

## Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

### ***Background...***

In 2005, the provincial government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). It is predicted that in 20 years, 20 percent of Ontarians will have a disability. This represents a large pool of potential customers and employees for businesses across the province. The goal of the Act is to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities in Ontario by 2025. Accessibility will be achieved by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises.

### ***What this means for your business...***

Standards development committees are to set a series of proposed targets for what needs to happen to reach the goal of an entirely accessible Ontario by 2025. The Act itself sets out a *process* for developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. There will be common and sector-specific standards developed.

*Businesses will be required to comply with the standards as they are made law.* All business owners are strongly encouraged to visit:

[http://www.cfdlearn.ca/courses/pwd\\_module/](http://www.cfdlearn.ca/courses/pwd_module/)

The purpose of this website is to serve as a training and information resource for businesses; provide knowledge and help raise awareness of accessibility issues; increase understanding of AODA 2005 and its impact upon small and medium enterprises (SMEs); resource to help businesses prepare and plan for new regulations.

There are three modules within the website:

- 1) The Foundations of Accessibility
- 2) Serving Customers with Disabilities
- 3) The Standards

Organizations will be required to send a yearly report to the government to provide information as to how the organization is complying with the standards; these reports must also be available to the public. The website provides an accessibility audit template and an action plan template for each business owner to measure the readiness of his/her business.

### ***The next steps...***

The first standards will become regulations under the AODA in January 2007; these regulations are in the area of customer service. Module 3 on the website is devoted to informing business owners of the standards as they are developed and of the regulations as they come into law. Business owners are strongly encouraged to *visit the website* and use it as an informational tool. The website can be used to gauge the preparedness of your business for the impending changes. The website is user friendly and modules can be started and stopped at any time. SMEs are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and get a head start on improving accessibility, thereby widening the base of potential customers and increasing the pool of potential employees.