



# Inclusive Hiring - Your Duty to Accommodate: HR TOOL KIT



## About Retail Council of Canada

Retail is Canada's largest private-sector employer with over 2 million Canadians working in our industry. The sector annually generates over \$85 billion in wages and employee benefits. Core retail sales (excluding vehicles and gasoline) were over \$462B in 2022. Retail Council of Canada (RCC) members represent more than two-thirds of core retail sales in the country. RCC is a not-for-profit industry-funded association that represents small, medium, and large retail businesses in every community across the country. As the Voice of Retail™ in Canada, we proudly represent more than 143,000 storefronts in all retail formats, including department, grocery, specialty, discount, independent retailers, online merchants and quick service restaurants.

Retail Council of Canada acknowledges the support of the Government of Ontario's Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility



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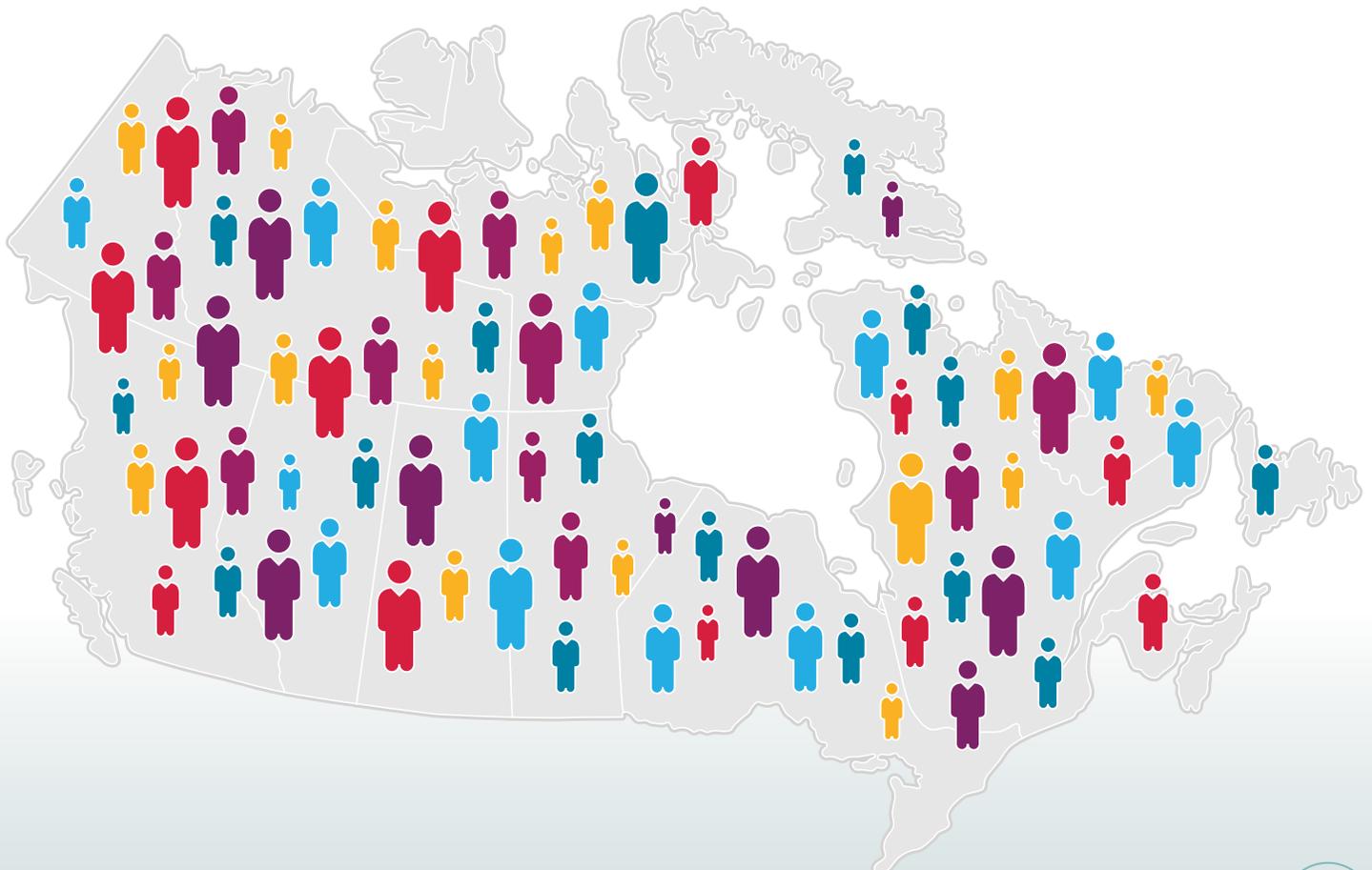
## Introduction

Did you know that over 50% of Canadians live with some form of disability every day?

Given this, it's widely understood that treating all current and future employees with equal respect and dignity is crucial for guaranteeing the success and profitability of a retail store.

In fact, it's especially important today for retailers to include every segment and demographic of Canada's population within their recruiting strategy considering that the country is experiencing a shrinking talent pool. People living with disabilities are part of an untapped market, possessing a variety of skills and breadth of experience. And, to assist their efforts, it's incredibly important for retailers to understand the basics concerning Inclusive hiring.

