



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS



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Accessibility Plan 2010-2011 Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

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Introduction

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) 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. In 2010 the government of Ontario was the first public service organization to report compliance with the first standard - Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) continue to guide us as new standards are introduced under the AODA.

Through annual accessibility plans required under the ODA, the government sets the course to prevent, identify and remove barriers to persons with disabilities.

Building on last year's plan, the 2010-11 accessibility plan will continue to move the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) toward the goal of an accessible province for all Ontarians.

To view other ministries' Accessibility Plans please visit: Ontario.ca.

Report on Accessibility Achievements for 2009-2010

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) is working to achieve an accessible and barrier-free province by 2025.

An accessible OPS is a better place to work, to do business, and to receive services. Accessibility is a core pillar of diversity and a key value of the OPS Diversity Strategy.

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 and information that they require, and it is vital so that our employees with disabilities can reach their full potential.

The ministry has an overall Accessibility Leadership Strategy that incorporates not only the current AODA and ODA requirements, but also looks ahead to implementation of future standards under the AODA and takes a proactive approach in aiding our stakeholders with their compliance requirements under the standards.

This section demonstrates how OMAFRA has contributed toward achieving an accessible and barrier free province by 2025 with a focus on the categories outlined below:

- Sustainability of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation, (O. Reg. 429/07);
- Removal of barriers in the areas of Information and Communications, Employment and Built Environment in anticipation of future regulations under the AODA and;
- OMAFRA's Accessibility Awareness Plan.

Focus Area: Customer Service - Sustainability of Training Requirements

Achievements:

Having achieved 100% of staff trained by January 2010, OMAFRA continues to show leadership in the area of training on the provision of accessible customer service as required under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation.

- All new staff and management are required to complete training within three months of hire;
- Orientation documents have been modified to inform new staff and management of the requirement to complete "May I Help You?" modules 1 and 2 as well as OMAFRA-specific accessibility training.
- Various alternate formats are available to complete training including in- person sessions, on-line through our intranet site and by CD or hard copy. Enhancements were made to the accessibility pages on the ministry's internal website that build in efficiencies for self-serve on-line training and provide additional resources and links to assist staff in meeting the needs of people with disabilities;
- Training is recorded and tracked quarterly through a combination of reports. The performance target is to maintain a rate of 90% or more staff trained at all times.

Focus Area: Customer Service - Agencies

Achievements:

Compliance assistance was provided for OMAFRA agencies named under Schedule 1 of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation.

- OMAFRA facilitated a community of practice, a forum for exchanging ideas and providing information and advice, for its five named agencies in support of their implementation requirements by January 1, 2010.
- The five named agencies reported no issues with meeting their requirements and submitted their compliance reports directly to the Accessibility Directorate of

Ontario (ADO) as required.

Focus Area: Customer Service - Inclusion Lens (formerly Diversity Lens)

Achievements:

In addition to a review of all ministry services as part of the OPS Service Directive implementation and making accessibility part of the core approach to quality and timely public service, OMAFRA piloted the Diversity Lens (now the Inclusion Lens) in five of its business areas in 2009-10.

- This analytical tool was applied with an objective to identify and mitigate potential and/or existing barriers in the development or review of policies, programs and services.
- The tool contained specific questions and considerations about diversity, accessibility and inclusion that could be integrated into existing planning cycles related to areas such as policy development, project management, financial reporting and communications.

Focus Area: Information and Communications

Achievements:

- OMAFRA uses the Ontario government's web accessibility guidelines and web standards checklist which includes standards for accessibility and continues to improve the accessibility of web images, documents and videos and increase awareness amongst ministry staff of the requirements around accessible web resources including tables and forms.
- OMAFRA continues to follow the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to ensure a high level of accessibility exists for our stakeholders. The W3C is an international community where Member organizations and the public work together to develop Web standards.
- Information about how to respond to requests for alternate formats was highlighted in a September orientation session for key staff.
- OMAFRA now uses the principles of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's (CNIB) clear print accessibility guidelines wherever possible. Various vendors/designers are also made aware of the guidelines.

