

OVERVIEW OF THE AODA



Accessibility - AODA

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

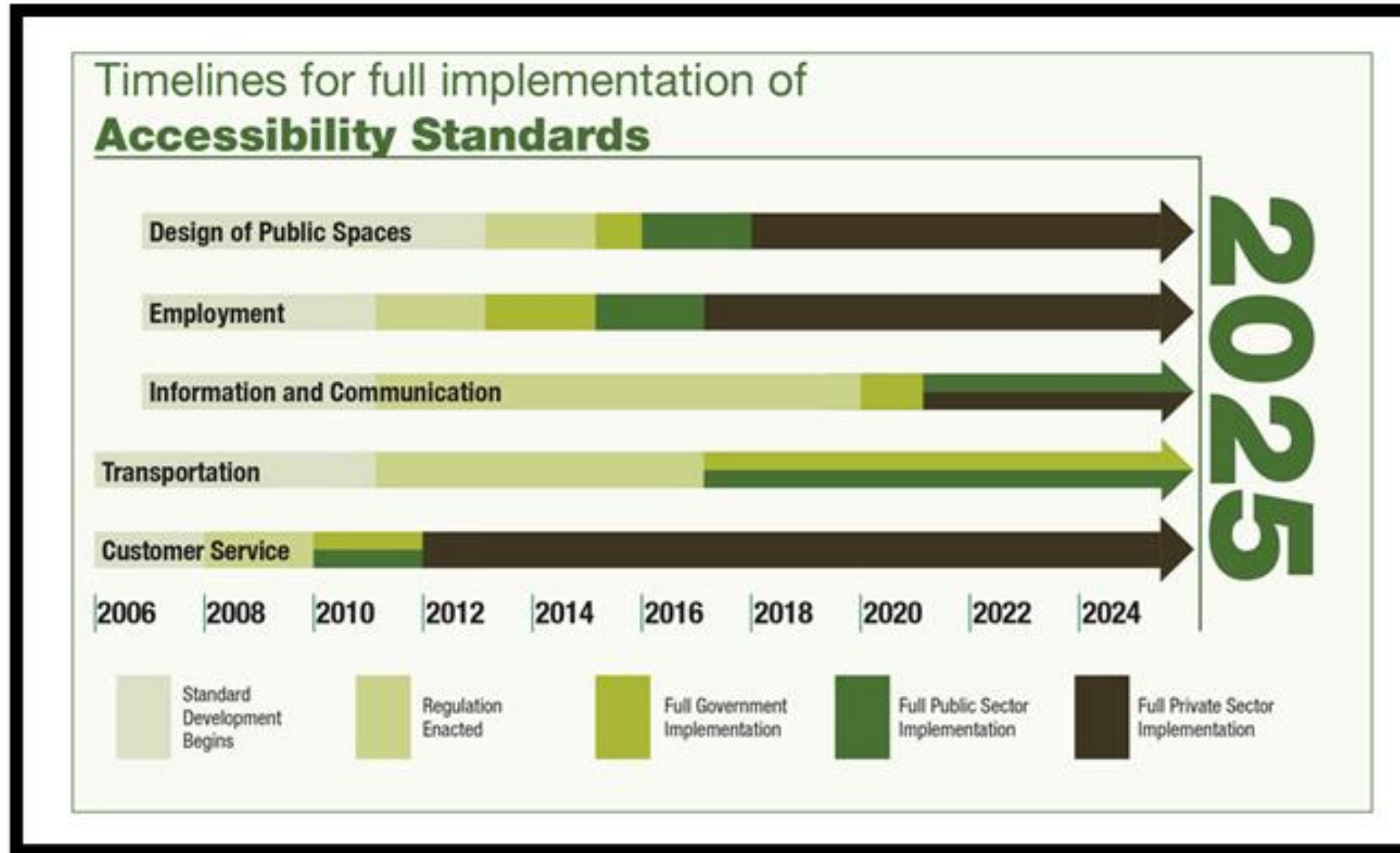
became law in 2005. Its goal is to create an accessible Ontario by 2025 by removing barriers in several areas.

