Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance

United for a Barrier-Free Ontario for All People with Disabilities

**Summary of a Discussion Paper:** What an Ontario Education Accessibility Standard Could Include?

# 1. Introduction

## a) What is This Discussion Paper All About?

It discusses what the Education Accessibility Standard should aim to achieve, the educational organizations to which it should apply, the disabilities it should cover, and the accessibility barriers it should address.

## b) Who is the AODA Alliance?

The non-partisan AODA Alliance is a volunteer grassroots disability coalition. It advocates for the AODA's effective implementation and enforcement.

**c) What is an Education Accessibility Standard?**

## The AODA requires the Ontario Government to lead Ontario to become fully accessible to all people with disabilities by 2025. The educational organizations must take to remove and prevent accessibility barriers that impede students with disabilities from fully participating in, being fully included in, and fully benefitting from education programs in Ontario.

## d) Summary of This Discussion Paper's Ideas for the Education Accessibility Standard

# The Education Accessibility Standard should be to ensure that Ontario's education system to become fully accessible to all students with disabilities by 2025. This includes all schools and school boards, job training programs, experiential learning programs, and pre-school educational programs, requirements to ensure that the curriculum taught in Ontario's education system is designed based on principles of "Universal Design in Learning (UDL).

# 2. Reach of the Education Accessibility Standard

## Purpose of the Education Accessibility Standard

## The Education Accessibility Standard should aim to ensure that organizations in Ontario's education system fulfil their duties to students with disabilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

## Ensuring Proper Accommodation of Students with Mental Health Needs and Other Disabilities Which Ontario's Special Education Legislation Now Leaves Out

## The Education Accessibility Standard can and should ensure that educational organizations address accessibility barriers facing students with any kind of disabilities, not just those disabilities which Ontario's 36-year-old and outdated special education regulations recognize.

**3. Specific Recurring Barriers that the Education Accessibility Standard Can and Should Address**

## a) Inclusive Education Strategies Generally

**b) Addressing Built Environment Barriers in Ontario's Education System:** distinctive accessibility barriers for schools, pre-school programs and day care programs that a broad building code typically does not sufficiently address.

## c) Barriers in Digital Technology Used in Ontario's Education System: should aim to ensure digital accessibility in Ontario's education system at all levels.

## d) Use of Service Animals: should set provincial standards regarding situations where students with disabilities need to bring a service animal to school.

## e) Improved Measures Aimed at Ensuring the Accessibility of Instructional Materials: should include effective measures to ensure that instructional materials used in Ontario's education system are fully accessible to students with disabilities who need to use them, and are available when needed.

## f) Ensuring Universal Design Principles are Embedded in Curriculum Taught in Ontario's Education System

## g) Addressing Recurring Attitudinal Barriers that Impede Students with Disabilities: for students with disabilities to fully participate in and be fully included in Ontario's education system, it is important to ensure that there are no attitudinal barriers to their inclusion, among students without disabilities.

## h) Barriers in Testing of Students with Disabilities: should include measures to ensure that any testing of students in Ontario's education system is conducted in a way that fairly and accurately assesses students with disabilities.

## i) Barriers in Education Program Admission Criteria

If an educational organization with an admission test, that test must be designed to accommodate students with disabilities, or the organization must be prepared to provide a comparable alternative method of assessing an applicant.

## j) Barriers to Full Participation in Experiential Learning: should include measures aimed at ensuring that students with disabilities can fully participate in experiential learning at all levels of Ontario's education system. People with disabilities can serve as a vital way into Ontario's job market and have chronically face exceptionally high unemployment rates in Canada.

## k) Barriers in Teacher Training: should include measures addressing barriers to full inclusion of students with disabilities that arise from the content of training of teachers working in Ontario's schools.

## l) Barriers Impeding Students with Disabilities and their Families from Getting Essential Information to Ensure They Can Fully Participate in Ontario's Education System: should put in place a prompt and effective process to ensure that all parents and guardians of students with disabilities get the information they need to address the student's disability-related needs.

## m) Bureaucratic Procedural Barriers Impeding Effective Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

The 2015 KPMG report found bureaucratic barriers that impede access to needed educational supports and accommodations, and recurring poor transition planning for students with disabilities.

# 4. Other Considerations

## Addressing the Cost of Providing Accessibility in Ontario's Education System

## The Education Accessibility Standard Would Not Set Quotas on How Much Additional Staff Support Each Student with A Disability Would Receive

## The Education Accessibility Standard Should Not Set Rigid and Inflexible Rules on Integration versus Segregation of Students with Disabilities