Focus Area: Employment - Barrier-free Recruitment Practices

Achievements:

OMAFRA hiring managers work with Recruitment Consultants to have all job ads reviewed to ensure there are no arbitrary barriers to accessibility.

- As part of the hiring process, the ministry alerts the public that accommodation for persons with disabilities is available on request. This statement is included directly on each job ad. Hiring managers also provide accommodations to all applicants with accessibility needs, upon request, at any point throughout the entire hiring process.
- A Barrier Free Recruitment panel discussion took place at the September Joint Executive Forum. This session, attended by OMAFRA managers and senior executives served to increase awareness around the potential for accessibility requests during the hiring process and information on how to ensure such requests are met. The panel included experts from the OPS Diversity Office, Enterprise Recruitment Branch, Regional Recruitment Centre and the Regional Service Delivery Centre.

Focus Area: Employment - Emergency Management Practices

Achievements:

Accessibility considerations were embedded into emergency evacuation procedures.

- OMAFRA's emergency evacuation staff received training in May 2010 which included how to provide assistance to visitors and staff with disabilities in an emergency evacuation through the establishment of a buddy system. Alternatives to the buddy

system are also covered as second and third options as the situation may warrant.

- The procedure for evacuation was tested during a fire drill in June 2010 that included staff with disabilities. Results of the drill indicate a timely and successful evacuation.
- New manager orientation covers accessibility and staff evacuation.

Focus Area: Built Environment

Achievements:

- An accessible and ergonomic office layout was incorporated into the design of OMAFRA's newly constructed office in Downsview. All workstations and kitchenettes will be designed in accordance with the OPS Barrier Free Design Guidelines and reflect current industry standards for ergonomic design.
- Accessibility improvements also included the installation of two additional automated door openers to washrooms in the ministry's Guelph location.

Focus Area: Other - Accessible Procurement Practices

Achievements:

- For all purchases over \$4,999, the ministry requires documentation from ministry staff showing that accessibility considerations as per the ODA were taken into account. This requirement serves as a constant reminder to all staff of the need to take accessibility considerations into account when making purchases and equally to develop barrier free requests for proposal so as not to disadvantage anyone from applying to bid.
- Tools and information have been made available to staff to assist in the completion of procurement documentation; for example, a direct link is available to the ODA Procurement Requirements Checklist maintained by OPS Supply Chain Management through the ministry web site.
- Communications were sent to organizations who provide services on behalf of the ministry reminding them of their responsibilities under the AODA.

Focus Area: Other - OMAFRA Accessibility Awareness Plan

Achievements:

- An Accessibility Awareness Plan was developed outlining the delivery of outreach and education activities that aim to increase accessibility awareness amongst staff, agencies and stakeholders.
- Accessibility was embedded in OMAFRA's Emergency Preparedness Week activities in May 2010. Through various activities, staff were reminded to consider people with disabilities in an emergency situation and, if they were someone who required assistance in an emergency, to inform their manager to ensure proper arrangements are in place.
- The 2nd annual Southwest Accessibility Expo was hosted in Guelph in July 2010. OMAFRA adopted the OPS theme of "Minds Matter" developed by the Diversity Office to increase awareness about mental health disabilities and the various supports available. As part of this event, various private and public sector organizations participated with displays, wellness tools and literature. A workshop was also conducted by the Canadian Mental Health Association on Mental Health in the Workplace.
- To increase awareness among our external stakeholders, tip-sheets were created on how to host accessible outdoor events and shared with our Agriculture and Horticulture Societies during their annual conferences in 2010.
- In October 2010, OMAFRA hosted a lunch-hour screening of a short film that brings awareness to the topic of depression. A fundraiser arranged by Agricornp, an agency of OMAFRA, was also held as part of the day's events and all proceeds were donated to the United Way.

Report on Accessible Customer Service Requirements

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation came into force on January 1, 2008. All OPS ministries were required to comply with the Regulation by January 1,

2010.

