



**Ministry of Agriculture and Food and
Ministry of Rural Affairs**

2013 - 2014 - Annual Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

For over ten years, every ministry has set a course to prevent, identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Ministries achieve this through the preparation of their annual Accessibility Plan as required under the [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 \(ODA\)](#).

Recently, the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) established Ontario's roadmap to become accessible by 2025. It includes standards in areas such as: customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment. In 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) and Ministry of Rural Affairs (MRA) complied with the requirements of the first standard on [customer service](#).

In 2011, ministries began to meet the requirements of the other four standards found in the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#).

On January 1, 2012, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) published a single [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan \(MYAP\)](#). The MYAP included the following 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 Plan will build on these laws and the MYAP. The Plan will outline how the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs will continue to contribute to a barrier-free Ontario by 2025.

To access this and other ministries' Accessibility Plans, visit [Ontario.ca](#).

Section One: Report on Measures Taken in 2012 – 2013

Customer Services

List of commitments - Information taken from 2012 - 2013 Accessibility Plan

OMAF and MRA 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. Service disruptions 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 ministries' external and internal websites. Appropriate action will be taken in response to feedback to foster continuous improvement in the way the ministries conduct business.

Measures Taken

OMAF and MRA have 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 (including summer, co-op and contract staff) and management; not only frontline service providers as required by the AODA. Staff were informed of the training requirements through orientation documents. The status of staff training was monitored and tracked to maintain a minimum of 90% of staff trained at all times.

To support continued business and accessibility of services, OMAF and MRA worked with our service provider partners to ensure service disruption notices were posted in a timely manner and an alternate service location was indicated.

Various feedback channels and methods were available for clients and staff to provide feedback on accessible customer service. This included the use of surveys and evaluations for internal clients and the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback. Well established response mechanisms are in place to ensure feedback informs continuous improvement in the way the ministries conduct business.

The Summer Employment Opportunity survey included questions regarding the ministries' inclusive culture and an opportunity to submit suggestions for improvement. Ninety percent of program participants felt that OMAF and MRA valued diversity.

Information and Communications

List of commitments - Information taken from 2012 - 2013 Accessibility Plan

The ministries will ensure that new and refreshed websites and web pages are properly tagged and coded to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards. An OMAF and MRA 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 OMAF and MRA websites prior to January 2012 will be reviewed for compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standards and will be updated to meet the standard or be removed from the site.

OMAF and MRA 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.

Measures Taken

With the development and launch of the new Ontario.ca webpage, all ministries' web content in the OPS will be included on one site. Accessibility and plain language are key components of the project work.

The Foodland Ontario website was updated. The new look and format was reviewed to ensure it met WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standards.

Videos added to the ministries' YouTube accounts were captioned when posted in order to improve accessibility.

In preparation for migration to the new Ontario.ca page, web content including PDF's posted on OMAF and MRA websites prior to January 2012 have continued to be reviewed and removed if they do not meet the WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standard.

Various staff in the ministries received accessible PDF training. New publications developed by external designers and service providers have been and will continue to be provided to the ministries in an accessible PDF format for posting to the ministries' website.

The ministries have developed Social Media guidelines and policies. The guidelines outline requirements for accessibility. The Social Media Plan, which is required for all official social media communications, includes a section where applicants must outline their plans for accessibility.

Employment Accommodations

List of commitments - Information taken from 2012 - 2013 Accessibility Plan

The ministries will begin implementation of January 2013 requirements of the IASR's employment standards as directed by HROntario. Standards exist in the areas of recruitment, employee accommodation and return to work, performance management, career development and redeployment.

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.

Measures Taken

OMAF and MRA are committed to fair and accessible employment practices that retain and attract talented employees including persons with disabilities. The ministries worked closely with HROntario and the OPS Diversity Office to implement January 2013 requirements of the IASR's employment standards. The following are among the initiatives undertaken to sustain and enhance accessibility in all stages of employment:

- Job advertisements include a statement on the availability of accommodations.
- Inclusive selection guidelines were shared with hiring managers.

- New employees were made aware of the ministries'/OPS accommodation processes through links to relevant policies included in job offer letters and as part of orientation.
- Accessibility performance commitments in annual performance development plans are included at all levels of management, including the requirement for individualized emergency response plans for staff that identify accommodation needs in an emergency.
- New human resource strategies, programs, and resources that support the creation of an accessible workplace were communicated to managers and employees as appropriate. Recent communications included flexible work strategies, a mental health toolkit and fair hiring practices.
- The new OPS Executive Recruitment Lens was integrated into executive level hiring practices.
- The new OPS Manager's Workplace Mental Health Toolkit was launched by HROntario in May 2013. Two OMAF and MRA managers participated in the development of the Toolkit.

