



[News](#)

[Agriculture](#)

[Food](#)

[Rural](#)

[Products](#)

[Contact Us](#)



[Advanced Search](#)

In This Section

- [Accessibility Plans](#)
- [2008-2009](#)
- [2007-2008](#)
- [2006-2007](#)
- [2005-2006](#)
- [2004-2005](#)
- [2003-2004](#)
- [Accessibility Ontario web portal](#)

Topics

- [Agriculture](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Rural](#)
- [Research & Innovation](#)
- [Food Safety](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Programs & Resources](#)
- [Agencies, Boards & Commissions](#)
- [What's New](#)

Accessibility Plan 2009-2010 Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Table of Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Report on Status of Customer Service Requirements](#)
- [Report on Commitments](#)
- [Accessibility Improvement Initiatives to Identify, Remove or Prevent Barriers in Preparation for AODA standards currently under development](#)
- [For More Information](#)

Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 sets out the roadmap to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Under this act, accessibility standards are being developed and implemented to break down barriers in key areas of everyday life.

These standards will increase accessibility for people with disabilities in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment.

The Government of Ontario is preparing to lead the way towards an accessible province, beginning in January 2010 when the first standard - for customer service - comes into force.

Each year, the government sets the course to prevent, identify and remove barriers through annual accessibility plans required under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

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.

Building on last year's plan, the 2009-10 accessibility plans will continue moving the Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) towards the goal of an accessible province for all Ontarians.

An executive summary of all Government of Ontario Ministry Accessibility Plans is available at: http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/ministry/accessibilityPlans/ministries_accplans10.htm.

Report on Status of Customer Service Requirements

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008. All OPS ministries must comply with the Regulation by January 1, 2010.

OMAFRA is committed to a barrier-free and accessible workplace, where every employee and customer is treated fairly, equitably and with dignity. Accessibility is important so that our

stakeholders are able to access the Ministry services that they require, and it is vital so that our employees with disabilities can reach their full potential.

OMAFRA has built on its commitments as outlined in previous ODA plans in order to fully comply with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O. Reg 429/07), as outlined below:

Focus Area:

Does the organization have policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Improve services for people with disabilities.

Planned Action:The ministry undertook in its 2008-2009 ODA plan to 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 2008 - October 2009

Results achieved: The commitment has been fully achieved. OMAFRA worked closely with the OPS Diversity Office at the Ministry of Government Services (MGS) to implement initiatives in order to bring OMAFRA into compliance with all requirements of the Customer Service Standard by January 1, 2010. This included working with the ministry committee established to review the OPS Service Directive, in order to ensure adoption of the OPS Customer Service Policy for the provision of services to people with disabilities. OMAFRA also reviewed its policies, practices and procedures for provision of services to external stakeholders to ensure compliance with the Customer Service Policy. The ministry provided training to all staff and management about the policy, as part of its training strategy.

Focus Area:

Does the organization's policies address the use of assistive devices?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) OMAFRA undertook in its 2008-2009 ODA plan to introduce a policy allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access its goods and services.

Planned Action: Adopt the OPS Customer Service Policy and review existing policies, practices and procedures reviewed to ensure compliance.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. By adopting the OPS Customer Service Policy and reviewing its existing policies, practices and procedures, OMAFRA has established a policy enabling people with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access ministry goods and services. In addition, the ministry provided training to all its staff and management regarding its available assistive devices, including its TTY services.

Focus Area:

Does the organization's policies, practices and procedures require the organization to take a person's disability into account when communicating with the person?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Implement OPS Customer Service Policy.

Planned Action: Adopt the OPS Customer Service Policy and review the existing policies, practices and procedures reviewed to ensure compliance. Provide awareness training to OMAFRA staff and management.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. The OPS Customer Service Policy was adopted and existing policies, practices and procedures were reviewed to ensure compliance. All OMAFRA staff and management were provided May I Help You? training (modules 1 & 2) and OMAFRA-specific training, increasing awareness about how to best serve people with disabilities.

