

Member Bulletin

Limited opportunity to comment on proposed accessibility rules

The provincial government's proposed rules governing how businesses and organizations in Ontario prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities, in their physical surroundings, are now available for comment. The government's Accessibility Standards Committee for the Built Environment (of which the OCC is a member) has drafted the rules which are available online for public review until October 16, at <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/assessment/business/environment/>.

The committee's proposed standard will affect all new construction and extensive renovations and proposes requirements for every aspect including:

- Common access — entrances, doorways, ramps, stairs
- Exteriors — curbs, crossings, street furniture
- Plumbing — washrooms, showers, drinking fountains
- Communication — signage, telephones
- Buildings — air quality, acoustics, lighting.

The committee has proposed the following timelines:

- New construction to follow the standard within 12 months of it coming into force
- Substantial renovation to follow the standard 12 to 36 months of it coming into force.

It is important to note that the government does not plan to impose requirements **for retrofitting existing buildings** at this time. Also, the government does not intend to require existing or new single family houses accessible at this time. **All members are encouraged to review the draft standards and to provide their comments to the government no later than Oct. 16, 2009.**

KEY FACTS

Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in 2005, becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to legally commit to breaking down barriers by 2025. These accessibility standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Ontario is developing accessibility standards in areas such as:

- customer service, which came into force January 1, 2008
- transportation, which was submitted to the government for consideration
- information and communications, which was submitted to the government for consideration
- employment, which is being finalized following public review that ended in May 2009
- built environment — proposed draft is available for public review until Oct. 16, 2009.

For more information and comment forms for the draft Built Environment Standards:

<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/assessment/business/environment/>