



**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

2012-2013

Annual Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

Each year, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) sets a course to prevent, identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Every ministry participates through the preparation of its annual accessibility plans, as required under the [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 \(ODA\)](#).

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) is Ontario's roadmap to become accessible by 2025. It includes accessibility standards in:

- Customer service,
- Information and communications,
- Employment,
- Transportation, and
- Built environment.

This year, the accessibility plans must also address the [Integrated Accessibility Regulation \(IASR\)](#) under the AODA enacted June 2011. The IASR required the OPS to develop a multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. The [OPS MYAP](#) was published on January 1, 2012. This included a statement of commitment for the OPS to demonstrate leadership for accessibility.

The OPS endeavours to demonstrate leadership for accessibility in Ontario. Our goal is to ensure accessibility for our employees and the public we serve in our services, products and facilities.

Building on the OPS Statement of Commitment, the OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and the ministry's previous 2011-2012 Accessibility Plan, the new 2012-13 Accessibility Plan will continue moving the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the OPS to be a leader in building an accessible province for all Ontarians.

This plan outlines the specific steps the government is taking to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.

To view every ministry's Accessibility Plans, visit [Ontario.ca](#).

Section One: Report on Measures to Identify, Remove and Prevent Barriers in 2011-12

The Government of Ontario is working to achieve the most accessible province by 2025.

Since 2001, the OPS has been complying with the obligations of the ODA and prepared an annual accessibility plan, which it has made available to the public through the Government of Ontario's public website.

During the last ten years, the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) has been a leader in accessibility.

In 2003, the ministry published its first public annual accessibility plan which reported on achievements in support of the ODA legislation enacted in late 2001. The ministry committed to ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities in its roles as an employer and provider of public services. At that time, many existing business practices within the ministry already met key requirements of the new legislation.

A commitment to form an Accessibility Working Group was met the following year (2004) with cross-branch representation of staff with disabilities and/or interest or expertise in the area. The ministry continues to support this group in their efforts to advance accessibility in the key areas of education, outreach and implementation activities of the AODA enacted in 2005.

In 2009-10, OMAFRA took a leadership role by being the first among OPS ministries to comply with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. As of January 1, 2010, OMAFRA requires ALL staff complete accessibility training, not only front line customer service staff as required by the regulation.

For the past three years OMAFRA has hosted the annual South West Accessibility Expo. This education and outreach event aims to increase awareness about various accessibility-related topics. The event follows the OPS Accessibility Expo and brings the theme to the south west region.

This year, OMAFRA created a virtual version of the Expo for on-line viewing and participation across the OPS and regions. The virtual version still exists with videos, photos, and blog posts by visitors who attended the event.

In 2011-12, the government continued to comply with the [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation](#). As well, it undertook initiatives to meet compliance of some of the requirements of the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) in the areas of employment, information and communications, transportation and procurement. The government continues to implement initiatives to enhance accessibility in other areas such as the built environment.

The following is a summary of the accessibility initiatives the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs implemented last year as a result of the [2011-2012 Annual Accessibility plan](#).

Reporting on 2011-2012 AODA obligations

Customer Service

OMAFRA is committed to ensuring that staff and clients with disabilities obtain accessible goods and services with the same quality and timeliness that others receive.

In 2011-12 the ministry is proud to report the following achievements in the areas of Accessible Customer Service:

OMAFRA maintained full, ongoing compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation and the associated Ontario Public Service (OPS) Accessible Customer Service Policy.

Mandatory accessible customer service training was required of all new staff and management; not only frontline service providers as required by the AODA. Staff are informed of the training requirements through orientation documents and are required to complete the training within three months of hire. The status of staff training is monitored and tracked to ensure a minimum of 90% of staff are fully trained at all times.

Various feedback channels and methods continue to be available for clients and staff to provide feedback on accessible customer service. This includes the use of surveys and evaluations for internal clients and the opportunity to provide

anonymous feedback. Response mechanisms are in place to ensure feedback informs continuous improvement in the way the ministry conducts its business.

In response to summer student feedback collected in 2010-11, the OMAFRA-specific AODA training module was enhanced to include a knowledge test.

