



Kit 1: The AODA - What You Need To Do

The AODA for BIAs

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) became law in 2005. The legislation applies to businesses, nonprofits, public sector, and government organizations with one or more employees. This includes many BIA members in [district]!

The AODA is made up of five standards: the Customer Service Standard; the Information and Communications Standard; the Employment Standard; the Design of Public Spaces Standard; and the Transportation Standard. The last four standards are collectively called the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). Each standard has requirements that organizations need to meet, with specific compliance deadlines.

The goal of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible by 2025 and helps us meet the changing needs of our communities, the future needs of an aging population, and the competitiveness of our businesses.

To find out more about the AODA and how it affects you, check out the [Ontario BIA Association's Accessibility page](#) on their website and watch our [AODA Overview webinar](#) to get a quick summary of what obligations businesses' have under the AODA.

CONTACT

If you would like further information on the AODA, please contact Constance Exley, Project Manager of Accessible Smart Businesses and CEO of Accessibility Ontario at director@accessontario.com.



Kit 2: Employment Myths

Employment Myths

Disability in the workplace can be a hard topic to talk about. The word disability carries a lot of stigma with it. The thought of hiring a person with a disability may scare many business owners - but the reality is, you probably already have employees with disabilities or have a disability yourself! There are many myths around employment and disability that we need to dispel.

Myth 1: All people with disabilities are the same.

When we think of a person with a disability, we often think of a wheelchair user or someone accompanied by a guide dog. However, disability covers many areas of human difference. Wearing glasses to read or a cane to walk are accommodations we see everyday that we may not think of being part of a disability. However, most forms of disability cannot be seen as 70% of all disabilities are invisible, meaning you couldn't tell a person has a disability just by looking at them!

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) uses the same [definition of "disability"](#) as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes both visible and non-visible disabilities. This includes vision disabilities such as low or no sight, deafness or being hard of hearing, intellectual or developmental, learning, and mental health disabilities. Disability is a broad term!

Myth 2: Employing people with disabilities will cost more and use up more time

80% of accommodations in the workplace cost under \$500. Employee engagement is often greater for employees with disabilities, with turnover that is 5x less than their non-disabled counterparts. Accommodations help employees, with or without disabilities, to do their job better, be engaged and feel a valued part of the organization. This saves the organization money and time in the long run!

There are many supports available to organizations looking to increase accessibility such as [Stop the Gap](#), the [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#), the [Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities](#), and [Workplace Accessibility](#).

Article Resources

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Kemper et al. [Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario](#). Martin Prosperity Institute. (2010). PDF. Web. 29 April 2013.

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Kit 3: Fears

Businesses can have hesitations about hiring persons with disabilities, yet there are many good reasons to have a more diversified staff team. The Uxbridge BIA is sharing information addressing the commonly held fears that businesses have about employing people with disabilities.

QUICK FACTS

- Of working-age Canadians with disabilities, 58% of the disabilities are classified as mild or moderate.
- 80% of workplace accommodations cost less than \$500
- Employers accommodate employees for many reasons, the least being for a disability related issue.

TIPS

1. Empower yourself with knowledge on your business' requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Ontario Building Code, and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Need help? Accessibility Smart Businesses can help you do this! Check out [OBIAA's website](#) for more information and resources.
2. Even if you're not required under the AODA to file a compliance report, keep a record of the staff training you have done to meet your AODA requirements.
3. Don't leap to the conclusion that an accommodation request is too expensive or risky. Instead, begin an open dialogue with the person with the disability who is making the request and educate yourself on accommodation options. This will empower you to make the best decision for both your business and the employee with a disability.

FAQS

Who has to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)?

All organizations with 1 or more employee(s) must comply with the requirements under [the AODA](#). It applies to all organizations in the public and private sectors of Ontario, including all municipalities in the province as well as ministries and agencies of the Ontario government.

If I'm not 100% accessible, will I be penalized?

No business is 100% accessible – it's a journey. The key to avoiding a penalty is to understand your requirements under the AODA.

In some cases, you will need to work together with your staff and customers to provide accommodations, and in other cases you will need to ensure that you have met the AODA minimum requirements, including staff training and policy development. The government is doing regular audits and inspection but they will not issue a fine as the first step. Rather they will help you to become compliant by giving you information and resources. But don't wait to be audited! Get started on meeting your compliance requirements right away.