The ministries continued to conduct annual emergency evacuation training, which included a review on evacuation of persons with disabilities.

Through continued annual evacuation training, fire wardens were trained on engaging persons with disabilities to ensure appropriate assistance is available in the event of an emergency situation.

Built Environment

List of commitments - Information taken from 2012 - 2013 Accessibility Plan

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

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

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

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

Measures Taken

In the design, planning and construction of a new Stratford office, accessible and ergonomic workstations were incorporated in the layout. The main entry and high traffic doors had barrier free automated door openers installed in accordance with the OPS Barrier Free design guidelines.

Through regular communications with the building service provider, OMAF and MRA have worked to ensure safe and accessible facilities to all visitors and staff at the main headquarters and all regional offices.

OMAF and MRA supported the recommendations under the Design of Public Spaces legislation. Impacted business areas continue to consider the requirements as part of ongoing operational planning.

The ministries' Multi-year Accommodation Strategy ensures a proactive approach to accommodations planning. It provides the ministries with a road map for the annual accommodations planning process and encourages the inclusion of accommodations planning when making program delivery decisions. The ministries' multi-year Accommodation Strategy included an annual consideration of the AODA and Design of Public Spaces Standards to ensure accessibility is always considered and/or reviewed as a corporate objective.

Procurement

List of commitments - Information taken from 2012 - 2013 Accessibility Plan

OMAF and MRA will integrate 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 ministries' 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.

Measures Taken

The ministries continued to incorporate accessibility considerations into our competitive procurement process, such as the Premier Summit, Foodland Retailer Award ceremony, stakeholder tax seminars, Quest for New Farm Value-Version e-learning, and our Drainage and Construction Guidelines document.

Accessibility requirements were incorporated during the development of the ministries' Intranet Improvement Project, such as in the design of the site and newly created documentation for the site.

Other Commitments - Accessibility Training

List of commitments - Information taken from 2012 - 2013 Accessibility Plan

OMAF and MRA will continue to support the OPS Diversity Office Accessibility at Source educational campaign through various communications to staff as new topics are launched.

Accessibility is embedded into the new Diversity and Inclusion category of OMAF and MRA's BRAVO recognition awards.

OMAF and MRA 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.

Measures Taken

OMAF and MRA promoted the OPS Diversity Office's Accessibility at Source campaign; an information and awareness initiative launched to help staff across the OPS understand how to build accessibility into the early stages of their work. The campaign was promoted across all regions through email communications, posters and personal addresses. Topics included Accessible Employment, Creating Accessible Documents and Accessible Procurement.

Summer Employment Opportunity staff were provided with an overview of the Accessibility at Source campaign and encouraged to utilize resources as part of their orientation process.

Criteria for staff to submit a nomination under the Diversity and Inclusion category of the ministries' BRAVO recognition awards included a demonstrated commitment to accessibility through interactions with colleagues and/or the public, among other criteria. Three nominations were submitted under the category, one specific to enhancing accessibility of training material.

IASR and Human Rights Code training was added to the mandatory training requirements for all staff and management, including summer, co-op and contract staff. New staff were 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 annually.

Since 2009, OMAF and MRA have organized an annual Southwest Accessibility Expo to raise awareness of, and promote learning about accessibility. In May 2013, OMAF and MRA teamed up with the University of Guelph for its fifth Annual Accessibility Conference to offer OPS employees a high-quality, low-cost alternative to the traditional expo. The event highlighted existing and future standards of the AODA and increased general accessibility awareness through interactive displays hosted by abilities organizations.

Other 2012 - 2013 Achievements

Measures Taken

OMAF and MRA support for the OPS Disability Advisory Council:

On June 5th, 2013 OMAF and MRA supported an OPS Disability Advisory Council event to commemorate National Access Awareness Week. As part of the event, a seminar entitled, “On the Job: Tools of the Trade for Employees with Disabilities” was attended by employees in person and through webcast.

OMAF and MRA coordinated the development of an education and awareness video. Event attendees were invited to contribute their statement on what an accessible OPS means to them in a short recorded video segment.

Diversity Mentoring Partnership Program:

OMAF and MRA administered a Diversity Mentoring Partnership program in 2012-2013 with 14 executive-employee partnerships. The Diversity Mentoring Partnership program pairs executive partners with employees who self-identify as a member of groups traditionally under-represented in senior management, including persons with disabilities.

Section Two: Report on Measures Planned for 2013 - 2014

Last year, the OPS published a [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan \(MYAP\)](#) that outlines how the government will identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. In this section, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs are reporting on measures to be undertaken over the next year.

