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Accessibility Plan 2008-2009 Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

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Introduction

Ontario is making progress toward building an accessible province by 2025. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) has laid the foundation to meet this goal. Under the act, Ontario is developing standards that will remove the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

On January 1, 2008, the first accessibility standard under the act came into force. Through the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, people of all abilities will be able to get the service they need. Public sector organizations, including the Ontario government, will need to comply with this standard by 2010. Private sector and non-profit organizations will need to comply by 2012.

Next year, more standards will be released in other important areas, including:

- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Employment
- The built environment.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' (ministry) sixth annual accessibility plan highlights 2007-08's achievements to break down barriers for people with disabilities. It also outlines this ministry's commitments in the coming year to make programs, policies and services more accessible for all Ontarians.

The ministry is committed to improving accessibility through identifying, removing and preventing barriers, working together within our ministry, across government and in our relationships with our stakeholders.

The ministry continues to work to better promote accessibility for both citizens and its employees, including more accessible Internet and Intranet sites and a streamlined site for recruitment advertising. The need for ergonomically sound work areas and provision for employees requiring accommodation has been a key focus. The ministry has also promoted new training modules to help front line employees welcome customers with disabilities who come to our locations for services.

This accessibility plan is unique, because it reflects our transition between the AODA and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). The ODA applies to the Ontario government and all broader public sector organizations. Under this act, the ministry develops annual accessibility plans to make its policies, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities.

Through the ODA, accessibility planning has laid a strong foundation for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to build on. This ministry will continue to help make Ontario more accessible for people with disabilities and a more inclusive society for all Ontarians.

[An executive summary of all Government of Ontario Ministry Accessibility Plans is available.](#)

Report on Status of Customer Service Requirements

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (New) Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities. Include a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about your feedback process readily available to the public.

Planned Action: The ministry will establish an accessible customer service policy, as well as associated practices and procedures, in accordance with the requirements of the new accessible customer service standards. The policy will identify a process for feedback and the promotion of that process to the public.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - March 2010

Results achieved: A ministry committee is in place to review the new OPS Service Directive and will work with the Accessibility Planning Working Group to ensure that barriers to accessibility are reflected in the implementation of the Directive.

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (Ongoing) Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public, or other third parties, on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

Planned Action(s):

The ministry will develop a strategy to ensure that organizations that provide services on behalf of the ministry are aware of the requirements of the accessible customer service standards and are provided with information about how to meet these standards.

The ministry will encourage employees to complete the "May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" e-learning course.

The ministry will maintain and update the ministry's intranet website to inform staff about the ODA, the AODA and accessibility.

The ministry will consider accessibility when planning events and conferences.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - March 2010

Results Achieved:

The "May I Help You?" e-learning course is highlighted in the "Accessibility Planning" section on the ministry's intranet site. The launch of the e-learning course was communicated to all OPS managers and staff in December 2007.

A guideline has been developed to promote accessibility in procurement. The guideline is used when acquiring goods or services from third party vendors.

Planning for a number of events including the Premier's Summit (an annual meeting with stakeholders in the agri-food sector) and the Outlook Conference (a biennial international forum hosted by the ministry on innovation in Ontario's agri-food sector) was undertaken using the guideline developed for use in planning accessible events.

The ministry has adopted a plain language format for its publications and is moving to make changes as publications are revised or new publications produced.

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (New) Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality and opportunity.

Planned Action: The ministry will ensure that the Accessibility Planning Working Group, and other committees or focus groups which may be formed in support of accessibility planning to achieve compliance with the customer service standard, will include representation from persons with disabilities, to ensure that unique needs are taken into account in the development of policies, practices and procedures.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - March 2010

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (New) Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods, use your services and any other measures your organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access your goods and use your services.

Planned Action: The ministry will review current practices and

ensure that a policy is in place which addresses the specific needs of persons who use assistive devices.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - March 2010

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (New) Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

Planned Action: The ministry will review current practices and identify specific measures to address the need for support persons on ministry public premises, including any appropriate notice regarding admission fees.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - March 2010

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (New) Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.