Under the AODA, mandatory accessibility standards are being developed for all organizations and businesses that provide goods or services to the public or third parties. The applicable standards for our churches are Non-Profit with under 50 employees.

The AODA is developing Accessibility Standards in five areas:

- **Customer Service:** policies for hearing, vision, mobility, reliance disabilities, Staff, Board, volunteers etc know and follow the standards
- **Transportation:** when your organization also transports its staff and customers
- **Information and Communications:** print and online materials
- **Employment:** equal-opportunity employment practices
- **Design of Spaces:** building entry, exit, emergency/safety, waiting area & service counter

Phased Implementation



Customer Service Standard

Develop an accessibility plan & post publicly.

To form your plan:

- Work with a template (Government of Ontario website!)
- Consider different types of disability, consult with those affected
- Consider the role of support persons, assistive devices, service animals and service modifications
- Consider how you will notify people how to access barrier-free services and what to do if they are disrupted
- Create a review and feedback process
- Create a training process for employees and volunteers (accessforward.ca)



Employment and Transportation



Churches are exempt from 'Transportation' standards.

They apply to businesses such as ferries, taxicabs, etc.

The 'Employment' standards apply to paid employees. They do not apply to volunteers or contractors.

They derive from the Ontario Human Rights Code, which requires employers to meet the accommodation needs of employees to the point of undue hardship.

Is this job barrier-free?

If not, can we make it barrier-free?

Do we advertise, recruit, interview, train in an accessible way?

What is our process for receiving feedback from our employees and modifying requirements as necessary?

Communication Standards

The AODA requires us to consider the methods we use to communicate our services, and how we can make them barrier-free.

Best Practices:

- Signage with symbols and braille
- Large print: paper and electronic
- Sound system
- Posted notices
- Website: exempt but good practice



Design of Public Space

Standard: which parts apply?

The requirements of the standard are divided into sections:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public use eating areas (small organizations exempt)
- Outdoor play spaces (small organizations exempt)
- Exterior paths of travel (**sidewalks** or **walkways**) and associated elements, such as **ramps**, **stairs**, **curb ramps**, **rest areas** and **pedestrian signals** (small organizations exempt)
- **Multi-year maintenance & accessibility** planning (small organizations exempt)
- Accessible **on-street** parking spaces (usually dependent on municipality)
- ✓ Accessible **off-street** parking
- ✓ Fire safety and emergency response
- ✓ Obtaining services (service counters, fixed queuing guides, waiting areas)

AODA Compliance



Design of Public Space Standard: Scope of Application

The standard requires organizations to incorporate accessibility when:

- Building new public spaces, or
- Making **planned significant alterations** to existing public spaces.

Organizations are **not** required to retrofit public spaces to meet the requirements. This means that organizations are not required to alter their public spaces if they have no plans to do so.

Accessibility for elements related to buildings, for example, building entrances, washrooms and barrier-free paths of travel, are **not** addressed in this standard. They are addressed through Ontario's Building Code.

What does this mean for churches?

If we cannot alter the physical space, we must have an Accessibility Policy that provides appropriate accommodation in another manner.

Accessible Off-Street Parking

Where there are 1 to 12 parking spaces, 1 accessible space is required; where there are 13 to 100 parking spaces, four per cent must be accessible spaces, with generally equal numbers of wider spaces and standard spaces.

Current standard space requirements: 5.6m long x 2.6m wide x 2.0m high clearance with a 1.5m access aisle.

Each accessible parking space must be identified with current signage requirements found in Regulation 581 under the Highway Traffic Act.

New Build: When building new or making planned significant alterations to existing off-street parking facilities, certain technical requirements must be followed. For example: if 2 accessible spaces are required, one must be designated as 'var accessible' and the other may be undesignated. Always consult and follow your local building code.



Fire, Safety & Emergency

Develop a Fire & Emergency Safety plan and post publicly; including a diagram of the church and location of equipment such as fire extinguishers, first aid kit, naloxone, defibrillator, etc.

Identify and correct all fire hazards and barriers to safe evacuation: emergency lights, fire doors, egress windows, etc.

Ensure local fire department has a copy of your plan, keep an electronic copy or a copy offsite.

Helpful Hints: Your local Fire Department & Health Unit have a wealth of resources for the components and signage necessary for fire safety, emergency exit, etc.



