

Built and DOPS Q&As

Under the AODA, the fifth standard to be addressed is the Design of Public Spaces (Accessibility Standard for the Built Environment).

What is the Design of Public Spaces (Accessibility Standard for the Built Environment) or DOPS for short?

Recommendations from the Standards Development Committee that fall outside the scope of the Ontario Building Code are being addressed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services through the development of draft standards for the Design of Public Spaces. Draft standards for the Design of Public Spaces include requirements for:

- Recreation Elements, like trails and beach access routes
 - [Example: Organizations will need to meet minimum width requirements for new or redeveloped trails and beach access routes and post signage with specific information at the start of trails.]
- Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas, like rest stops or picnic grounds
 - [Example: Organizations will need to provide a minimum number of accessible tables.]
- Outdoor Play Spaces, like playgrounds in provincial parks and local communities
 - [Example: Organizations will need to incorporate accessibility features for children and caregivers with various disabilities when building and designing new or redeveloping existing outdoor play spaces.]
- Exterior paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
 - [Example: Organizations will need to meet minimum width requirements for sidewalks and install accessible pedestrian signals at intersections.]
- Accessible parking (on and off street)
 - [Example: Organizations that provide off-street parking for public use will need to make a minimum number of accessible spaces available and provide two types of spaces.]
- Service-related elements, like service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas
 - [Example: Organizations must have at least one service counter that accommodates a mobility aid.]
- Maintenance requirements to ensure accessibility features are kept in working order

- [Example: Organizations must include preventive and emergency maintenance procedures for accessibility elements in public spaces in their accessibility plans]

The requirements will only apply to new construction and planned redevelopment of existing elements.

How is the Building Code being amended?

Many of the recommendations made by the Standards Development Committee that address accessibility in buildings expand on existing requirements that are already part of Ontario's Building Code (OBC), which governs new construction and renovations in buildings.

As a result, The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is reviewing the current requirements in Ontario's Building Code against the recommendations made by the Committee to see where improvements can be made.

MMAH hopes to move forward with enhanced accessibility in the Building Code shortly.

Timelines for DOPS and requirements under the Building Code:

DOPS

- The standards for the Design of Public Spaces were available for a 45 day public review and comment period from August 15, 2012 to October 1, 2012.
- The draft regulation proposes the following timelines for organizations to begin complying with the requirements:
 - Ontario government – 2015
 - Public sector organizations – 2016
 - Large private sector organizations with more than 50 employees – 2017, and
 - Small private sector organizations – 2018.
- The government is reviewing all comments received and making decisions on what will become law and when.

Amendments to the OBC:

Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is working on amendments to address accessibility in the Building Code. MMAH hopes to move forward with enhanced accessibility in the Building Code shortly.

Will I need to make changes to my public space?

No, organizations will not be required to retrofit existing public spaces. The standards for the Design of Public Spaces will only apply to new construction and the redevelopment of existing elements in public spaces. This will allow organizations to include accessibility in the planning stages, right at the beginning.

What does the “redevelopment of existing elements” mean?

The concept of ‘redeveloped’ is planned work done on an element, structure or site that takes it beyond its original condition.

“Redeveloped is different from maintenance. Maintenance includes activities to keep an existing element, structure or site in good working order or to restore it to the original condition (such as painting or minor repairs).

What is required for accessible parking?

Organizations will need to make a minimum number of accessible spaces available and provide two types of spaces.

Until these proposed standards are in place, the designation and enforcement of accessible parking will continue to be enforced through municipalities.

The government has said that when passed, requirements in these standards will not require organizations to retrofit or renovate existing parking areas to meet new requirements.

How much will the standards cost to implement?

The expected costs for organizations to implement the standards will be minimal. The standards’ go-forward approach and lead time for implementation will allow all organizations to plan for accessibility within their existing budgets and incorporate any new requirements into their planning.