The OPS was the first public organization to file their compliance report with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario in January 2010.

OMAFRA has taken a leadership role in adopting the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). OMAFRA was the first ministry to comply with the requirements of the Regulation, well in advance of the January 1, 2010 deadline. The ministry has also undertaken to train all of its staff and management, not only frontline service providers as required by AODA.

To sustain compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation, OMAFRA continues to look for opportunities to embed accessibility in all areas of planning, programs and policies.

Focus Area: Customer Service - Stakeholder compliance

Commitment: New and Ongoing

OMAFRA will inform external stakeholders of their requirement to comply with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation.

Planned Action(s):

OMAFRA stakeholders will be made aware of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation. The general communications will aim to raise awareness and understanding of the regulation and provide information on the resources available through the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) to assisting them with their implementation requirements by January 1, 2012.

Implementation Timeframe: October 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Accessible Customer Service Policy

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA has policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):

OMAFRA has adopted and maintains the OPS Accessible Customer Service (ACS) Policy for the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities. The policy speaks to the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity and describes how OMAFRA meets the requirements of the Accessible Customer Service standards as set out in Ontario Regulation 429/07.

The ministry continues to provide on-going, mandatory training on the OPS ACS policy to all new staff and management with a requirement to complete within three months of their hire date.

OMAFRA will encourage staff to take on-line training to understand how to apply the concepts of the new Inclusion Lens, a methodology recently launched by the OPS Diversity Office to ensure the principles of accessibility are consistently applied in the development of any new initiatives and in reviewing existing human resources and general business-related policies, programs or services.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Assistive Devices

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA maintains its policy for allowing persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to access our goods and services.

Planned Action(s):

The ministry continues to provide on-going mandatory training to all new staff and management on how to best enable persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Communicating with Persons with Disabilities

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA policies, practices and procedures take a person's disability into account when communicating with a person with a disability.

Planned Action(s):

The ministry continues to provide on-going mandatory training to all new staff and management that includes accessibility awareness training on how to best serve people with disabilities.

OMAFRA will apply the concepts of the Inclusion Lens in the development of any new initiatives and in reviewing existing human resources and general business-related policies, programs or services.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Service Animals

Commitment: Ongoing

Planned Action(s):

The ministry continues to provide on-going mandatory training to all new staff and management that includes OMAFRA's policy on permitting people with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal.

Where a service animal is excluded by another law, other measures to provide services to the person with the disability are readily available.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Support Persons

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA policies, practices and procedures enable 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.

Planned Action(s):

The ministry continues to provide on-going mandatory training to all new staff and management that includes OMAFRA's policy enabling people with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person.

OMAFRA policy dictates that where admission fees are charged, the fees will be waived for the support person.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA policies, practices and procedures dictate that notice is provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on are temporarily disrupted.

Planned Action(s):

OMAFRA will continue to utilize current processes for managing service disruptions and follow the recommended Service Disruption Protocol as developed by the OPS Diversity Office.

Notices will be posted in a timely manner and identify any alternatives available throughout the disruption.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Feedback and Response Mechanism

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA welcomes feedback about its services for people with disabilities. The ministry uses existing, well established feedback channels and methods to enable people with disabilities to provide feedback by telephone, in writing (via letter or fax), via email, on-line, on disk or by any other method including in-person at any OMAFRA office that is open to the public.

Planned Action(s):

OMAFRA will continue to review and ensure that feedback on accessibility related matters informs continuous improvement to the way the ministry conducts its business.

All feedback will be collected, reviewed and analysed to identify trends and potential gaps to ensure appropriate action was taken.