Focus Area:

Does the organization permit people with disabilities to keep their service animal with them on the parts of your premises that are open to the public or other third parties, except where the animal is excluded by law, and is this included in policies practices and procedures?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises owned or operated by the ministry 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 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. By adopting the OPS Customer Service Policy, OMAFRA has established a policy enabling people with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal in those areas of the premises that are open to the public, unless excluded by another law. And, if excluded by another law, other measures will be used to provide services to the person with disabilities.

Focus Area:

Does the organization permit people with disabilities to enter parts of the premises that are open to the public or other third parties with their support person, and provide notice of any fee charged for the support person or waive the fee, and is this included in policies, practices and procedures?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) 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, or waive the fee.

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 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. By adopting the OPS Customer Service Policy, OMAFRA has established a policy enabling people with disabilities to be

accompanied by a support person. Where admission fees are charged, the fees will be waived, per the OPS Customer Service Policy.

Focus Area:

Does the organization post a notice in a conspicuous place on the premises, website, or by another reasonable method, of any temporary disruption in facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access goods or services, including the reason, duration, and any alternatives available?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) 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: Utilize current processes for managing service disruptions and the recommended Service Disruption Notice Protocol.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. OMAFRA has worked within existing building management committees and practices to implement the recommended Service Disruption Protocol as developed by the OPS Diversity Office.

Focus Area:

Has the organization established and documented a process to receive and respond to feedback on how its goods or services are provided to people with disabilities, including actions that the organization will take when a complaint is received?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Implement processes for enabling feedback.

Planned Action: Utilize current processes for obtaining feedback from external ministry stakeholders.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. By utilizing existing feedback channels through the Correspondence Unit and Client Services Branch, stakeholders with disabilities are able to provide feedback about ministry services by telephone, fax, e-mail, letter and in person.

Focus Area:

Does the organization make information about its feedback process readily available to the public, including how feedback may be provided?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Implement process for enabling feedback, and post a statement describing the feedback on the ministry website.

Planned Action: Utilize current processes for obtaining feedback from external ministry stakeholders, and post a statement outlining the feedback channels on the ministry's website.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. By utilizing existing feedback channels through the Correspondence Unit and Client Services Branch, stakeholders with disabilities are able to provide feedback about ministry services by telephone, fax, e-mail, letter and in person.

A statement outlining the channels available to provide feedback is posted on OMAFRA's public website.

Focus Area:

Does the organization ensure that every person who deals with the public or other third parties on behalf of the organization and every person who participates in developing the organization's policies, practices and procedures receive training about providing goods and services to people with disabilities?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Implement a training strategy.

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 ensure required employees complete the "May I Help You?" training (modules 1 & 2) and the OMAFRA-specific training.

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

The ministry will consider accessibility when planning events and conferences, meeting its commitments as stated in the OPS Customer Service Policy.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: OMAFRA has exceeded the requirements of the Customer Service Standard by training all staff and management. Its training strategy also includes processes for ensuring new staff and management are trained. A comprehensive series of intranet pages was created to increase awareness of the ODA and AODA, a series of events was undertaken to improve broad accessibility awareness, OMAFRA has provided information to staff and management about planning accessible events, and training has been provided on the OPS Customer Service Policy. The commitment was fully achieved.

Focus Area:

Does this training include the organization's policies, practices and procedures required under the Customer Service Standard and all the topics listed in section 6(2) or the standard?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Implement training strategy.

Planned Action: Implement a strategy including required May I Help You? training (modules 1 & 2) and OMAFRA-specific training to ensure compliance.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. Part three of the training, the OMAFRA-specific training, includes a review of the policies for providing services to people with disabilities, and to complete the training staff are required to read the OPS Customer Service Policy.

Focus Area:

Does the organization have a written training policy that includes a summary of the contents of the training and details when training is to be provided, and does the organization keep records of the dates that training was provided and how many people were trained?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Implement training strategy.

Planned Action: Develop and implement a training strategy outlining when training is provided, and maintain records.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. OMAFRA has a training policy that outlines the contents of the training, the multiple options for receiving the training, and the methods for tracking the completion of training.

Focus Area:

Does the organization post a notice in a conspicuous place on its premises, website, or by another reasonable method, that the documents required by the Customer Service Standard are available upon request, and are these documents provided in a format that takes a person's disability into account?

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Post required documents.