To start, retailers should intensify their focus on people living with disabilities within all aspects of the store's strategic planning, including processes and tactics related to recruitment, onboarding, retention, and promotion. To support these efforts, it is important to create and maintain a culture of inclusion within the organization to ensure that every employee feels safe, respected, valued, and welcome from day one. A positive and inclusive culture promotes a sense of togetherness among the team and the equitable treatment of all, ensuring that employees living with disabilities are placed onto the same promotion track and receive the same professional development and growth opportunities as their colleagues. It's a strategy that not only helps organizations do the right thing, but it also helps them find the right talent and differentiate themselves within a hyper-competitive retail market.



To help retailers better understand the best inclusive hiring practices and give them the best opportunity to find top talent among those living with disabilities across the country, Retail Council of Canada has developed the *Inclusive Hiring – Your Duty to Accommodate: An HR Tool Kit*. created as a starting point and guide for those operating within the retail industry to enhance their inclusion strategies and associated hiring practices, and to begin capitalizing on an untapped talent market in Canada.

This Tool Kit offers retailers accessible resources to seamlessly incorporate inclusive hiring practices into their operations.

### Your Duty to Accommodate – Employment Standards

In Ontario, there are two branches of laws:

Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) (enacted in 1962): This code is administered by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The Code is an individual, complaints-based legislation that addresses discrimination. The Code requires organizations to accommodate people living with disabilities to the point of undue hardship to demonstrate due diligence.

AODA: According to the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) and its [Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), Ontario's accessibility law serves as the province's primary legislative authority concerning accessibility. The law applies to all organizations with one or more employees in Ontario (public, private and not-for-profit).

The information provided in this Tool Kit is based on the Ontario Government's Employment Accessibility Standard in the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) and its [Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) – a standard which requires that retailers of all sized in Ontario must make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities. For instance, employers offering employment to a successful applicant must communicate their organization's policies related to accommodating employees with disabilities.

For more information about Ontario Accessibility Laws, please visit: [Ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws](https://ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws)

For more information about accessibility laws and legislation in other regions, please refer to the specific province's accessibility website.





## SECTION 1: Expanding Retail’s Skilled Talent Pool

### Your Duty to Accommodate – Why Inclusion Matters

Some individuals are born with disabilities, while others develop them over time, and some may result due to accident, illness, or age. In fact, it’s more likely than not that we already know someone, or are working with someone, who is living with a disability, but we just don’t know it.

#### ::: People Living with Disabilities: [Factsheet](#) :::

	<p>More than 1 in 10 youth in Canada live with one or more disabilities.</p>
	<p>People living with disabilities, along with their friends and families, represent more than half of Canada’s population.</p>
	<p>More than 4 in 10 Canadians living with disabilities suffer from the effects of a severe or very severe disability.</p>
	<p>Mental health-related and learning disabilities are the most common types of disabilities among youth.</p>
	<p>Youth living with disabilities are at a higher risk of not attending school or becoming unemployed – a risk that often increases with the severity of the disability.</p>
	<p>30% of Canadians consider accessibility when looking for a place to shop.</p>

According to *The Global Economics of Disability 2020* report

	<b>1.85</b> BILLION	1.85 billion people live with a recognized disability (a number equivalent to the population of China).
	<b>\$3.0</b> TRILLION	\$3 trillion is the cumulative annual income among people living with disabilities.
	<b>\$1.9</b> TRILLION	\$1.9 trillion is the cumulative annual disposable income among people living with disabilities.

In Canada

	<b>9.1</b> MILLION	9.1 million people live with a recognized disability.
	<b>\$171</b> BILLION	\$171.2 billion is the cumulative annual income among Canadians living with disabilities.
	<b>\$82</b> BILLION	\$82.2 billion is the cumulative annual disposable income among Canadians living with disabilities.

This group possesses significant purchasing power. Retailers in Canada must work to find new ways to create value for this substantial and influential community of people living with disabilities in provinces and territories across the country.

### Retail Industry Overview: Serving People with Disabilities

Retail is sometimes referred to as “the accidental profession” – a moniker referencing the two-thirds of employees who admittedly find themselves working within the industry by chance rather than by design. However, it could just as easily be referred to as “the overlooked industry” because so few people recognize the wide variety of career opportunities available within retail.

In addition, many people fail to appreciate the sheer size of the retail industry and its significant contribution toward the economic wellbeing of communities across the country, as well as the health of the national economy. Retailers, whether they are located on Main Streets or in neighborhood malls, represent the commercial lifeblood of their surrounding areas, and are often their largest employers, too.



In fact, retail is Canada’s largest industry by employment, representing approximately 2.1 million jobs, employing 12% of all eligible Canadian workers. It’s also one of the country’s most dynamic industries, frequently facing challenges to adapt quickly to consistently meet and exceed the changing needs and preferences of Canadians.

The industry is also one that offers more choice and variety than any other, carrying a plethora of products that are made available to consumers in an array of different modes and formats, servicing the needs of an incredibly diverse population. And there’s diversity in the types of merchants that help comprise the Canadian retail ecosystem, from small, independent operations to large, multinational, publicly traded companies, and everything in between. As diverse as the industry is, however, the need to manage and develop its people is universal.

## Closing the Employment Gap

Over the course of the past two years, store closures (temporary or permanent), staff layoffs, and a general uncertainty concerning health and safety, among other forcing functions, have led several retail employees to leave the industry, resulting in a shortage of skilled labour that’s available for merchants across the country to draw from.

In December 2021, Statistics Canada reported that the retail industry in Canada experienced the creation of more than 100,000 job vacancies during the month – a number that has remained over the 100,000-per-month mark, with little change, since August 2021.



There is no single solution that will remedy the current labour crisis. However, leveraging the skills of people living with disabilities – a largely untapped community of potential employees who want to work – is an excellent way to start filling the gaps.

