

Employment Update: The December 2026 AODA Compliance Deadline

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Ontario employers with 20 or more employees are required to file an accessibility compliance report under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“**AODA**”) every three years. The next deadline is December 31, 2026. With roughly two months remaining, now is the time to take stock, close any gaps, and file with confidence.

Who Must Comply

The AODA applies to every provincially regulated organization operating in Ontario with at least one employee, including private businesses, non-profits, and public-sector bodies. Federally regulated employers are not covered. The obligations scale with headcount:

- **1+ employees:** Must comply with the customer service standards and train employees, volunteers, and others acting on the organization’s behalf.
- **20+ employees:** Must also file an accessibility compliance report every three years (next deadline: December 31, 2026). Organizations with 20 to 49 employees report only on accessible customer service. Headcount includes full-time, part-time, seasonal, and fixed-term contract employees in Ontario.
- **50+ employees:** Must also develop and publicly post written accessibility policies and a multi-year plan, ensure public-facing websites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level AA, and maintain written Individual Accommodation Plans.

Key AODA Obligation: A Refresher

The AODA establishes mandatory accessibility standards across five areas: customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation, and the design of public spaces. For most private-sector employers, the following are of greatest practical significance.

Employee Training

All organizations must train employees, volunteers, and individuals acting on behalf of the organization on the AODA and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as they relate to persons with disabilities. Training must be provided as soon as reasonably practicable and updated whenever policies change. Organizations with 50 or more employees must keep records of the training provided. Importantly, this obligation extends beyond employees to volunteers and

others who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the organization – a commonly misunderstood requirement and a frequent source of non-compliance.

Website and Digital Content Accessibility

Organizations with 50 or more employees must ensure their public-facing websites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level AA – one of the most time-consuming areas of AODA compliance, as it often requires support from IT and web development teams. While the AODA currently references WCAG 2.0, Ontario is expected to transition to WCAG 2.2 by 2027, making it worthwhile for organizations to plan for the updated standard as part of any remediation work already underway.

Accessible Employment Practices

The AODA's Employment Standard requires organizations to build accessibility into every stage of the employment lifecycle, including notifying job applicants that accommodations are available, providing workplace information in accessible formats upon request, developing documented Individual Accommodation Plans, maintaining a return-to-work process for employees absent due to a disability, and considering accessibility needs in performance management and career development.

Customer Service Standards

Every organization that provides goods, services, or facilities to the public must establish policies and practices that respect the dignity, independence, and integration of persons with disabilities, including permitting service animals and support persons, providing notice of temporary service disruptions, and establishing a feedback process.

The 2026 Compliance Report

The compliance report is more than a paperwork exercise; it requires a senior officer with legal authority to certify that the information provided is complete and accurate. In other words, an organization must actually be compliant, not just say it is. Reports are submitted through the Ontario government's online Accessibility Compliance Reporting Portal. Before filing, employers should update their organization profile on the portal and have on hand their legal name, business number (BN9), employee count, and certifier contact information.

Enforcement and Penalties

Failure to comply with the AODA, including failing to file the compliance report, can trigger financial penalties of up to \$100,000 per day for corporations and up to \$50,000 per day for individual directors and officers. Enforcement has historically been complaint-driven, but the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario conducts audits and has issued compliance orders and penalty notices against non-compliant organizations. With increased regulatory focus heading into the 2026 reporting cycle, the risk of enforcement is not one to take lightly.

The AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code

Employers should be mindful that the AODA and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* are separate but complementary. The AODA is process-based – it prescribes the systems and policies an organization must have in place – while the *Human Rights Code* is outcome-based, requiring accommodation of individual employees up to the point of undue hardship. Meeting AODA requirements does not automatically satisfy the duty to accommodate under the *Human Rights Code*; both must be addressed.

Key Takeaways for Employers

1. **Don't wait for December.** If your organization has not revisited its compliance framework recently, there may be more ground to cover than expected. A proactive review can help identify gaps before they become liabilities.
2. **File early.** The filing portal can become congested as the deadline approaches. Submitting well in advance can help avoid technical issues or last-minute surprises.
3. **Review training obligations.** Training must cover employees, volunteers, and individuals acting on behalf of the organization, not just employees. Organizations that have let training lapse may find themselves unable to sign off honestly on the compliance report.
4. **Audit digital accessibility.** Website compliance is one of the most time-consuming AODA obligations. Start remediation work now and plan for the anticipated transition to WCAG 2.2.
5. **Remember the *Human Rights Code*.** AODA compliance alone does not insulate an organization from a human rights complaint, both the AODA and the duty to accommodate under the *Human Rights Code* must be addressed.

For specifically tailored advice on AODA compliance or accessibility-related employment obligations, please reach out to a member of Blaneys' [Labour and Employment Group](#).

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