

**Ministry of Community
and Social Services**

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**REGION OF YORK
CLERK'S OFFICE**

FILE No. - P14

October 10, 2008

Regional Municipality of York

Mr. David Wheeler

Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)/Regional Council Member

17250 Yonge Street

Newmarket ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

Let me begin by thanking you and your Accessibility Advisory Committee members for the extraordinary work you are doing to make Ontario accessible. I know that, with your commitment to accessibility, we can reach our goal of a province that is inclusive to everyone by 2025. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the progress being made across the province.

Across Ontario

Making Ontario accessible will take the effort of many people just like you. Over the last few months, I have been encouraged to see first hand the progress being made to break down barriers for people with disabilities across Ontario.

I recently participated in a Youth Accessibility Roundtable in Port Hope where I met Zac Andrus, a young man with cerebral palsy. Zac is committed to making his community a more accessible place to live and Port Hope is responding. His school is installing an elevator so Zac can get to his classes. His community has also rallied together to raise nearly \$25,000 for a new accessible playground.

In a visit to the City of Thorold this summer, I saw a wonderful example of what can be accomplished with the guidance of an accessibility advisory committee. Thorold built a new city hall where people of all abilities can access their municipal services. In addition, Thorold responded to a mother's request for barrier-free recreational opportunities by building a new accessible play structure for her son and other children with disabilities.

Last spring, I met with Jeff Preston on his journey to drive his wheelchair from London, Ontario to Ottawa to raise awareness about accessible transportation. I was deeply moved by Jeff's determination to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

And I know that accessibility is growing across the province. With the commitment of people like Zac, Jeff and you, we will achieve the vision of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and a province that is open to all its citizens.

AODA Update

As you are aware, accessibility standards are being developed in a number of key areas under the *AODA*. The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are now law and municipalities must comply by **January 1, 2010**. We are currently developing a reporting process for this standard and more information will be released once it is finalized.

Standards Development Committees continue to develop four more standards that will be available for public review in the near future.

EnAbling Change Partnership Program

Last year, my ministry's Accessibility Directorate of Ontario partnered with the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) to develop resources and to deliver training on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The Accessibility Toolbox – a source of information and resources to help municipalities comply with the standard – can be found at www.accessibilitytoolbox.com.

Compliance Assistance Materials

The ministry continues to develop tools and resources to help municipalities, as well as a broad range of other service providers, comply with accessibility standards.

The Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and the Summary of Requirements are now available to help organizations comply with the requirements of the standard. These tools and a variety of other resources can be found at www.AccessON.ca.

I invite you to tell me your stories about the accessibility successes and challenges in your community at www.AccessON.ca/ado/english/tell_story.

I appreciate your continued efforts to make Ontario accessible to everyone and I look forward to working with you. Together, we can break down the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Thank you for being a part of Ontario's accessibility solution.

Sincerely,



Madeleine Meilleur
Minister

ONTARIO IMPROVES SERVICE FOR CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES*McGuinty Government Helps Remove Barriers***NEWS**

October 8, 2008

Ontario is partnering with the Retail Council of Canada to help remove barriers that customers with disabilities frequently face.

A new interactive tool, '[How May I Help You?](#)' is now available to help businesses attract more customers of all abilities. It uses real-life scenarios to teach people how to interact with customers who have a variety of disabilities, including those who:

- Use assistive devices, such as canes or wheelchairs
- Have an invisible disability, such as a learning or mental health disability
- Are accompanied by a sign language interpreter
- Have a support person.

Under Ontario's landmark [accessibility legislation](#), Ontario's first standard – for [customer service](#) – is now law. The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service sets out rules that businesses and organizations must follow to serve customers with disabilities. '[How May I Help You?](#)' supports the training [requirements](#) in the standard.

QUOTES

"Every business should strive to open their doors to every potential customer. With this tool, more businesses can increase their customer base and therefore their bottom line," said Community and Social Services [Minister Madeleine Meilleur](#).

"Businesses across Ontario will learn how to better meet the needs of customers with disabilities. And people with disabilities will have access to more goods and services. It's a win/win situation," said Derek Nighbor, Senior Vice President, National Affairs, Retail Council of Canada.

QUICK FACTS

- Today, 15.5 per cent of Ontarians have a disability. This number will grow as the population ages.
- People with disabilities have an estimated spending power of about \$25 billion annually across Canada.
- The [Retail Council of Canada](#) has 14,000 members in Ontario, including independent, chain and online merchants.

LEARN MORE

See [businesses](#) that are breaking down barriers for customers with disabilities.
Find out more about [serving customers with disabilities](#).
Visit [AccessON.ca](#) and [tell us your accessible customer service story](#).