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

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Customer Service - Staff Training

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA will ensure that all staff receive training on the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):

- OMAFRA will continue to show leadership in the area of training by requiring all new staff and management who join the ministry to complete training on the provision of accessible customer service within three months of hire.
- Orientation for new staff and management will continue to include information about the requirement to complete "May I Help You?" training modules 1 and 2 as well as OMAFRA-specific training on providing services to persons with disabilities.
- OMAFRA-specific training will continue to include a review of the policies for providing services to people with disabilities. To complete the training staff are required to read the OPS ACS policy adopted by OMAFRA.
- This training will be provided on an on-going basis and is available in various formats such as in-person sessions, on-line through our internal website and by CD or hard copy.
- The status of staff training will continue to be monitored and tracked quarterly to ensure a minimum of 90% of staff are fully trained at all times across the ministry.
- OMAFRA will continue to promote the use of the Inclusion Lens as part of its Accessibility Awareness Plan to help staff identify and mitigate any potential barriers to persons with disabilities in the development of new initiatives, policies, practices or procedures.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Customer Service - Format of Documents

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA will ensure that notice is posted publicly to indicate that any and all documents required by the Accessible Customer Service (ACS) standards are available upon request and in alternate formats.

Planned Action(s):

OMAFRA policies, practices and procedures will continue to dictate that alternate formats of documents can be obtained through a request using our many existing feedback channels. A statement outlining the channels available will remain posted on OMAFRA's public website.

The document will be provided in a timely manner and in a format that takes the persons disability into account.

The ACS policy continues to be available in all ministry locations and is posted electronically on the ministry's internal and external websites.

OMAFRA policy will ensure a link to ODA plans is maintained on the accessibility page of its external website.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 - December 2011

Information and Communication Commitments

Information and the methods of communication are key to delivering many government programs and services to the public. It is essential that we provide the same quality and service to everyone in the province.

In anticipation of the pending standards guiding Information and Communications, the government of Ontario is continuously looking for opportunities to prevent and remove barriers to person with disabilities when creating, procuring, conveying, receiving or distributing information and communications to the public.

OMAFRA has launched a readiness initiative in anticipation of the AODA compliance timelines for the Information and Communications Standard. In addition, the ministry will continue to exhibit leadership in its commitment to accessibility and will continue to identify opportunities to ensure accessibility in Information and Communications.

Focus Area: Information and Communication - Accessible Websites and Content

Commitment: New and Ongoing

OMAFRA is implementing enhanced accessibility features through the planned launch of the Online Design Program (ODP) by January 1st, 2011, the common look and feel for all Ontario ministry websites as directed by Cabinet Office Communications.

Planned Action(s):

To better enable improvements in the accessibility of OMAFRA's web-based resources, future training around requirements for the development of accessible web-based resources will be focused on the subject matter experts tasked with the development of such resources in addition to web development staff.

Implementation Timeframe: October 2010 - May 2011

Focus Area: Information and Communication - Creating Alternate Formats

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA policy will require staff to incorporate accessibility considerations into the preparation of communication materials to ensure that communication products are accessible to everyone.

Planned Action(s):

As part of OMAFRA's accessibility awareness plan, the ministry will encourage all staff to take the training prepared by the Diversity Office which provides instruction on creating accessible documents (i.e. Microsoft word and PDF) and how to create braille ready documents to increase knowledge in the production of literature in different formats. OMAFRA will continue to communicate best practices when sending PDF documents and emails to ensure a greater level of accessibility.

Implementation Timeframe: October 2010 - December 2011

Other Accessibility Commitments

Accessibility Improvement Initiatives to Identify, Remove or Prevent Barriers in preparation for AODA standards currently under development.

In anticipation of the upcoming standards the Government of Ontario has planned several corporate initiatives in the following areas, Transportation, Employment, Built Environment and others. The goal of these focus areas is to make it easier for people with disabilities to travel in Ontario, ensure accessibility for people with disabilities across all stages of the employment life cycle and break down barriers in buildings. Many of the corporate initiatives identified for 2010-2011 aim to support ministries in their journey towards compliance with the upcoming standards.

To review a list of corporate initiatives please refer to the Ministry of Government Services 2010-2011 Accessibility Plan.

