

Business / Small Business / money

AODA and Small business: Severe penalties for lack of accessibility for the disabled

AODA stands for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Many business owners are unaware of the law that requires the filing of a compliance report. They are also unaware of the onerous penalty for non-compliance.



By: Rona Birenbaum Special to The Star, Published on Wed May 15 2013

The AODA's deadline for providers of goods and services with 20 or more employees to file a Customer Service Accessibility Compliance Report was December 31, 2012.

AODA stands for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Many business owners are unaware of the law that requires the filing of a compliance report. They are also unaware of the onerous penalty for non-compliance.

Employment lawyer Doug MacLeod tells the story of a client of his that received a non-compliance letter from the Ontario government. Her organization was given 15 business days to comply with AODA. Thereafter, the organization would be subject to a fine of \$50,000 for each day the organization did not comply with AODA.

"The government has provided fairly user friendly tools to assist employers fulfill their obligations under the act" MacLeod says. There is a detailed package that provides directions on compliance reporting. MacLeod suggests not waiting until you receive a letter from the government to develop an accessibility policy and file the compliance report. "It appears that employers are being given very short deadlines for compliance. It is prudent to file the report now, even though the deadline has passed."

Businesses with fewer than 20 employees don't need to file the compliance report, but they are **still have obligations** under the Customer Standard of AODA. Such obligations include: establishing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities; providing people with disabilities with notice of a temporary disruption in facilities or services; and providing training to certain persons about the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities.

The Ontario government provides a range of online resources to help business owners fulfill their obligations under the Act.

- For every provider of goods and services (except sole proprietors) there is a an accessible customer service policy [template](#).
- For every provider of goods and services (except sole proprietors) there is a 45-minute online [training course](#) for employees.
- For every provider of goods and services with 20 or more employees there are [directions](#) on compliance reporting.

These resources, along with advice from your employment lawyer, are all that you need to become compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Rona Birenbaum has worked in financial services for over 20 years within the Credit Union, full-service brokerage and independent Financial Planning industries. She is an Honours graduate of York University's Business School, a Certified Financial Planner (CFP), and fully licensed Insurance and Investment Advisor.

Email: rona@caringforclients.com

Linked In: www.linkedin.com/in/ronabirenbaum

Twitter: @Caring4Clients

Website: www.caringforclients.com