And it also happens to be a great step to take toward making stores more accessible. People living with disabilities, like everyone else, want to shop at retail brands that reflect who they are as individuals. Retailers can meet this growing demand while filling important roles within their stores by looking to people living with disabilities and the skills that they can offer.

### Statistics: People Living with Disabilities & Employment

	General Population	Living With Disability
Educational Attainment Above High-School	80.1%	40.7%
Unemployment Rate	7.6%	16%
Employment Rate	72.8%	59.4%
Labour Market Participation Rate	66.4%	52.7%
Average Employment Income	\$44,864	\$39,710

Source: Canadian Survey on Disability Reports, 2017 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>

## An Overlooked Talent Pool

::: According to the Globe and Mail article, ‘Why Canadian companies should do more to hire people with disabilities’ :::

	<p>Canada has a reputation for being a progressive, caring, and inclusive nation, but many Canadian jobseekers with disabilities might argue otherwise.</p>
 <p><b>15%</b> BY 2023</p>	<p>By 2030, 15% of Canadians – around 550,000 people – who live with a physical disability would be able to work more hours if workplaces were more accessible, according to the Conference Board of Canada.</p>
 <p><b>59%</b> VS 80%</p>	<p>Only 59% of Canadians of legal working age who live with a disability are employed, compared to 80% of the general population – an employment gap of 21%.</p>
 <p><b>28%</b> AND 30%</p>	<p>Disability-inclusive businesses have 28% higher revenue and 30% higher profit margins than companies that aren’t, and twice the net income of other companies.</p>

There are a lot of misconceptions concerning the hiring of people living with disabilities which prevent some businesses from developing accessible employment practices, including:

- Employees living with disabilities won’t perform as well at their jobs as other employees.
- People living with disabilities can’t be fired or disciplined.
- A person living with a disability won’t be reliable and will miss a lot of work.
- Employees living with disabilities are more likely to get injured on the job.
- There is increased turnover among employees with disabilities.

## Hiring People with Disabilities is Good for Business

Employment practices that are inclusive for people with disabilities are good for business and the community. People with disabilities – along with their friends and loved ones – represent more than half of Canada’s population, with purchasing power that contributes \$82 billion to the Canadian domestic economy and \$3 trillion globally.

::: Business Benefits of Accessible Employment Practices for Retailers (Statistics Canada) :::

 <b>72%</b>	<p><b>Better job retention/lower turnover:</b> Statistics Canada research reveals that organizations with accessible employment practices have a 72% higher retention rate among people with disabilities.</p>
 <b>86%</b>	<p><b>Higher attendance:</b> 86% of people living with disabilities rate average or better on attendance than their colleagues without disabilities.</p>
 <b>90%</b>	<p><b>Enhanced job performance and work quality:</b> 90% of people living with disabilities rate average or better on job performances compared to their colleagues without disabilities.</p>
 <b>75%</b>	<p><b>Exceeding workplace expectations:</b> 75% of small - and medium-sized businesses in Ontario that employ people living with disabilities report that they meet or exceed workplace expectations.</p>
 <b>98%</b>	<p><b>Better safety records:</b> 98% of people living with a disability rate average or better in work safety than their colleagues without <u>disabilities</u>.</p>

A common misconception about hiring people with disabilities is the belief that necessary resources (e.g., Braille keyboard, TTY phone) are costly. In reality, these resources typically cost retailers less than \$500.

### The Cost of Turnover

Retaining employees is critical for boosting productivity, keeping recruitment costs low, and contributing to a positive employer brand. However, it's important for retailers to understand exactly why employees choose to leave, allowing them to assess whether tweaks or changes might be required to assist their efforts in reducing the cost of turnover.

#### Two types of employee turnover:

**Voluntary turnover:** this type of turnover occurs when a retail employee decides to leave their role at an organization and includes retirements and voluntary resignations. Employees typically need to submit a notice two weeks in advance of retirement or resignation. Scheduling exit interviews can help retailers better understand the reason for voluntary turnover in their workplaces.

**Involuntary turnover:** this type of turnover occurs when a retailer requests that an employee leave their position and includes terminations and involuntary resignations. Some common reasons for involuntary turnover include structural reorganization, employee behavioural problems, and budget cuts.



**Turnover Calculator**

The chart below shows the turnover cost for an organization when an employee leaves, assuming a two-week notice period and a two-week job vacancy – **a cost to the business of over \$4,000.**

Termination Costs		
Paperwork processing (admin support)	0.5 hour @ \$25/hr	\$12.50
Separation processing (management)	2 hours @ \$30/hr	\$60
Exit interview (HR/management)	1 hour @ \$30/hr	\$30
Hiring Costs		
Writing ad/posting position	2 hours @ \$30/hr	\$60
Cost of advertising (online/print)	Varies	\$250
Resume screening	2 hours @ \$30/hr	\$60
Telephone screening	3 hours @ \$30/hr	\$90
Interviewing	3 hours @ \$30/hr	\$90
Reference/background check	1.5 hours @ \$30/hr	\$45
Job offer preparation	0.5 hour @ \$30/hr	\$15
Orientation and Training		
New hire paperwork (admin support)	1 hour @ \$25/hr	\$25
Orientation with Manager	2 hours @ \$30/hr	\$60
In-house training	12 hours @ \$13.00/hr	\$156
Lost Productivity		
Lost productivity of existing employee	80 @ \$13.00/hr hours	\$1,040
Lost productivity of co-workers while covering	80 hours @ \$13.00/hr	\$1,040
Lost productivity of management	18 hours @ \$30/hr	\$540
Lost productivity of new hire for first week	40 hours @ \$13.00/hr	\$520
Lost sales/productivity in exiting employee and new hire	To be determined	\$ -
Other costs		
Increased defects/operating errors	To be determined	\$ -
Dissatisfied/lost customers during transition	To be determined	\$ -

