

An Illustrated Technical Guide to the Design of Accessible Public Spaces and other accessibility resources

Bob TOPPING

Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES)

Abstract. The Government of Ontario (Canada) has enacted legislation with the overarching goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. Legislative elements include standards for public- and private-sector organizations, requiring them to develop and maintain accessibility policies and practices, as well as design transportation systems and built environments that are accessible to all. The article overviews a series of resources, including an Illustrated Technical Guide to the Design of Accessible Public Spaces, that have been developed by the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) to assist organizations develop appropriate accessibility policies, practices and public spaces.

Keywords. Accessibility, accessibility legislation, accessibility policy, accessibility practices, public spaces, built environment, Ontario.

Introduction

The Government of Ontario (Canada) has enacted legislation with the overarching goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. Legislative elements include standards for public- and private-sector organizations, requiring them to develop and maintain accessibility policies and practices, as well as design transportation systems and built environments that are accessible to all. The article overviews a series of resources, including an Illustrated Technical Guide to the Design of Accessible Public Spaces, that have been developed by the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) to assist organizations develop appropriate accessibility policies, practices and public spaces.

In 2009, 2010 and 2013 GAATES successfully applied for funding from the EnAbling Change, a grant program of the Government of Ontario, to develop resources to assist organizations understand and implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (Government of Ontario, 2013). The Illustrated Technical Guide to the Design of Accessible Public Spaces specifically address the requirements for obligated organizations to develop accessible public spaces. The resources also address requirements for obligated organizations to provide/develop and maintain: accessibility policies; accessibility plans; information in accessible formats; communication systems that address the needs of all of their clients/customers, and; accessible employment practices.

Although the resources were developed to address the need for appropriate and accurate information within the legislative context of the Province of Ontario, the concepts and technical guidelines included within the resources are widely applicable to other jurisdictions.

The remainder of the article identifies the various resources developed by GAATES and summarizes the content of each.

1. Illustrated Technical Guide to the Design of Accessible Public Spaces (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, 2014)
<http://gaates.org/locationtobedetermined>

This document describes the parts of the legislative requirements of the Province of Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Regulation, (Government of Ontario, 2009) related to the Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment). Technical requirements, best practices and design studies are provided for: Exterior Paths of Travel; Recreational Trails; Beach Access Routes; Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas; Outdoor Play Spaces; Accessible Parking; Obtaining Service in Public Spaces, and; Maintaining Accessible Public Spaces.

2. Accessible Information and Communication: A Guide for Small Business (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, 2012)
<http://www.gaates.org/aic/index.html>

This document describes the parts of the legislative requirements of the Province of Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Regulation, (Government of Ontario, 2009) related to the Information and Communication requirements of the regulation. Implementation strategies are provided for: Providing Information in Accessible Formats; Communicating Accessibly with Clients, Employees and Suppliers, and; The Importance of Accessible Information and Communication within Emergency and Public Safety Systems and Procedures. Sections are also included on common terms, acronyms, and resources.

3. Outsourcing Web Development: A Guide for Hiring Contractors to Develop Accessible Websites and Web Content (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, 2012) <http://www.gaates.org/aICout/cont.php>

This document describes the parts of the legislative requirements of the Province of Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Regulation, (Government of Ontario, 2009) related to the web site requirements of the regulation. Information is provided on: The Benefits of Web Accessibility; In-House versus Outsourcing; Choosing a Developer to Work With; The Selection Process; What You Need to Provide to the Developer to Achieve a Successful Project, and; User Testing.

4. WCAG 2.0 - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines: An Introductory Guide for Web Developers (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, 2012) <http://www.gaates.org/aICwebdev/index.php>

This document describes the parts of the legislative requirements of the Province of Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Regulation, (Government of Ontario, 2009) related to the web site requirements of the regulation. Information is provided on: An Introduction to Web Accessibility; WCAG 2.0: A Closer Look; Other Technical Considerations, and; Organizations Considerations.

5. Other Resources (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, 2012) http://www.gaates.org/026ICT_Publications.php

This web page includes links to other GAATES publications including;

- Developing accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan: A guide for organizations with 50 or more employees, GAATES, 2012
- A guide to developing an accessibility policy: for organizations with 1-49 employees, GAATES, 2012
- Providing accessible information to people with disabilities, GAATES, 2012
- Making Emergency and Public Safety Information Accessible to the Public, GAATES, 2012
- Providing individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, GAATES, 2012
- Procuring or Acquiring Accessible Goods, Services or Facilities, GAATES, 2012

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