

PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP Spring 2008

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Standards Development

In September 2007, as part of the election campaign, the government made a number of commitments to the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Alliance**, which included adjusting the membership of the AODA standards development committees to ensure 50 per cent membership from the disability community, and waiving the ministries' official roles as voting committee members. The standards development process was put on hold while new committee members representing the disability community were recruited, and in early March orientation meetings were held for new members.

The **Employment Accessibility Standards Development Committee** met at the end of March and welcomed 13 additional members, recognizing the wealth of experience and diversity of the expanded membership, but also the importance of building on the work done by the committee to date. Presentations at the meetings included an analysis of barriers to accessible employment and an inter-jurisdictional review of accessible employment best practices and legislation in 19 jurisdictions. The committee will meet again in late May.

The **Information and Communication Standards Development Committee** resumed in early April and brought the new members up to date on the progress made so far in creating the first draft of the standard. It was clear that lot of new expertise and perspectives have been added to the committee. Subcommittees have been set up to work on sections of the draft standard, to bring back to the full committee in June. The committee is still struggling with balancing the need to be specific enough so that organizations know when they are in compliance, with the need for flexibility in order to encourage innovation.

Human Rights Reform

The **Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO)** and the **Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)** have been working on implementing the transition from the current system of handling human rights complaints to the new one, where complaints will go directly to the HRTO. This change will come into effect on June 30, 2008, and any new complaints as of that date will follow the new system.

In January 2008 the HRTO released new Rules of Practice to govern the Tribunal's process for all complaints that have been or will be referred to the Tribunal by the OHRC (under the old system) up until January 1, 2009 (when the OHRC will no longer have the statutory authority to refer complaints to the Tribunal): www.hrto.ca/english/rules/. At the end of January the HRTO also released for consultation (until March 14th) proposed Rules of Practice for the new process to start on June 30, 2008. LDAO submitted a

response to this consultation, and looks forward to contributing to public consultations on drafting the HRTO Policy on Accessibility and Accommodation.

A transition team has begun planning for and setting up the new Human Rights Legal Support Centre, which will open on June 30, 2008.

Ministry of Education Dispute Resolution Processes

The Provincial Advisory Committee on Dispute Resolution (for special education programs and services) met on May 8th and members were pleased to learn that the piloting of formal dispute resolution processes in six school boards will be extended to June 2009. The committee heard from the research team about their plans for evaluation of the pilot projects, and welcomed plans from the Ministry to provide further training on the informal dispute resolution processes outlined in *Shared Solutions*.

LDAO Communique newsletter Spring 2008 www.ldao.ca