**Total turnover costs**

Termination costs	\$102.50
Total hiring/orientation/training costs	\$851
Lost Productivity	\$3,140+
Other costs	To be determined
<b>Total turnover cost</b>	<b>\$4,096.50+</b>

For industry insiders facing significant turnover, the Canada HR Center can calculate its impact on their bottom lines [CanadaHRCentre.com](http://CanadaHRCentre.com) 

**::: People with Disabilities make Exceptional Employees\* :::**

 <b>72%</b>	72% higher employee retention rate among people with disabilities.
 <b>86%</b>	86% of persons with disabilities rated average or better on attendance.
 <b>90%</b>	90% performed equal or better than their coworkers without disabilities.

*\*Research from Statistics Canada and Accessible Employers*



## SECTION 2: Writing Inclusive Job Descriptions

Whether it's a new or replacement position, filling a vacancy is an opportunity to review the job requirements to ensure they are accurate, up to date, and compliant with workplace-related laws.

When setting or updating job requirements, retailers should first consider whether the tasks and responsibilities included are “bona fide occupational” requirements.



**A bona fide occupational requirement is defined as “Necessary for proper and efficient performance of a job.”**

When assessing whether a job requirement, task or duty is essential, retailers should weigh the following:

- How often the duty is performed
- Time spent on each duty
- Physical requirements of the duty
  - range of motion required
  - frequency or strength requirements
  - special equipment to be operated
- How the duty fits with others performed within the job
- How the job would change if the duty was removed
- Whether or not removing the duty would create a health and safety hazard

A “bona fide occupational” requirement does not necessarily mean that an applicant living with a disability who cannot perform a certain function should be removed from the selection process. However, these types of requirements, and others, should be discussed during the interview assessment phase of the selection process.

“*The Ontario Human Rights Code* prohibits discrimination that results from requirements, qualifications, or factors that may appear neutral but have an adverse or negative effect on people identified by *Code* grounds.

At the same time, the *Code* allows an organization to show that the requirement, qualification or factor is nevertheless “reasonable and bona fide” in the circumstances. However, to do this, [the organization must show that the needs of the person cannot be accommodated without undue hardship.](#)

The test for “bona fide” job requirements must be proven with more likely than not evidence that it:

- Is rationally connected to performing the job.
- Was adopted in good faith and is necessary to fulfill a legitimate work-related purpose.
- Is impossible to accommodate individual employees sharing the characteristics of the claimant without imposing undue hardship upon the retailer.

It is important to note that the requirements listed must be inclusive and must accommodate individual differences up to the point of undue hardship. It is not enough to maintain discriminatory standards and only accommodate people who cannot meet them. Each person should be assessed based on their unique abilities, not presumed characteristics.

The Ontario Human Rights Code considers three elements with respect to an accommodation causing undue hardship:

1. Cost beyond the means of the retailer.
2. Whether outside sources of funding are available.
3. Accommodation creates a health and safety risk.

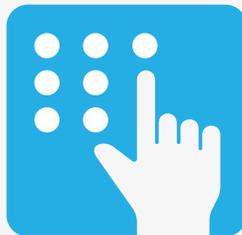


**Retailers should always seek legal counsel on matters of this nature before claiming for undue hardship.**

**Accommodating someone living with a disability is seldom as expensive or difficult as some might claim. The Ontario Human Rights Commission states that over two-thirds of job accommodations cost less than \$500, and many are free to implement.**



TTY PHONE



BRaille READERS



LARGE COMPUTER SCREENS

**Accessible and Inclusive Language**

Here are some best practices for accessible communication to ensure a retailer’s job description encourages candidates of all backgrounds and all abilities to apply:

- Communicate one idea per paragraph and highlight keywords.
- Use plain language. Write simple, concise text that uses short paragraphs, short sentences, and short words. Cognitive limitations can be associated with learning disabilities, low literacy, or numeracy skills, and/or cultural and language differences.
- Be specific and easy to understand. Avoid using slang, jargon, and short forms as not everyone will understand what they mean. Use an “inverted pyramid” writing style by communicating the most important information first, at the top of the written content.
- Break the content into bulleted lists, if possible.
- Spell out requirements ahead of time (for example: “Passwords must be at least 6 characters with no spaces”), and write clear, simple error messages.
- Remove gender-coded words phrases, or traits that have historically been associated with either the male or female gender.
- Outline employee policies like mission statement and/or DEI statement.
- Include inclusive benefits like parental leave.

**Examples Of Discriminatory Language vs More Inclusive Language:**

Discriminatory Language	More Inclusive Language
Must be able to lift 50 pounds	Moves equipment weighing up to 50 pounds
Seeking able-bodied individual	[No replacement. Avoid completely.]
Bending and crouching under desks to install equipment	Positions self to install equipment, including under desks
Must be able to stand for entire shift	Must be able to remain in a stationary position during shift
Talks to students about their financial concerns	Communicates with students about their financial concerns
Walks throughout the building to access files	Moves throughout the building to access files
This role requires visually inspecting sites for safety	This role requires inspection of sites to detect safety concerns

Table Credit: Monster

### Quick Tips

- People living with disabilities related to hearing loss may have a different understanding of language than people who have become hearing impaired later in their lives. Their first language might be a standard sign language system with an identifiable “grammar.”
- Formatting-wise, always use standard fonts with easily recognizable upper- and lower-case characters, like Arial and Verdana, but any font from the sans-serif family is preferred.
- Keep the text size large, preferably between 12 and 18 points, depending on the font (point size varies between fonts). Consider the audience when choosing font size and if possible, provide size options.
- Finally, keep the spacing between the letters and sentences wide enough so that it is not touching or overlapping.

