

## Executive Summary

It is estimated that one in seven people in Ontario have a disability. Over the next 20 years, that number will rise as the population ages\*. To that end, in 2005, the Ontario government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) with the objective of breaking down barriers that limit and/or prevent individuals with disabilities from participating in a variety of activities in Ontario. This includes receipt of goods and services, employment, transportation, communication and information. The AODA is a follow up to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (ODA) 2001.

The AODA outlines accessibility standards – the rules that persons and organizations have to adhere to in order to understand, remove and prevent barriers. With a goal of achieving full accessibility for all Ontarians by 2025, the government is developing ongoing accessibility standards whereby the majority of organizations in both the public and private sectors, will be required to comply. The standards, which are positioned to encourage and enforce accessibility in most areas of an organization's operations, will be rolled out intermittently over the coming years.

The Customer Service Standard has already become law and directs public service organizations to have commenced compliance by **January 1, 2010**. Any private sector organization in Ontario with more than 20 employees and who provides goods or services will be required to comply with the regulation starting **January 1, 2012**.

Customer Service Standards require all documents that are public facing, to be available in an accessible format when requested. By 2013, all existing websites will need to be compliant.

While organizations must comply with the accessibility standards that apply to them, they are also required to send a report to the government to show their compliance with the standards. At the very least, an organization must show their plan or the steps taken to become compliant.

## Overview of Employer Obligations

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 requires private and public organizations and businesses:

- To develop internal policies and procedures incorporating the standards;
- To train all employees in how to provide accessible services to all of their customers or clients;
- To make accessibility policies and procedures available to the public in accessible formats, upon request.

\* <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/accessibility/index.aspx>

In order to ensure full access to the goods or services your organization provides, it is important that your employees become familiar with the policies and procedures that your organization or business has developed to address accessibility for individuals who have a disability.

## How Shepell·fji can assist organizations with compliance

### Policy Review and Development:

Having internal organizational policies incorporating the new standard are a legal requirement under the revised AODA.

The review of existing policies and/or the development of new policy can be provided by Shepell.fji's Consultants with expertise in Human Rights Legislation, Occupational Health Legislation, and Workplace Harassment in particular.

### Training:

Training in Accessibility Standards for Customer Service is a legal requirement and an essential component under the AODA of 2005.

In order to support employers across Ontario in becoming compliant with their new accountabilities under the AODA, Shepell.fji, in collaboration with Surrey Place Centre, is pleased to offer convenient self-paced online training. This training program is geared to all employees, including people leaders, and is designed to help employers meet their legal obligations under AODA and help employees feel more confident in serving your customers and clients with disabilities.

### In particular, participants will learn:

- About the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act,
- What organizations have to do to be compliant with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard – starting January 1, 2010 for public sector and January 1, 2012 for private sector
- Some great tips on how to provide service with dignity to your customers with disabilities.

The objectives of this training program correspond to the training requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

The AODA carries monetary penalties for any violation to the Act. Directors and officers can be personally fined along with the organization.

For convenient and affordable compliance assistance, please contact Shepell·fji now for more information and to make your booking at 1 800 461-9722.