

While there has been increasing attention by Canadian government organizations on making Canadian facilities accessible to people with hearing loss, it does not currently have mandatory codes, standards or guidelines for accessibility. Currently the standards are voluntary, non-legally binding until adopted and/or mandated by the appropriate jurisdictions.

## Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is leading efforts to deliver [guidelines for universal design and barrier-free access](#) for people with hearing loss in public venues and make the change from voluntary compliance to standards adopted and enforced by industry.

The Province of Ontario has adopted requirements for assistive listening systems. These requirements are outlined below.

According to the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, and Employment assistive listening systems are required or will be required in public sector and not-for-profit organizations when persons with a hearing disability request it. In addition, assistive listening systems shall be provided at no cost and the organization shall notify the public of the availability of such systems. These requirements are stated in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2005 and the Ontario Building Code Act of 1992, as amended.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed in 2005—its goal is to [make Ontario accessible](#) for people with disabilities by 2025. The Act covers a broad range of disabilities, including hearing disabilities.

[Section 12 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\): Part 2](#)—Information Communication States:

12(1) Except as otherwise provided, every obligated organization shall upon request provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability; and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charge to other persons.

(2) The obligated organization shall consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

(3) Every obligated organization shall notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

And that these requirements must be implemented by these dates:

| Affected Organizations                                       | Compliance Dates |
|--|------------------|
| Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly               | January 1, 2014  |
| Designated public sector organizations with 50+ employees    | January 1, 2015  |
| Designated public sector organizations with 1-49 employees   | January 1, 2016  |
| Private and not-for-profit organizations with 50+ employees  | January 1, 2016  |
| Private and not-for-profit organizations with 1-49 employees | January 1, 2017  |

Further rules state: To be accessible to people with disabilities, organizations must be able to provide and to receive information and communications in an accessible manner.

There are several ways to do this. Here are some examples:

- Accessible, electronic formats, such as HTML and MS Word Documents
- Braille
- Accessible audio formats
- Large print
- Text transcripts of visual and audio information
- Reading the written information aloud to the person directly
- Exchanging handwritten notes or providing a note taker or communication assistant
- Captioning or audio description<sup>1</sup>
- **Assistive listening systems**
- Augmentative and alternative communication methods and strategies, such as the use of letter, word, or picture boards, and devices that speak out messages
- Sign language interpretation and intervener services
- Repeating, clarifying, or restating information

For more information, refer to the [Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, and Employment website](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca).  
<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca>

For more information on The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association's Universal Design & Barrier-Free Access guidelines go to <http://www.chha.ca/chha/links-access.php>