For more information on how to make a document accessible, refer to [CNIB’s Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines](#).



## SECTION 3: Posting Inclusive Jobs and Accessibility Notices

When posting jobs internally or externally, a retailer must include a statement that, when requested, ensures that accommodations will be made to support applicants living with disabilities during the interview/assessment process. It is recommended that this information be posted in an obvious place on a document, in bold text.

Additionally, this statement could be posted in the career section of a retailer’s webpage or intranet in an accessible format (e.g., Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, (WACG), in which a prospective applicant living with a visual disability can use text-to-speech software to read the posted information.



When a retailer posts internally, it’s important that they communicate to all employees through email, staff meetings, and company newsletters, that accommodations will be made available to applicants living with disabilities should they request them. This ensures that all retail employees are aware of accommodations should they make a request for them while applying, as not all employees will disclose that they have a disability.

Including an accommodation policy in external applications may increase the number of applicants as well as the quality of job-seeking candidates.

### Sample Retail Workplace Accommodation Policies:

#### ::: SAMPLE 1 :::

“Retailer Name encourages applications from people living with disabilities, racialized persons, women, Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Gender Diverse persons, neurodiverse individuals, and others who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas. We will work with applicants selected for the interview/assessment process to accommodate all accessibility needs.”

#### ::: SAMPLE 2 :::

“Company Name is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applications from racialized persons, women, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Gender Diverse persons, neurodiverse individuals, and others who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas. If selected for an interview, please advise our Human Resources team if you require accommodation during the interview/assessment process.”

::: SAMPLE 3 :::

“Name encourages applications from racialized persons, women, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Gender Diverse persons, neurodiverse individuals, and others who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas. Accommodation is a shared responsibility, and we will work with our applicants who let us know of their accommodation needs, as per the Retailer Name Employment Accommodation policy.”

### How to Attract Top Diversity and Inclusion Talent

Current studies show that social media use by companies for hiring is at an all-time high. 92% of companies use social media today for recruiting, while 29% of candidates use social media as their primary tool for job searching.

#### Organizations Offering Employment Support for People Living with Disabilities:

		<p><b>WEBSITES:</b></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Ontario Disability Employment Network</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Discover Ability Network</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Jobs Ability</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>CNIB Foundation</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Canadian Hearing Services</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Ready Willing Able</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Corbrook</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Community Living</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>Epilepsy Ontario</u></a></p>
		<p><a href="#"><u>March of Dimes</u></a></p>



## SECTION 4: Creating an Inclusive Interview Environment

The most important part of the hiring process for retailers is the interview/assessment. After all, the purpose of a job interview is to help determine whether the applicant is qualified for the position for which they are applying, but also whether the individual will be a good fit for the organization. The result should be the hiring of an employee who is going to be a successful, contributing member of the team.

Accommodations are needed not only in the workplace, but also during interviews. Providing the necessary accommodations shows that the retailer is an employer that cares about their employees, and that they support diversity in all forms.

### Notifying Selected Applicants for Interview

Once candidates have been selected from the pool of applicants, retailers must advise them that they're invited for interviews/assessments, and that accommodations are available upon request. It is recommended that the retailer contact candidates to schedule an interview/assessment through email first, as it is a dynamic communication tool that can be read visually and/or through a screen reader (i.e. text-to-speech software).

If applicants have not responded to an email in a reasonable period of time, hiring managers or recruiters should attempt to contact them by phone or letter (if appropriate) to schedule a date and time for the interview/assessment.

While not legally required, it is recommended that retailers provide applicants with a contact person to:

- Receive information about any accommodation requirements.
- Work with the applicant to determine specific accessibility requirements based on the interview/assessment.

If the candidate contacts the retailer, the contact person should prioritize listening to the candidate's accommodation needs. Afterward, they can discuss the interview or assessment agenda with the candidate who may need specific accommodations due to their disability. To maintain a fair process, it's recommended not to disclose specific interview questions. Instead, retailers should provide an overview of the interview structure, covering topics like job description, work history, situational or behavior-based questions, job-related tasks, and so on.

It's extremely helpful to have a checklist available for the contact person. This list can remind them of specific items they need to review with the candidate, whether they have a disability or not. Reviewing specific items with the candidate can help to determine whether they'll require specific accommodations to fully participate in the interview/assessment process.

Guidelines for contacting applicants

1. Thank the applicant for applying and introduce yourself.
2. Determine if they are still interested in the position.
3. Advise applicant of the interview/assessment process and what they can expect.
4. Ask all applicants if they require any accommodations for the interview/assessment.
5. Arrange the meeting time and location.
6. Ensure that the applicant is given appropriate instructions concerning parking, entry, etc.
7. Provide an escort to meet the applicant (if required).
8. Thank the applicant and ask if they have any questions.

If the retailer is advised by an applicant that they require accommodations, they should:

1. Ask the applicant what is required to accommodate them during the interview/assessment.
2. Collaborate with the applicant.
3. Adjust the interview/assessment process accordingly.

