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November 23, 2009

**For the Attention of
Hospital CEOs, Board Chairs, LHIN CEOs, LHIN Board
Chairs, CCACs, CCAC Board Chairs, Chief HR Officers,
Hospital Communicators**

From: Tom Closson, President and CEO

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities

In June of this year, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Honourable David Onley, appointed Charles Beer to conduct an independent review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* (AODA).

The review, which will conclude later this year, is intended to provide a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the AODA, the regulations, and the Standards Development Process.

The AODA mandates change to help improve the lives of people with disabilities, with the goal of achieving accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

In the coming years, designated public sector organizations, including hospitals, will be working towards ensuring that their policies and practices not only identify barriers towards accessibility, but work towards removing these barriers.

To date, accessibility standards have been developed in five important areas: Customer Service; Transportation; Information and Communications; Built Environment and Employment.

As you are no doubt aware, beginning January 1, 2010, the *Customer Service Standard* (Regulation 429/07) under the AODA will apply to hospitals. This means that hospitals, as well as other designated public sector organizations, will need to ensure that they

comply with the requirements of the Standard, and file an [Accessibility Report](#) by March 31, 2010 to demonstrate this compliance.

This includes establishing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities, including the use of personal assistive devices, support persons and animals.

In addition, the *Customer Service Standard* provides that hospitals train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf, or who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures.

To assist hospitals and other health care organizations in meeting their training obligations, the OHA, in collaboration with the Accessibility Directorate's Enabling Change Partnership and Discovery Campus has developed a [Customer Service E-Learning Module](#). This 30 minute module is available to you at no cost until October 2010 and is available through a web-based interface requiring only an internet connection.

OHA staff continues to work closely with our hospital representatives on each of the Standards Development Committees to ensure that the unique concerns and opinions of hospitals associated with the Standards and their development are addressed.

Through formal written submissions on the Proposed [Employment Standard](#), [Information and Communications Standard](#), [Built Environment Standard](#), and the [Independent Review of the AODA](#), we remain committed to advocating on behalf of our members to ensure that the impacts of the legislation and regulations (Standards) on a hospital's ability to deliver high quality care are carefully considered.

On November 30, 2009 the OHA will be hosting its 2nd Annual Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Conference. In addition to having the opportunity to dialogue with the Accessibility Directorate regarding compliance with the Customer Service Standard and hear from Charles Beer regarding his independent review, delegates will hear first-hand from the Honourable David Onley about the AODA in ensuring accessibility throughout the Province. You can learn more about the conference and register online at www.oha.com under "Education – Conferences – Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Conference."

Serving the special needs of hospital patients, clients and communities is integral to the mandate of hospitals. Indeed, when you think of it, every patient that comes through hospital doors has impairment, whether it is of a temporary or more permanent nature.

If you have any questions about the AODA or the Accessibility Standards, feel free to contact Melissa Prokopy at mprokopy@oha.com.