

From: communicate@amo.on.ca [mailto:communicate@amo.on.ca]

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To: Abrams, Jeffrey

Subject: AMO Breaking News - New AODA Accessibility Standards - Design of Public Spaces in the Built Environment

AMO Breaking News

December 19, 2012

New AODA Accessibility Standards - Design of Public Spaces in the Built Environment

The Ministry of Community and Social Services amended *Ontario Regulation 191/11*, the Integrated Accessibility Standards (IAS) *under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, to include new standards governing the design of public spaces in the built environment.

The standards outline new requirements for municipalities to incorporate into the design of the following public spaces starting in 2016:

1. Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes
2. Outdoor Public-Use Eating Areas (e.g. rest stops or picnic areas)
3. Outdoor Play Spaces (e.g. playgrounds)
4. Exterior Paths of Travel (e.g. sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps)
5. Accessible parking (on and off-street)
6. Obtaining Services (e.g. services counters, waiting areas)
7. Maintenance (of accessibility-related equipment and features in public spaces)

AMO supports the objectives of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and is working collaboratively with the provincial government to ensure sustainable progress towards an accessible Ontario by 2025. Removing barriers for municipal residents in public spaces is an essential component of building accessible communities.

AMO provided advice to the government on the initial draft regulation released in August 2012, with the goal of ensuring that the new standards were implemented in a way that is affordable, efficient and sustainable for municipalities and their residents. As a result, a number of changes were made that provided greater clarity and more certainty about municipal obligations. However, in many cases the standards are still overly prescriptive. AMO would have preferred that a greater degree of local flexibility was afforded to municipalities to implement the standards in a way that best reflects their local needs and priorities, as appropriately developed in consultation with disabled persons and residents.

The fiscal cost of implementing the AODA standards still remains unaddressed. Municipalities are now faced with the challenge of implementing the new standards with a significant cost impact at a time when there are competing needs for fiscal constraint and other critical infrastructure needs.

While the government will provide some modest indirect support to municipalities, there is no commitment by the government to providing any direct financial assistance. The indirect support will include tools to help with consultations and to establish forums to share best practices.

The 2016 implementation timeline will be challenging. Municipalities need appropriate time to consult, plan and finance the government's requirements. An extension to the timeline beyond 2016 was not accommodated.

AMO will continue to monitor the implementation all AODA regulations and to advocate for implementation of new standards in a manner that is affordable, efficient and sustainable for municipalities and their residents.

AMO's submission to the provincial government concerning the initial draft regulation is found on the social services section of AMO's website.

http://www.amo.on.ca/wcm/AMO/AMO_AMOAdvocacy.aspx?search=design%20of%20public%20spaces

More information on the new Accessibility Standards is found on the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services website.

http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/built_environment/index.aspx

The new ONTARIO REGULATION 413/12 is posted is found on the Government of Ontario E-laws website. http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2012/elaws_src_regs_r12413_e.htm

Contact: Michael Jacek, Senior Advisor, mjacek@amo.on.ca or (416) 971-9856 ext. 329

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