Planned Action: The ministry will review current practices and identify specific measures to address the need for a guide dog or service animal on ministry premises.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - March 2010

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: (New) Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

Planned Action: The ministry will review current practices and identify specific measures to address the need to provide notice regarding the temporary disruption of services.

Report on Other Accessibility Commitments

Accessibility Improvement Initiatives to Identify, Remove or Prevent Barriers in Preparation for AODA Standards Currently Under Development.

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Focus Area: The Built Environment

Commitment: New

Planned Action: Adopt ergonomic standards for employee workstations at ministry head office location.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - December 2008

Results Achieved: Layouts for new workstations were designed in accordance with OPS Barrier Free Design Guidelines and reflect current industry standards for ergonomic design.

As part of the project, a process was developed whereby employees complete an ergonomic self assessment to identify concerns with their new workstations. Issues that were not resolved through minor self adjustments were referred to an ergonomic specialist who conducted a thorough assessment to determine requirements. Approximately 75 ergonomic assessments have been referred to the specialist.

The supplier of the office equipment offers a line of ergonomic accessories including adjustable keyboard arms, visual display tools, footrests and laptop stands that can easily be incorporated into the workstation to meet individual needs.

Focus Area: The Built Environment

Commitment: Ongoing

Planned Action: Participation on advisory committee to the Built Environment Standards Development Committee

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - December 2009

Results Achieved: In support of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the ministry is participating on an inter-ministry advisory committee designed to provide input to the Accessible Built Environment Standards Development Committee. The committees continue to meet and task forces are being developed in an effort to prepare for public review of the new standard.

When the new standard is in place, the ministry will work with the Ontario Realty Corporation and our stakeholders to determine what modifications or improvements are needed to meet the requirements of the new standard and to be a role model to our private sector partners.

Focus Area: The Built Environment

Commitment: Completed

Planned Action: Infrastructure projects at agricultural colleges

Results Achieved: The work in previous accessibility plans for agricultural colleges at Ridgetown and Kemptville has been completed. At Ridgetown an elevator and barrier free washrooms were constructed at the main administration building. At Kemptville, an elevator was installed to all floors of Parrish Hall and a chair lift was upgraded and put in service in Fraser Hall. The total costs for these projects were \$675,000.

Focus Area: Employment

Commitment: New

Planned Action: The ministry will inform managers and supervisors about a new guide called: "From Disabilities to Possibilities: A Guide to Hiring, Training and Retaining People with Disabilities". The information will also be made available on the ministry's intranet site.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2008 - December 2009

Focus Area: Employment

Commitment: Completed

Planned Action: The following Emergency Management activities were undertaken to accommodate employees with a disability:

- Evacuation information for special needs was included in the Emergency Handbook for employees.
- Buddy system information was included in the delivery of awareness sessions and new manager training.
- The ministry's Emergency Operations Centre was designed to accommodate special needs, including elevator access; double entry doors; work stations which are mobile and well spaced; and large screen monitors, display technologies.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2007 - December 2008

Focus Area: Employment

Commitment: Ongoing

Planned Action: The ministry will inform managers with regard to the need to accommodate persons with disabilities in the recruitment process as part of planned recruitment awareness training.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - December 2009

Focus Area: Information and Communications

Commitment: Ongoing

Planned Action: Advances will be made in the adoption of barrier free technology for the ministry's Internet and / or Intranet sites.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - December 2009

Results Achieved:

On April 16th, 2008, the [OMAFRA Internet site](#) was refreshed. The site now has improved navigation features and enhanced performance for accessibility. Printed pages are also formatted for easier reading. Further improvements are expected when we move to a content management system in future.

A newly designed Foodland Ontario website improved its accessibility. It launched October 2008.

Our Intranet website "Charlotte" was re-launched in September 2008. Extensive work to the design, functionality and coding makes it accessible to staff in a wide range of situations.

For More Information

Questions or comments about the ministry's accessibility plan are always welcome.

Please phone: 519-826-3135

General inquiry number: 519-826-3100

TTY number: 519-826-7402

1-800 number: 1-888-466-2372

E-mail: accessibility.omafra@ontario.ca

[Ministry website](#)

Visit the [Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web portal](#). The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

Alternate formats of this document are available free upon request from:

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