Setting Up an Inclusive Interview Environment



**Location of the interview**

Consider whether the applicant living with a disability can access the facility or the meeting room where interviews are normally conducted. Is the location or room accessible to an individual who uses a mobility aid, such as a walker or wheelchair? If not, consider moving the interview to an accessible room or location.



**Room setup for in-person interviews**

Is the interview room set up in an accessible fashion? Individuals with hearing loss may require a brightly lit room to read lips and expressions, or a room that is quiet to minimize distractions and allow complete focus. Make sure there is easy access to washrooms and ensure a scent-free location for the interview.



**Interview timelines**

Assess whether individuals with disabilities can meet the expected timelines during the interview/assessment. For instance, some health conditions may make short, timed interviews stressful for them. To accommodate, consider extending interview durations, spacing out interview rounds, or offering extra time for skills tests. Also, align the assessment process with the job role’s typical duration; for example, if it’s a part-time position, ensure the interview/assessment doesn’t exceed the duration of a regular shift the individual would work.

**Support persons or animals**

Can individuals with disabilities have a support person or support animal present at the interview? For example, someone with a developmental disability may need support from caregivers or family members. Consider letting a support person join the interview to provide extra insights into the candidate's abilities or to ask additional questions. Similar accommodations may be needed for individuals who require service animals.

**Paperwork**

Can the applicant complete necessary paperwork? For instance, someone with vision loss or a learning disability might face challenges with written forms. Consider providing assistance from a staff member to help with form completion.

Keep in mind that the accommodations provided during the interview/assessment may also need to be implemented if/when the successful candidate is working in the workplace.

## Interview Types

While interviewing applicants living with disabilities, a retailer should consider alternate methods for conducting the interview. The applicant may need to have the interview conducted:

- By phone.
- In person: on-site and/or off-site.
- Via video conferencing (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, etc.).

To minimize biases during the interview process, retailers should attempt to standardize the interview process as much as possible by:

- Using scripts to lay out questions, such as a standard interview/assessment guide.
- Tailoring scripts to the organization and the specific job.
- Ensuring a consistent and equitable process interview/assessment process for all applicants.

During the interview/assessment, maintain the following practices:

1. Document responses to interview questions as well as performance assessments.
2. Ensure the applicant's availability of accommodations are communicated.
3. Do not state that the applicant is unfit for the position because of a disability.
4. Demonstrate that all reasonable efforts are made to accommodate an applicant living with a disability during the interview/assessment stages.

## Types of Interview Questions

**Behavioural Questions:** This technique is based on the idea that past behaviour is the best indicator of future behaviour. The more recent a past behaviour is, and the more often it occurred, the more likely it is to indicate future behaviour.

Behavioural interview questions are based on a list of ideal skills and qualities for the position. Usually, the questions identify a desired skill or quality and ask the applicant to describe a time when he or she demonstrated it. Because the questions are open-ended, they require candidates to describe the desired action, skill, or quality as they have demonstrated (and therefore understand) it. As interviewers, retailers should be capable of evaluating whether the candidate's response aligns with their expectations for position compatibility.

### Examples of behavioural questions:

- Describe a time when you had to work as a member of a team. What contributions did you make?
- Think of a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer. Describe the situation and how you handled it.
- Describe an instance in which you turned a customer problem into a positive situation.
- In the past, how have you responded to customers who reply to your greeting with, “Just looking”?

**Fact-Based Questions:** These types of questions are aimed at gathering information about an applicant's education, credentials, employment history, and technical skills. They are useful for screening applicants when looking for very specific qualifications. Fact-based questions can tell organizations about what the candidates' competencies are. However, fact-based interviewing does not indicate the candidate's work ethic or willingness to go above and beyond for the company.

### Examples of fact-based questions:

- What size of sales budget or quantity of staff did you manage?
- What were your key responsibilities in your last position?
- What are some of the problems that you have had to resolve?
- What skills did you acquire during your previous position that you can transfer to this position?

**Opinion-Based/Hypothetical Questions:** These types of questions focus on what an applicant thinks about a topic. Hypothetical questions lead applicants to explain what they think they would do in a specific situation. Hypothetical questions can also be behavioural questions in that they focus on actions and behaviours. These questions are useful for probing into an applicant's possible behaviour. However, they do not reveal how the applicant performs.

### Examples of opinion-based/hypothetical questions:

- What are your strengths?
- What are your areas of opportunity?
- What three words best describe you as an employee?
- What does quality customer service mean to you?

### Tips for Asking Fair and Inclusive Questions

- Use the same question guide for all candidates to ensure fair and accurate comparison.
- Use language that focuses on the individual and not the disability.
- Be patient, respectful and professional. Allow silence or pauses to give applicant time to think.
- Ask only one question at a time. Asking several questions at once is confusing and can make it difficult for the applicant to answer.
- Do not touch their assistive device and/or service animal as this is part of their personal space.
- Provide more time for the interview/assessment (if requested).
- Explain the reason for additional individuals attending an interview.

### For applicants with vision loss:

- Position the interviewer to be in front of the person.
- The interviewer should identify themselves at the start of a conversation.
- Tell them when you are handing something to them.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Do not shout.
- If statements are not understood, rephrase, or ask them to repeat comments.
- Be prepared to read documents not available in Braille.

### For applicants having difficulty communicating:

- Refrain from using technical terms or jargon.
- Be professional and provide time for the applicant to answer.
- Ask the applicant if there is anything you can do to assist in improving communication.
- Interviewers may need to write down key words or use pictures to help communicate messages.
- A person living with a form of intellectual disability may require the interviewer to use short and clear sentences.
- Applicants may request that questions be asked where they can provide a “yes” or “no” response.
- For those that have difficulty writing, a note-taker may be required, or computer-based test-taking methods.
- Interpreters may be required to accompany the applicant to assist with communicating.