Planned Action: Work with the OPS Diversity Office to post the required documents.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved. OMAFRA has provided a link to the required documents on the accessibility page it has created on its public website. Links to this information are provided on its staff intranet site to provide easy access to the information.

Report on Other Accessibility Commitments

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

In the near future, the OPS will be obligated to comply with four new standards in the areas of transportation, information and communication, employment and the built environment. This section identifies the status of ODA planning on readiness and preparation for these new standards currently under development.

Focus Area: Built Environment

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Improve ergonomic standards in employee workstations.

Planned Action: Adopt ergonomic standards for employee workstations at OMAFRA's Guelph head office location.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was fully achieved through completion of OMAFRA's Furniture Refresh project. 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. 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: Built Environment

Impact: Regulation

Commitment: (Completed) Provide comment to the AODA Built Environment Standard.

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

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was achieved, as the ministry was an active participant on an inter-ministry advisory committee designed to provide input to the Accessible Built Environment Standards Development Committee. When the new standard is enacted, 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: Built Environment

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Improve infrastructure at Grenville Street office

Planned Action: Improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was achieved, as OMAFRA improved accessibility to its Grenville Street office by adding three accessible doors to the 11th floor offices. The total cost for this infrastructure improvement was \$28,000.

Focus Area: The Built Environment

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Completed) Improve infrastructure at OMAFRA's Elora office

Planned Action: Improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - October 2009

Results Achieved: This commitment was achieved, as OMAFRA improved accessibility to its field office by including three accessible doors and a ramp in the construction of its Elora regional office. The total cost for this infrastructure improvement was \$17,000.

Focus Area: Built Environment

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Ongoing) Identify physical barriers to improve infrastructure at OMAFRA's offices.

Planned Action: Improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - March 2011

Results Achieved: As part of a review of OMAFRA's existing policies, practices and procedures, program managers are identifying barriers for providing services to people with disabilities. This will include an identification of physical barriers in OMAFRA's offices. OMAFRA also introduced an electronic suggestion box on the accessibility pages on its intranet site to encourage staff to identify barriers to accessibility. In addition, as part of awareness-building among its staff and management, OMAFRA conducted a day-using-a-wheelchair event, after which barriers identified by participants were shared with the facilities management of OMAFRA's Guelph head office.

Focus Area: Employment

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Ongoing) Improve emergency evacuation procedures for people with disabilities

Planned Action: Undertake Emergency Management activities to accommodate employees with disabilities

Implementation Timeframe: September 2008 - March 2011

Results Achieved: Information for people with disabilities was incorporated in the Emergency Handbook for employees. Training was provided to management and staff regarding assisting people with disabilities in an emergency situation, including the establishment of a buddy system. Information about providing assistance to people with disabilities in the event of an emergency was also incorporated into the AODA OMAFRA-specific training that has been provided to all staff and management. Continued awareness activities will be provided over the coming years.

Focus Area: Employment

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Ongoing) Include people with disabilities in the recruitment process.

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 - March 2011

Results Achieved: OMAFRA is committed to a barrier-free and accessible workplace where every employee and customer is treated fairly, equitably and with dignity. Accessibility is important so that our employees with disabilities can reach their full potential. Through the ongoing development and implementation of the ministry's diversity strategy, of which accessibility is a key pillar, the ministry is developing a strategy that will provide managers with the tools they require to ensure people with disabilities are accommodated through the recruitment process and are provided the resources they require within the work environment.

Focus Area: Information and Communications

Impact: Service

Commitment: (Ongoing) Improve services for people with disabilities on the ministry's public website and internal Intranet site.

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 - March 2011

Results Achieved: OMAFRA introduced a new Intranet site in 2008, providing improved navigation features and enhanced performance for people with disabilities. Printed pages are also formatted for easier reading. A comprehensive series of accessibility pages was introduced on the Intranet site. On its public website, a newly designed Foodland Ontario website providing improved accessibility for people with disabilities was launched in October 2008. An accessibility page outlining ministry services for people with disabilities was launched in the fall of 2009, bringing the ministry into compliance with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard. And the ministry will continue to make ongoing improvements to the accessibility of its web content.

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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