A training refresh was part of an interactive Accessible Customer Service display exhibited at the South West Accessibility Expo in February 2012. Staff awareness was increased by enabling them to test their knowledge of the standards that came into affect in January 2010.

OMAFRA is in full compliance with the 2012 requirements of the IASR. Highlights across key areas are included in the categories that follow as they relate to information and communications, employment and procurement.

Information and Communications

OMAFRA has emergency plans available to the public. Upon request for an alternate format, OMAFRA will work with the client to provide the information in a manner that takes the person's disability into account and/or with the appropriate communication supports as soon as possible after the request is made.

Posting of accessible Portable Document Format (PDF) of web content has begun. External designers of publications are being asked to provide accessible PDF formats.

New website templates include coding that allows for tracking of downloaded information and resources in alternate file formats. This helps inform program areas of the use and demand for alternate formats of these materials.

New or significantly refreshed internet and intranet websites and web content conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

A ministry Social Media team was formed and is reviewing accessibility best practices and guidelines to inform staff and program areas of the requirements for accessibility when using social media tools.

A tip sheet has been developed to assist in the captioning of YouTube videos posted by OMAFRA. Several videos have been captioned using these instructions.

More OMAFRA branches and projects are using internal blogs as a tool for staff newsletters. The blog format is more accessible than PDF formats.

Accessible Information and Communications was a feature display at the South West Accessibility Expo 2012. It provided visitors with key concepts around making web content usable for everyone. The “virtual” exhibit still exists as a resource to staff on the ministry’s intranet site.

Employment

Senior managers have accessibility performance commitments as part of annual performance planning and delivery.

The OPS Inclusion Lens, which includes persons with disabilities as one of the dimensions of diversity, was applied to ministry Human Resources strategies to identify potential barriers to accessibility.

Managers developed individualized workplace emergency response plans with staff who identified accommodation needs during an emergency. In addition, OMAFRA-specific accessibility training, a mandatory requirement for new employees, encourages staff to inform their manager if they require assistance in an emergency.

An Accessible Employment display was featured at the South West Accessibility Expo in February 2012. It provided visitors with information and resources including individualized workplace emergency response plan templates and guides and current accessible recruitment practices.

Annual emergency evacuation training included evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities. The effectiveness of evacuation procedures was tested through simulations that involved persons with disabilities.

Emergency procedures for persons with disabilities continue to be communicated to staff across regions to ensure evacuation staff and staff requiring assistance are identified and aware of evacuation procedures.

Transportation

The transportation standard relates specifically to public transportation and the transportation sector with no implementation requirements affecting OMAFRA or its external stakeholders.

OMAFRA invited a municipal partner to host a display at the South West Accessibility Expo held in February 2012 to increase awareness about progress among municipalities who provide accessible public transportation to their citizens.

Built Environment

An accessible and ergonomic office layout was incorporated into the design layout for the Stratford office relocation in October 2012.

An Accessible Built Environment display was featured at the South West Accessibility Expo in February 2012. Visitors received information and resources and learned about progress OMAFRA has made and plans to further improve accessibility in and around the buildings we occupy.

Procurement

OMAFRA updated accessibility language in procurement documentation by incorporating information from the Ministry of Government Services (MGS) accessibility tools and resources posted December 2011 into the deliverables and rated criteria sections where applicable.

Accessibility language was also updated for the standards for accessible customer service to reflect the requirement for private sector compliance effective January 1, 2012.

Ministry training materials, tools and checklists reflect current accessibility requirements and links to MGS and ministry resources. For example, the MGS Checklist: Meeting Accessibility Obligations in Procurement was incorporated into the ministry's procurement process to ensure requirements are considered in the planning stage.

Accessibility resources are shared with staff relevant to their procurement requirements. For example, the Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings is available to staff planning training sessions.

A Procurement Tip Sheet was developed, distributed and posted on the ministry's intranet site. It is available in an accessible format which includes links to MGS, Supply Chain Management and ministry resources. This tip sheet was distributed at the Accessibility in Procurement display at the South West Accessibility Expo in

February 2012 among other resources to promote and raise awareness about accessibility considerations.

OMAFRA promoted the OPS Diversity Office's Accessibility@Source campaign. An information and awareness initiative which was launched to help staff across the OPS understand how to build accessibility into the early stages of their work. Accessibility@Source will focus on various topics related to the requirements under the IASR and the first topic is accessibility in procurement.