## SECTION 5: Closing the Right Candidate

When determining the successful applicant, retailers must make their selections based on the applicant's skills and experience, and not on their disability.

In addition to reducing turnover and training costs, careful selection also helps to get the right person hired. Retailers may need to conduct a second round of interviews before making their final selection. The first round of interviews should have screened out unsuitable candidates. Additional rounds may be needed and should focus on gathering specific information that is directly related to the person's suitability to the position and the company.

**When making this final decision, the following strategies will help determine the best candidate for the position:**

1. Review the notes and interview evaluation forms for each candidate. Try using a scale of 1 to 10 or 1 to 5 to evaluate each candidate's responses in comparison to the job description and to the list of necessary qualifications and qualities. With this numbered rating, it should be easier to select candidates for either the position or for a second interview.
2. Select a short list of the best-suited candidates whose references will be contacted. Contact both work-related references for specific information about a candidate's past work performance and personal references to confirm the candidate's personality, character, and interests.

The purpose of conducting reference checks is to validate what the candidate has shared during the interview process. Specifically, retailers will want to verify information such as the candidate's:

- Past performance, e.g., reliability, sales performance
- Dates of previous employment
- Education, training, and qualifications
- Reason for leaving
- Whether or not the candidate would be rehired



**Caution:** Remember to record and consider the information gathered during reference checks with discretion. Personal and professional references can sometimes be misleading or false and it is up to the interviewer to ask careful questions and to determine the credibility of the source. Avoid basing the final decision entirely on a reference's comments.

### Reference Checks

Consider the following when conducting reference checks:

- Contact a minimum of 3 work-related references that the candidate has supplied.
- Keep questions specific and consistent and record the candidate's answers.
- Try to only contact references that have worked with the candidate within the last five years.
- Approach all reference checks with positive expectations.
- Follow up written references with a telephone call to expand on the details provided.
- Follow up on any negative comments received from one reference with other references. Avoid referring directly to the original comment or its source.
- Contact additional references if information from one employer appears to be biased, exaggerated, or unrealistic.

In Canada, labour legislation restricts the type of information an employer can divulge about previous employees. Retailers should consult their local Canadian Human Rights Commission office for more information about these restrictions.

3. When selecting the most suitable candidate for the position be sure to choose an alternate candidate in case the selected candidate declines the position. Remember that applications of all unsuccessful candidates are required by law and by company policy to stay on file for a certain amount of time.

### Notifying Successful Candidates

When making an offer of employment, let successful applicants know about the retailer's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

In Canada, all new positions are automatically covered by a three-month probationary period during which the employer or the employee can terminate the employment agreement without providing any notice. Retailers cannot choose to extend this probationary period, regardless of any written contract, because this would violate the Canadian Labour Act. By creating a formal offer letter, and ensuring the new employee signs the letter prior to starting work, retailers can prevent any misconceptions about the role, the terms of employment, and the salary, for example. This will establish a basis for any future communications and ensure that the employee and the employer clearly understand each other's expectations.

Here is a sample email or letter that can be used to notify the successful job applicants. This text could also be adapted into a script to contact the applicant by phone. It informs the successful applicant that an accommodation process is in place should it be needed and invites the applicant to begin the process if/as needed.

::: Sample Notification to Successful Applicants :::

Dear **(insert successful applicant name)**,

We are pleased to announce that you have been selected to work for **(company name)** as **(name of the position the company is hiring for)**. This offer is contingent upon the receipt of **(documents that would apply)**. As the **(title of position)**, you will report to **(title of manager)**.

You will be expected to carry out the duties and responsibilities described in the attached job description, which is updated periodically. Your base salary will be **(insert)**, which will be subject to deductions for tax purposes.

We would like you to start your employment on **(insert date)**. Please report to the human resources department where you will be during your onboarding process at **(insert time)**.

PLEASE NOTE: **(Insert company name)** has an accommodation process in place and provides accommodations for employees living with disabilities. If you require a specific accommodation due to a disability or a medical need, please contact **(name and title of appropriate company contact)** at **(insert phone)** or by email **(insert email)** so that accommodations can be made prior to beginning your employment.

Please sign the enclosed copy of this letter and return it to me by **(insert date)** indicating your acceptance of this offer. This offer is valid for five (5) business days.

We look forward to you joining our team and the contributions you will make toward **(insert company)**'s success.

Sincerely,

**(Insert name of authorized person)**

**(Insert position)**

**(Insert company name)**



## SECTION 6: Building an Inclusive Onboarding Experience

Welcoming a new team member to an organization is very important and can help create a positive first impression, set up necessary accommodations, facilitate a sense of belonging, and ultimately help new employees feel more engaged and committed to their new job.

Retailers can create an inclusive onboarding process at multiple levels within the business. Here are some tips to help employees feel welcome right from the start.

- Share any current DEI commitments for the company. If there isn't one in place, invite them to contribute to the development of an organization-wide policy.
- Remind internal teams that inclusivity is everyone's responsibility.
- Provide any frequently used acronym or other vernacular that will allow them to feel like they are speaking the same language.
- Don't rush the onboarding. Allow for time to process all the new learnings and connections.
- Check in with new employees shortly after they start to see how they're adjusting. Follow up regularly for the first 6 weeks that a new employee is on the job.