If you have questions about the AODA, call Service Ontario's helpdesk: 1-866-515-2025.

What are the penalties?

Monetary penalties can be issued by the Government of Ontario for non-compliance with the AODA and its standards. Penalty amounts range from \$200 to \$2,000 for individuals or non-incorporated organizations to \$500 to \$15,000 for corporations.

If a situation is escalated to a provincial court, fines can be issued by provincial courts for specific offences under the AODA.

Maximum fines for organizations found guilty of an offence are:

- \$100,000 for each day or part of a day for corporations
- \$50,000 for each day or part of a day for an individual or organizations that are not incorporated.

What are the legal repercussions if I fire or let go an employee with a disability if they don't work out?

According to the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), an organization can stop employing someone with a disability if they cannot perform their essential duties even with accommodation, or if the accommodation could cause undue hardship. Undue hardship can include cost, health and safety requirements, etc. Employers need to be aware of employee needs and take steps to accommodate. Read more about your duty to accommodate on the [Ontario Human Rights website](#).

CASE STUDY

Joe runs a café on Main Street. All of the buildings on Main Street were built in the early 1900's, and Joe's café is in a heritage building, which he takes great pride in. However, Joe recently heard some customers talking about the AODA and the penalties companies can face for non-compliance. He now finds himself worrying about the penalties he could face for having a business that is not accessible to someone in a wheelchair. As a renter, he cannot make major changes, nor does he as it would take away the charm of his café.

What complaints could be filed against the cafe? What penalties could Joe face? What could Joe do to accommodate patrons, service providers and potential employees with disabilities?



Kit 4: Barriers

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is designed to remove barriers in everyday life for people with disabilities. The Employment Standard of the AODA is specifically designed to remove barriers to employment and requires employers to build accessibility into their HR practices.

Quick Facts

- The employment rate of Canadians aged 25 to 64 with disabilities was 49% in 2011, compared to 79% for those without a disability.
- 12% of Canadians have been refused a job recently because of having a disability.
- It is estimated that increased workforce participation among people with disabilities will increase the GDP per capita in Ontario by \$600 per annum.

TIPS: CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACE

Not having a fully accessible workplace shouldn't be a barrier to hiring someone with a disability. Disabilities encompass far more than physical limitations. Here are some tips for accommodating people with a variety of disabilities and generally making your workplace more inclusive.

1. Have a portable ramp on hand to deploy when people using mobility devices, strollers, or carriers need to enter your building.
2. Post information and disclaimers on your organization website, within job postings, and email signatures to make everyone aware that you offer accessible formats and communication supports.
3. Integrate accessible document practices into your everyday process. This can include using [Styles in Word](#) to format documents so that they are easier to read for people using assistive technologies.
4. When repairing or renovating, think about how you could make a space more accessible, such as lowering a light switch for people in mobility devices or lower stature, or moving furniture to increase visibility while reducing obstacles for people using assistive aids to navigate a space.
5. When updating corporate identity programs or branding, consider using fonts and colour schemes that are easy to read in a variety of lighting conditions, such as bright sunlight or a dim room.
6. Include the topic of accessibility at meetings and encourage employees to share success stories and concerns. Not only will this help isolate areas of celebration and improvement, but it will also help people feel more comfortable discussing the subject freely.

CHECKLIST: REMOVING BARRIERS IN THE WORKPLACE

There are many things that businesses can do to remove visible and invisible barriers to employment, many of which are included in the [Employment Standard](#) of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Here is an overview of the requirements that apply to most businesses in our BIA:

- ✓ Notifying employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in recruitment processes.
- ✓ Provide updated information to employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on accessibility.
- ✓ Provide workplace information in an accessible format if an employee asks for it.
- ✓ Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary.
- ✓ Performance management, redeployment, career development and advancement of employees need to take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when using each process in respect of employees with disabilities.
- ✓ Organizations with 50 or more employees need to develop and have in place:
 - a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.
 - a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work