OMAFRA regional offices have Point of Sale devices. As of January 2012, any newly acquired Point of Sale devices will include accessibility features.

Other

Accessibility is embedded into the new Diversity and Inclusion category of OMAFRA's BRAVO recognition awards. Recipients of the award will exhibit a commitment to accessibility through interactions with colleagues and/or the public, among other criteria.

The 3rd annual South West Accessibility Expo was held in February 2012. The event highlighted existing and future standards of the AODA and increased general accessibility awareness through interactive facilitated discussions with abilities organizations.

OMAFRA hosted a learning event titled "Mental Health and Stigma" in an effort to increase awareness about mental illness, support employees in the workplace and combat the stigma associated with mental illness. Staff could attend the event in person or through webcast.

Section Two: Measures Planned for 2012-13 and Beyond

Our Statement of Commitment:

The OPS endeavours to demonstrate leadership for accessibility in Ontario. Our goal is to ensure accessibility for our employees and the public we serve in our services, products and facilities.

This year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs accessibility plan focuses on six areas. In order to demonstrate leadership in accessibility, our ministry is planning to undertake the activities described below. These initiatives will support compliance with the existing Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and Integrated Accessibility Standards under the AODA and other areas.

Customer Service

Information & Communications

Employment

Built Environment

Procurement

Accessibility Training

Customer Service

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities receive accessible goods and services. This means they will receive goods and services with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

OMAFRA will continue to maintain compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation on an ongoing basis.

All new staff and management will be required to take accessible customer service training. Training will be tracked and monitored throughout the year to maintain a minimum of 90% of staff fully trained at all times.

Notices of temporary service disruptions will continue to be posted in a timely manner. They will identify alternatives available throughout the disruption consistent with the Service Disruption Protocol developed by the OPS Diversity Office.

Feedback about accessibility is welcomed from the public and staff and information continues to be available through the ministry's external and internal websites. Appropriate action will be taken in response to feedback to foster continuous improvement in the way the ministry conducts its business.

Timeframe: December 2012 – December 2013 and beyond

Information and Communications

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to making government information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. The information we provide and how we communicate it are key to delivering our programs and services to the public.

The ministry will ensure that new and refreshed websites and web pages are properly tagged and coded to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards. An OMAFRA Website Improvement Project will consider accessibility, plain language and the OPS Inclusion Lens to implement improvements in areas where barriers are identified.

Information in PDF and other formats posted on OMAFRA websites prior to January 2012 will be reviewed for compliance with WCAG 2.0 level AA and will be updated to meet the standard or removed from the site.

OMAFRA staff creating PDF files will be provided with training in preparing accessible versions of PDFs.

New social media projects will consider accessibility in the planning and implementation stages.

Timeframe: December 2012 – December 2013 and beyond

Employment

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to fair and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities. People with disabilities who are OPS employees know they can participate fully and meaningfully in services and employment.

The Ministry will begin implementation of January 2013 requirements of the IASR's employment standards as directed by HROntario.

Annual emergency evacuation training will include evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities. The effectiveness of evacuation procedures will be tested through simulations that involve persons with disabilities.

Emergency procedures for persons with disabilities will continue to be communicated across regions to ensure evacuation staff and staff requiring assistance are identified and aware of procedures.

Timeframe: December 2012 – December 2013 and beyond

Built Environment

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to greater accessibility in, out of and around the buildings used by the public and staff.

The ministry will ensure that Barrier-Free Guidelines continue to be incorporated into all new construction and renovation projects.

The ministry will continue to work with building service providers and landlords to ensure that facilities are safe and accessible for visitors and employees.

OMAFRA will monitor progress of future legislation such as Design of Public Spaces and the Accessible Built Environment legislation for impacts to OMAFRA facilities and service areas and its agencies and stakeholders.

The ministry's proposed multi-year accommodation plan will include a review and consideration of the draft Design of Public Spaces standards.

Timeframe: December 2012 – December 2013 and beyond

Procurement

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to integrating accessibility considerations into our procurement processes. We ask potential suppliers to tell us about the accessible options they offer. We include accessibility considerations in our evaluation criteria.