The image shows a vertical sign titled "Fire action" with a large exclamation mark at the top. It lists six instructions, each with a corresponding icon:

- Sound the alarm**: Icon of a hand pulling a fire alarm pull station.
- Leave building by nearest available exit**: Icon of a person running through a green exit door.
- Report to assembly point**: Icon of a green checkmark and the text "Fire assembly point".
- Do not return to the building until authorised to do so**: Icon of a person walking with a red prohibition sign over it.
- Do not use the lifts**: Icon of a person in a lift with a red prohibition sign over it.

Obtaining Services: Queuing Areas



- Fixed queuing guides are permanent or built-in fixtures that require people to line up and follow a set path. For example, an amusement park may use fixed queuing guides to help people line up at booths where they can purchase tickets for rides. For our churches, the most common queuing areas are related to Communion and meals.
- When installing new fixed queuing guides, you must make sure:

The queuing area is wide enough for people using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs, and mobility assistive devices, such as canes, crutches and walkers. People who are blind or have low vision can find the queuing guides with a cane.

Obtaining Services: Accessible Essentials

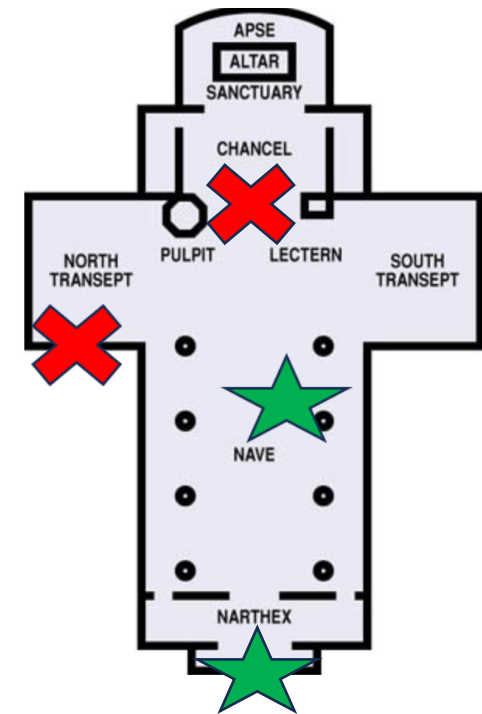
‘Service counter’ standard: the language of the AODA requires organizations to ensure barrier-free access to their service counters. Churches tend not to supply their services via counter, so we must consider the intention of this standard and comply as relates to the services our church offers.

What are the essential services we provide, and how can we make a barrier-free path to access them?

Worship? Events? Meeting? Office? Kitchen? Washroom?

What do we need to do to make these essential services accessible? Modify an entrance? Seating? Washroom?

How do we communicate which services are barrier-free and which are not? What alternatives can we offer?



Obtaining Services: Assessing the Essentials

DIGNITY: What does the principle of dignity mean?

- Policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer.

INDEPENDENCE: What does the principle of independence mean?

- In some instances, independence means freedom from control or influence of others – freedom to make your own choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to do things in your own way. People who may move or speak more slowly should not be denied an opportunity to participate in a program or service because of this factor.

INTEGRATION: What does the principle of integration mean?

- Integration means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible and implemented to everyone including people with disabilities. If you are unable to remove a barrier to accessibility, you need to consider what else can be done to provide services to people with disabilities.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: What does the principle of equal opportunity mean?

- In the case of services it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

'To Do' List for 2025

1. Create your Accessibility Policy.
2. Create your Fire, Safety and Emergency Plan.
3. Pursue the items required to accomplish these plans: signage, ramp, large print items, revise volunteer or job descriptions, etc.
4. Train staff and volunteers as required.
5. Ensure your Vestry 2025 includes an opportunity to approve the Accessibility Policy and compliance measures.

Remember that you have help!

The MMEF grant is up to \$540 for 2024, applications due at the end of June!

Use accessforward.ca for your training needs!

Resources and tips at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-in-ontario>

Signage for washroom, fire exit, etc. is readily available online!

Contact local Fire Department for helpful tips or templates.

Contact your Deanery Officials!