

## New Accessibility Standard Improves Customer Service for Everyone

With permission from Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

The Peel Halton Workforce Development Group and The Coalition for Persons with Disabilities are partnering to help remove barriers frequently faced by customers with disabilities.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Customer Service Standard) is the first accessibility standard created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005(AODA). The adoption of the AODA was itself significant, as Ontario became the first jurisdiction in North America to develop mandatory accessibility standards that will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living.

The Martin Prosperity Institute estimates that over the next five years, the implementation of the AODA could stimulate between \$400 million and \$1.6 billion in new spending on tourism and generate increasing retail sales ranging from \$3.8 to \$9.6 billion.

So, what does this new customer service mean to you, your business and most importantly your customer? Excellence in customer service is the goal of any successful business today. Ensuring you are accessible and open to all your customers, including people with disabilities, is what the customer service standard is all about.

### What you have to do to comply with the Customer Service Standard

The legislation requires that your business be in compliance by January 1, 2012. This new Customer Service Standard will ensure a more accessible business through the adoption of a few simple measures.

#### Policies

Set up a policy on how people with disabilities can access your goods and services.

#### Communication

Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

#### Training

Provide training to staff and any other people who interact with the public on your behalf on topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

#### Service Animals

Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas open to the public.

#### Support Persons

Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them.

#### Temporary disruptions

Provide notice when the facilities or services relied upon by people with disabilities are temporarily disrupted.

#### Feedback

Make sure people can provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and make it clear how people can provide this

If you are an organization or company with 20 employees or more you should note that there are some additional requirements around written documentation.

Some simple things you can do immediately to improve accessibility:

- treat all customers with dignity and respect
- ask 'How may I help you?'

If you require assistance in meeting the requirements of the new Customer Service Standard you may wish to receive the Out of the Box Customer Service toolkit now available from your local training advisory board with materials that are designed to help you comply with the legislation in.

Improving accessibility to your goods and services by removing and preventing barriers helps everyone.

To receive your toolkit contact: **Shalini da Cunha** who is the **Executive Director** at **905-306-9588 x102, Peel Halton Workforce Development Group**

**Linda Soulliere** is the **Executive Director** at **The Coalition for Persons with Disabilities** and can be reached at **905-755-9734**.

### BusinessLink Profile



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## BusinessLink on Holiday



Eric Doubt, Communication Associates, flying to remote village in Northern Haiti for Haiti Village Health clinic.



Barb Martin, Mary Kay Cosmetics, touring Venice.

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