RESOURCES

- [Accessibility and the Built Environment](#): Webinar on the accessibility requirements for built environments under the AODA, Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Ontario Building Code (Part of the 14/15 Go ON Project)
- [End the Awkward](#): Series of short videos that uses humour to educate the public on workplace etiquette when working with people with disability (Scope UK)
- [StopGap](#): community ramp building project
- [Conducting Accessible Meetings](#): document by OMSSA/ADO



Kit 5: **Business Benefits of Hiring** **Persons with Disabilities**

A major complaint within the business sector is finding skilled workers for the job at hand. Yet, many organizations overlook the largest minority group in Canada when recruiting talent: people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are educated, motivated, and ready to work. In fact, many studies in Canada, the US, and abroad have found that people with disabilities often surpass average numbers for employee retention, engagement, performance, safety, and attendance! Hiring people with disabilities is not only a good thing to do but also the smart thing to do for your business.

Quick Facts

- Companies with a diverse workforce are more adaptive to change, which leads to an increase in market share
- 90% of people with disabilities rated average or better on job performance (DuPont study, 2007)
- Employee engagement is often greater for employees with disabilities, with turnover that is 5x less than their non-disabled counterparts
- Businesses, such as Tim Hortons, have found that the turnover rate for employees with disabilities is 35%, compared to the industry average of 75%

AN UNEXPECTED WAY TO SAVE MONEY

We are always looking for ways to save money, whether it's in our household or our business budgets. One way that businesses can save money is through hiring people with disabilities. Now, this may come of a surprise to many people. However, employing people with disabilities is not a charity act – it's smart business decision. It is profitable.

One business owner who discovered this was Mark Wafer who owns multiple Tim Hortons franchises. When he began hiring people with disabilities, he started seeing a difference in productivity and profitability. What Wafer saw was that employees with disabilities were less likely to call in sick, managers became better people persons through working with people with disabilities, and

productivity remained constant - if not higher. This is backed up by a 2007 DuPont study that found that the job performance of people with disabilities was 90% of the time similar, or even better, compared to their co-workers who didn't have a disability.

The Martin Prosperity Institute estimated that increased workforce participation among people with disabilities will increase the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Ontario by \$600 per annum. A Harvard study found that companies that embrace diversity are more adaptive to change, with 90% increased market valuation. With Ontario's aging, shrinking labour pool, we cannot afford to lose further productivity!

By harnessing the unique perspective that people with disabilities have, their skills, and productivity, businesses can save while finding new, innovative ways to compete in an ever-changing world. Hiring people with disabilities is the right thing to do for your community and for your business.

CHECKLIST

Here are some ways that you can attract applicants and keep employees with disabilities at your organization:

- ✓ Post jobs on accessible recruiting websites that include accessible forms
- ✓ Do not restrict the job applications process to online only
- ✓ Make applicants and employees aware that accommodations and accessible formats are available at your organization upon request
- ✓ Have a policy in place that includes developing accommodation plans for new or existing employees
- ✓ When you have a job opening, inform student disabilities centres at post-secondary institutions and disability organizations in your community.
- ✓ Integrate accessible document practices into the day-to-day operation of your business, such as the default Styles in Word.

RESOURCES

- [Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector](#)
- [Canadian Business SenseAbility](#): non-profit supporting the private sector
- [Releasing Constraints](#)
- [Disability Confident](#) (campaign to help organizations recruit and retain employees with disabilities)



Kit 6: **Support for Hiring Persons** **with Disabilities**

Funding and supports exist for businesses interested in hiring people with disabilities. From recruitment, to orientation, to training, and even to help when things go awry, there are multiple resources available for businesses to access.

QUICK FACTS

- In a recent BMO study, 77% of small businesses that hired people with disabilities said that the employees met or exceeded their expectations.
- Statistics Canada found that 90% of people with disabilities did as well or better in their jobs than their co-workers
- Most people have a mild or moderate disability, which does not impact their ability to be employed.

INTERESTED IN HIRING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES? HERE'S HOW

Even at the best of times, recruitment can be difficult. It can feel even more intimidating when sourcing talent for a new role at your company, filling the shoes of a favourite past employee, or trying ways to reach diverse applicants. One way you can reach new applicants who have the skills you need is through hiring people with disabilities.