OMAFRA together with the OPS Diversity Office will continue to exhibit leadership in its commitment to accessibility and will continue to explore and proactively identify areas from across the ministry's operations which can be improved to be more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Focus Area: Employment - Barrier-free Recruitment Practices

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will continue to ensure there are no potential barriers in employment policies, processes, practices or tools for people with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):

- Interview questions and assignments will be reviewed with the Recruitment Centres to remove barriers and ensure the use of plain language.
- Job ads will be shared with employment networks that assist persons with disabilities in their job search.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010 -December 2011

Focus Area: Employment - Emergency Management Practices

Commitment: Ongoing

Emergency procedures for persons with disabilities will continue to be communicated to staff as part of the ministry's accessibility awareness plan.

Planned Action(s):

- Annual emergency evacuation training including training on evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities will be provided to designated staff.
- The effectiveness of our evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities will be tested annually through simulations that directly involve persons with disabilities.

Implementation Timeframe: December 2010-December 2011

Focus Area: Other - Accessibility Awareness

Commitment: Ongoing

Through the on-going implementation of OMAFRA's accessibility awareness plan, the ministry will continue to provide educational and outreach events that will assist the ministry in meeting its regulatory requirements and improve accessibility awareness among ministry staff, agencies and stakeholders.

Planned Action(s):

- Train staff on the production of literature in different formats in anticipation of the Information and Communications standard.
- Provide on-going training sessions for new ministry staff on the provision of accessible customer service.
- Promote the use of the Inclusion Lens, developed by the OPS Diversity Office.
- Host the 3rd annual Southwest Accessibility Expo to continue to build broader accessibility awareness.
- Embed accessibility considerations into other outreach activities such as Emergency Preparedness Week.

Implementation Timeframe: January 2011-December 2011

Focus Area: Other - Accessible Procurement Practices

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA will continue to integrate considerations around accessibility in ministry procurement processes as part of its ongoing efforts to seize opportunities to embed accessibility in ministry operations.

Planned Action(s):

- Enhance procurement contract language as it pertains to consideration of accessibility requirements.
- Integrate new procurement directive accessibility requirements into ministry tools, templates and checklists.
- Encourage staff to build accessibility criteria into the vendor selection process.
- Ensure staff are supported and encouraged to use the Inclusion Lens when developing ministry procurement documentation.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2010 - December 2011

Focus Area: Transportation

Commitment: Ongoing

OMAFRA does not anticipate any impacts from the requirements under the transportation standard as they relate specifically to public transportation and the transportation sector.

Planned Action(s):

- Continue to monitor progress of the standard to ensure that there are no future implications to OMAFRA or its external stakeholders.

Implementation Timeframe: September 2010 - March 2011

Act(s), Regulation(s), Policy(s) being reviewed to prevent Barriers to Persons with Disabilities

In support of the commitment to remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities, the Government of Ontario will continue to review all new legislation, and policies under development to identify and remove barriers.

To support the implementation of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation by January 1, 2010, OMAFRA conducted a review of its policies, procedures and practices to ensure our clients receive the accessible services they require and so our employees with disabilities are able to reach their full potential.

OMAFRA's review of new Act(s), Regulation(s) or Policy(s) includes a process for identifying and removing any barriers to persons with disabilities.

To ensure the success of future policies, programs and services, OMAFRA will apply the concepts from the Inclusion Lens developed by the OPS Diversity Office in the review or development of human resources and general business-related policies, programs or services.

Glossary of Terms / Acronyms

AODA - *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*

ACS - Accessible Customer Service

CNIB - Canadian National Institute for the Blind

ODA - *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*

ODP - On-line Design Program

OMAFRA - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

OPS - Ontario Public Service

TTY - Telephone Teletype

W3C - The World Wide Web Consortium

For More Information

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

General inquiry number: 519-826-3100

TTY number: 519-826-7402

Toll-free number: 1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Ministry website address: www.omafra.gov.on.ca

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 accessible province for everyone.

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

[ServiceOntario Publications](#)

Phone: 1-800-668-9938

TTY: 1-800-268-7095

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