As part of the ministry's Intranet Improvement Project, existing procurement information and resources will be reviewed and updated in accessible formats. The site will include user-friendly links to reference material including an AODA InfoSheet.

Timeframe: December 2012 – December 2013 and beyond

Accessibility Training

OMAFRA will continue to support the OPS Diversity Office Accessibility@Source educational campaign through various communications to staff as new topics are launched.

OMAFRA will promote IASR and Human Rights Code training developed to further increase awareness and understanding of the requirements and meet the obligations of the standard.

A new collaborative approach to the annual South West Accessibility Expo will be explored with the goal to expand this education and outreach event across various ministries within the region.

Timeframe: December 2012 – December 2013 and beyond

Section Three: Review of Acts, Regulations and Policies

In support of our commitment to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will continue to review government initiatives, including legislation and policies, to identify and remove barriers.

Acts, Regulations and Policies Reviewed in 2011-12

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to ensuring that our Acts and regulations are reviewed for potential accessibility barriers.

In 2011-12, the ministry initiated a process using the OPS Inclusion Lens to review OMAFRA's Acts and regulations. The process was led by a group of ministry representatives who participated in a training session for multidisciplinary teams from all ministries on how to use the OPS Inclusion Lens to review laws for accessibility barriers. The legislative review process will continue in 2012-13 and beyond.

Acts, Regulations and Policies to Be Reviewed in 2012-13

The OPS Diversity Office and the Ministry of the Attorney General have developed a coordinated approach to continue with the review of government legislation for accessibility barriers. In this next phase, high impact statutes that meet the following criteria will be reviewed:

- a. Statutes that affect persons with disabilities directly;
- b. Statutes that provide for the delivery of widely applicable services or programs;
- c. Statutes that provide benefits or protections; or
- d. Statutes that affect a democratic or civic right or duty.

This phase of the review will be completed by the end of 2014. The government has decided to review these statutes because it is anticipated that changes in these areas will have the highest impact on those Ontarians who have accessibility needs.

OMAFRA will continue the process initiated in 2011-12 to review the ministry's Acts and regulations using the OPS Inclusion Lens. Portions of this review will be linked

to a broader review of OMAFRA's Acts and regulations which is being undertaken as part of the ministry's commitment to the Open for Business initiative.

In addition, the ministry applies the OPS Inclusion Lens when developing proposed new Acts and regulations.

Identifying, Removing and Preventing Barriers with the OPS Inclusion Lens

In 2011, the OPS launched the OPS Inclusion Lens. The OPS Inclusion Lens is an analytical tool that helps staff incorporate elements of inclusion into their work through an enhanced understanding of diversity and accessibility. The Inclusion Lens can be used when initiating a project or reviewing policies, programs, legislation, guidelines and procedures. It can assist in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and other dimensions of diversity.

In OMAFRA the OPS Inclusion Lens was promoted and applied in the development of new initiatives and in reviewing existing human resources strategies in addition to general business-related policies and procedures to ensure the principles of accessibility are considered.

In July 2012, OMAFRA's Diversity Working Group received training from the OPS Diversity Office on how to facilitate OPS Inclusion Lens training. This core group of ministry staff are now equipped with the knowledge and tools to successfully present the *Intro to the Inclusion Lens* and *Using the Inclusion Lens* sessions. This has led to branch learning sessions within the ministry.

The Diversity Office also delivered training on *Using the Inclusion Lens* to OMAFRA representatives involved in the design and delivery of multi-year projects and initiatives.

In the future, OMAFRA will continue to promote and encourage the use of the OPS Inclusion Lens to review acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services.

OMAFRA will facilitate OPS Inclusion Lens training sessions across all ministry branches and encourage staff to document findings when applying the lens to their work. Findings will be communicated to the OPS Diversity Office to assist others in achieving their accessibility goals.

Glossary of Terms/Acronyms

AODA – Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

IASR – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

MGS – Ministry of Government Services

MYAP – Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

OMAFRA – Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

OPS – Ontario Public Service

ODA – Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

PDF – Portable Document Format

WCAG – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

For More Information

Questions or comments about the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs accessibility plan are always welcome.

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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 an accessible province for everyone.

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

[ServiceOntario Publications](#)

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