Many studies have shown that people with disabilities perform as well, if not better, than their co-workers. They often have higher levels of engagement, retention, and attendance! Despite the growing numbers of people with disabilities and their education levels, many people with disabilities find it extra difficult to find work. So, how can you reach out to these communities? There are many channels:

- Send your job posting to student disability centres in nearby post-secondary institutions
- Contact large charity organizations such as Independent Living Centres, Community Living Ontario, or March of Dimes
- Pair up with local disability organizations in your community
- Open a booth at a career fair that caters to people with disabilities, such as Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) Career Fair
- Contact employment agencies such as the Ontario Disability Employment Network, Link UP Employment, or Partners in Employment.

There are supports out there - use them! Reaching out to people with disabilities will increase your choices and your talent pool to help you find the right person for the job!

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Send your job posting to student disability centres at post-secondary institutions with programs that relate to your industry
- ✓ Contact large charity organizations for support in finding applicants, funding, accommodations etc.
- ✓ Pair up with local disability organizations in your community to help each other out
- ✓ Open a booth at a career fair that caters to people with disabilities
- ✓ Post jobs on accessible recruiting websites
- ✓ Offer job applicants alternative ways of applying as not everyone maybe able to submit an application online

RESOURCES

Employment Aid

- [Leads Employment Services](#) (London, Ont.)
- [Partners in Employment](#) (PIE)
- [Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network](#) (JOIN) (Toronto, Ont.)
- [March of Dimes Canada](#) (various locations)
- [Community Living Ontario](#) (various locations)
- [Independent Living Centres](#) (various locations)
- [Ontario Disability Employment Network](#) (ODEN)

Accommodation Aid

- [Canadian National Institute for the Blind](#) (CNIB)
- [Canadian Hearing Society](#) (CHS)
- [Institute for Work & Health](#) (IWH)
- [National Institute of Disability Management and Research](#) (NIDMAR)



Kit 7: **Funding to Hire Someone** **with a Disability**

The perceived cost of hiring a person with a disability can be intimidating, however, the most common workplace accommodations cost little or nothing! In the event that a business has to pay for an employee accommodation, funding options do exist.

QUICK FACTS

- 80% of accommodations in the workplace for people with disabilities cost under \$500.
- The most expensive accommodations are retrofits, such as building accessible washrooms
- Accommodations help to retain existing employees, increase productivity, and reduce costs
- Accommodations have indirect benefits like increased moral and improved employee interactions.

THE REAL COST OF ACCOMMODATION

Many businesses are resistant to the idea of making accommodations for employees with disabilities but the reality is that employers accommodate their employees all the time. For example, one employee might want to change their schedule in order to accommodate childcare, while another might need to change the workplace temperature to be warmer or colder. There are all kinds of accommodations being made for employees on a regular basis and employees with disabilities are no different in their need – and right – to request the same.

Accommodations help employees to do their job better, be engaged and feel a valued part of the organization. Accommodations benefit everyone!

Did you know that?

- 80% of accommodations in the workplace cost under \$500,
- Employee engagement is often greater for employees with disabilities
- Employee turnover is 5x less for those with disabilities compared to those without

The most expensive accommodations are retrofits, such as making a bathroom accessible to mobility device users. However, even costly changes can have a positive impact on an organization's sustainability. When Tim Hortons renovates a new store, franchise owner Mark Wafer usually sees a 1.4% drop in sales. However, when Wafer renovates his existing stores for accessibility, with accessible customer service training, and the installation of Order Assist buttons at doorways and the drive-through, he sees an 8% increase in sales! Clearly, accessibility is good for business.

Supports are available to businesses looking to increase accessibility such as [Stop the Gap](#) for building ramps; the [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#) which supports the capital costs of construction and renovations related to improving physical accessibility; [Abilities Connect](#) which helps organizations to remove financial barriers associated with accommodating employees with disabilities in the workplace; and [Ready, Willing & Able](#) which will help you to find, hire, and train an employee with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The misconception that accessibility is nothing more than charity is preventing businesses from taking full advantage of the push ahead that the AODA offers. Accessibility creates profit for businesses, increased market reach, innovation, and a positive brand image.

RESOURCES

- [Ready, Willing & Able](#)
- [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#)
- [ConnectAbility](#)
- [Stopgap.ca](#)