### Developing an Accommodation Plan

Once a request for accommodation has been received, consult with the employee to provide the most appropriate accessible formats and communication supports for job related information.

Under Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation's Employment Standard, retailers must accommodate employees living with a disability. This legislation does not replace any obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code related to accommodations and non-discrimination.

All retailers of all sizes in Ontario are required to set up their own accommodation process and provide accommodation to employees who require it.

All organizations must develop and write a process for creating documented accommodation plans for employees with disabilities that include the following:

- How an employee participates in the development of their individual accommodation plan.
- How an employee is assessed on an individual basis.
- How a unionized employee can ask for a representative from their bargaining agent.
- How a non-unionized employee can ask for a representative from the workplace to participate in the development of the accommodation plan.
- How assistance can be requested from an outside expert, at the retailer's expense.

- The steps taken to protect the privacy of the employee’s personal information.
- The schedule for when and how the plan will be reviewed and updated.
- How an employee will be provided with an individual accommodation plan that considers their disability accommodation needs.
- How an employee will be advised that their individual accommodation plan has not been accepted.

**::: Sample Accommodation Process Template :::**

**[Insert organization name]** is committed to providing accommodations for people living with disabilities. When an employee living with a disability requests an accommodation, we will follow this process:

**Step 1: Recognize the need for accommodation.**

The need for accommodation can be:

- Requested by an employee through a supervisor or human resources representative.
- Identified by the employee’s manager or the hiring manager.

**Step 2: Gather relevant information and assess needs.**

- Employee is an active participant in this step.
- Employer may ask for a functional capacity assessment at employer’s expense.
- Employee and employer explore a range of specific and universal accommodations to find most appropriate measure (an external expert may be involved).
- If accommodation denied, the reason is provided.

**Step 3: Write a formal, individual accommodation plan.**

Accommodation details are written down in a formal plan, including:

- Accessible formats and communication supports, if requested.
- Workplace emergency response information, if required.
- Any other accommodation that is to be provided.

**Step 4: Implement, monitor, and review the accommodation plan.**

- Employee and manager monitor the accommodation to ensure that it has effectively met the need.
- Formal reviews are conducted at predetermined intervals.
- The accommodation plan is reviewed if the employee’s work location or position changes.
- The accommodation is reviewed if the nature of the employee’s disability changes.

## Accommodation Solutions

Accommodations are tools and strategies that enable employees with disabilities to perform their job tasks effectively. What works for one employee may not be suitable for another, even if their disabilities seem similar. A collaborative dialogue between the employee and employer, will allow both parties to identify and implement the most suitable accommodations.



**It's important to note that not all individuals with disabilities require accommodations to fulfill their job responsibilities, and some may only need a few adjustments.**

Here are some examples of physical modifications in the retail workplace:

- Adjustable point-of-sale screens
- Task-specific lighting or adjustment of lighting levels
- Ergonomic mats
- Adjustable chairs/stools
- Installing ramps and handrails
- Reducing noise levels or installing sound barriers
- Assistive devices such as ear plugs and screen-reading software.

Here are some examples of schedule modifications in the retail workplace:

- Reassigning specific duties to other workers.
- Breaking down large tasks into individually trained components.
- Allowing employees to work less hours per week to accommodate medical appointments.
- Creating flexible hours for scheduled work/split shifts.
- Increasing the number of breaks/micro pauses.
- Holding brief weekly meetings between employees and managers to measure progress.
- Increasing frequency of employee training.
- Increasing preparation time for training and meetings.
- Job sharing and shadowing to increase confidence and transfer of learning.

**SAMPLE WRITTEN ACCOMMODATION PLAN**

**Sample Accommodation Plan Template**

Employee Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Department \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Limitations	Job-Related Tasks/ Activities Affected by Limitations	Is this an essential job requirement?

Sources of expert input into accommodation plan (e.g., HR Manager, family doctor, specialists):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Accommodation measures to be implemented from [start date] \_\_\_\_\_ to [end date] \_\_\_\_\_.

If no end date is expected, the next review of this accommodation plan will occur on [review date] \_\_\_\_\_. (It is recommended that the accommodation measure(s) be reviewed annually, at a minimum.)

**Description of Accommodation Measure(s):**

List job requirements and related tasks that require accommodations	What are the objectives of the accommodation? What must the accommodation do in order to be successful?	What accommodation strategies/tools have been selected to facilitate this task/activity?

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Outstanding Actions to Implement Accommodation	Assigned To	Due Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Manager's Signature

Additional resources for specific disability accommodations strategies:



**Employees who have Vision Loss Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)**



**Employees who are Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing Canadian Hearing Society (CHS)**



**Employees who have Mental Health Disabilities Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**



**Employees who have Learning Disabilities Learning Disability Association of Ontario (LDAO)**



**Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)**

### Improving Business Performance via Inclusive Hiring

When it comes to standing out within today’s hyper-competitive retail industry, brands and store owners are continuously doing everything they can to differentiate their service and offering from those operating around them. To achieve this, many are beginning to place a significant amount of focus on the recruitment and hiring of top talent who can help provide an enhanced experience for their customer and elevate the reputation of their store.

Seeking talent within the under-tapped pool of Canadians living with disabilities allows retailers to not only ensure that they do the right thing by including these individuals within their employee search but can also circumvent current labour market challenges to help fill critical staffing needs.

By creating and maintaining a thorough Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy within their organizations, and continuing to strengthen the culture that helps support it, retailers everywhere have the opportunity to improve the success and profitability of their businesses and to sustain growth and a positive trajectory through the development of inclusive recruitment and hiring practices.

