the federal government has introduced national standards under the Accessible Canada Act. The third AODA review supports the alignment of Ontario's accessibility laws with those of other provinces and federal legislation to ensure consistency and reduce duplication. Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) has adopted several European-based standards for information and communication technology (ICT), including accessible documentation, software, webpages, relay services, and emergency services. Future updates to AODA standards may draw from these federal and international frameworks to modernize and enhance accessibility across Ontario.

Current Status:

The 2025 target date for achieving full implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) has come and gone, yet progress remains ongoing. While some sectors have seen improvement, the pace of implementation and enforcement continues to vary. The town continues to monitor the Ministry's work and related developments closely, recognizing that accessibility is an ongoing journey. As new tools, technologies, and best practices emerge, it is essential to maintain flexibility in order to incorporate them into accessibility planning and service delivery.

Recurring themes from legislative reviews and interested parties feedback have emphasized the need for:

- Consistent enforcement of existing standards;
- Clearer roles and responsibilities across sectors;
- Increased public awareness and education;
- Stronger accountability mechanisms; and
- Defined outcomes and timelines to guide future implementation.

While the final recommendations on the [Design of Public Spaces Regulation](#) have been received, and consultation on the [Accessible Customer Service Standards](#) have recently concluded, the Province has not provided any updates on anticipated legislative changes or revised timelines. Notably, there has been no formal acknowledgement of the [January 1, 2025 date](#) milestone.

To date, the Province has not issued a new or updated comprehensive action plan in response to the recommendations of recent legislative reviews.

Advocacy Briefing Support

The town continues to support intergovernmental advocacy through its 2025 Priority Intergovernmental Requests. One of the identified priorities calls on the Province to develop a comprehensive action plan to support the implementation of the AODA and related recommendations. It also urges the province to:

- Review and adjust timelines as needed, supported by detailed and achievable steps;
- Identify concrete measures to guide progress; and
- Commit to regular public reporting on the status of accessibility initiatives across Ontario.

The town and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) remain actively engaged with Council to advance this advocacy. These efforts align with Council's strategic priority of fostering community belonging by removing barriers to participation for all residents. To support this ongoing advocacy, a draft notice of motion for Council's consideration is attached as **Appendix A**.

Next Steps for the AAC

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will continue to:

1. Monitor developments and provincial updates related to AODA implementation;
2. Support local initiatives that aim to exceed minimum accessibility requirements;
3. Reinforce the importance of municipal leadership in identifying and addressing local accessibility barriers; and
4. Encourage ongoing engagement with persons with disabilities in the planning and delivery of municipal services in accordance with the AODA.

The province's goal of achieving a barrier-free Ontario under the AODA by 2025 remains a significant and ongoing undertaking. The town continues to support this goal through local implementation and advocacy.

As the mandate of the Oakville AAC is to provide advice to Town Council on accessibility initiatives under the AODA, the committee plays an important role in monitoring progress and advancing efforts that promote equitable access for residents of all abilities.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Notice of Motion

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