Customer Service and Procurement

MYAP Outcomes

People with disabilities who are OPS customers, receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

2013 - 2014 MYAP Deliverables

New staff trained on accessibility.

Accessibility criteria built into decision-making, project management, procurement, technology, infrastructure, I & IT and training.

Increased awareness of accessibility best practices in customer service, and in the workplace within the OPS.

2013 - 2014 - Proposed Measures

All new staff and management will be required to take accessible customer service training. Training will be tracked and monitored throughout the year. Accessible customer service training modules include, “May I Help You? - Welcoming Customers with Disabilities”, and “May I Help Supplementary - Ten Things you need to know about Accessible Customer Service”.

OMAF and MRA will continue to ensure service disruption notice procedures are in place at all ministry locations when services are unavailable. This includes communicating with regional offices related to various scenarios such as power outages and inclement weather.

OMAF and MRA will encourage the use of the OPS Inclusion Lens in project development and approval processes.

Information and Communications

MYAP Outcomes

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats to all OPS staff and customers.

2013 - 2014 - MYAP Deliverables

Accessibility criteria built into decision-making, project management, procurement, technology, infrastructure, I & IT and training.

2013 - 2014 Proposed Measures

The ministries will continue to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards as outlined in the IASR.

OMAF and MRA will launch a new financial services intranet site with accessible design features and accessible content including procurement information and resources. Training will be offered to staff on how to navigate the new site.

All ministry specific project plan/management tools and templates will be provided in an accessible format, using best practices and guidelines for creating accessible documents.

OMAF and MRA staff that create PDF files will be provided with training in preparing accessible versions of PDFs.

The ministries will communicate the availability of accessible formats and communication supports to the public by January 1, 2014.

Employment Accommodations

MYAP Outcomes

People with disabilities who are also OPS employees, participate fully and meaningfully in services and employment.

2013 - 2014 MYAP Deliverables

Increased awareness of accessibility best practices in customer service and the workplace, within the OPS.

Senior managers have accessibility performance commitments.

2013 - 2014 Proposed Measures

The ministries will continue to increase manager awareness of and compliance with employment accommodation directives, policies and plans by providing additional tools and resources including a new guide for the ministries titled: “My Work Unit is Accessible! OMAF and MRA’s Guide for Managers in Meeting Compliance Requirements of the AODA”.

The ministries will increase manager and employee awareness of OPS programs and resources related to accessibility and inclusion by posting more direct links on the ministries’ intranet site when new policies or guides are released.

The ministries will continue to support accessibility performance commitments as part of annual performance planning at all levels of management.

Built Environment

MYAP Outcomes

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

2013 - 2014 MYAP Deliverables - Government Facilities

Continue to develop strategies for addressing infrastructure barriers.

2013 - 2014 Proposed Measures - Government Facilities

The ministries will continue to increase awareness of the OPS barrier-free requirements for government facilities.

OMAF and MRA will consult with people with disabilities on accommodation planning within existing infrastructure.

The ministries will incorporate a barrier free design, according to OPS Barrier Free design guidelines when designing the new space in the Toronto Grenville office.

Leadership

MYAP Outcomes

The OPS endeavours to demonstrate leadership for accessibility in Ontario.

2013 - 2014 MYAP Deliverables

Ongoing consultations with persons with disabilities.

Ministries continue to publish annual accessibility plans.

2014 Accessibility Conference.

2013 - 2014 Proposed Measures

The ministries will continue to support resources for a Diversity and Inclusion Working Group with representation from various geographic locations and dimensions of diversity, including employees with disabilities.

The ministries will continue to seek advice and guidance from persons with disabilities in the development and execution of an annual Accessibility Plan.

OMAF and MRA will collaborate with the University of Guelph on the delivery of the 2014 Accessibility Conference, scheduled for May 27th - 28th, 2014.

The ministries' will publish the OMAF and MRA 2013-2016 Inclusion Strategy in fall/winter 2013 that builds on the 2009-2012 Diversity Strategy. Leadership in accessibility will be a key strategic objective of this multi-year plan.

Other

2013 - 2014 Proposed Measures

OMAF and MRA will continue to ensure that IASR and Human Rights Code training are completed for all new employees. Training will be maintained and monitored throughout the year.

Additional IASR training courses specific to Information and Communications and Employment will be launched after release by OPS Diversity Office in fall 2013.

OMAF and MRA will administer the 2013-2014 Diversity Mentoring Partnership program and encourage employees in under-represented categories including people with disabilities to participate in the program.

Section Three: Report on Legislative Review

In support of our commitment to improve access for people with disabilities, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs will continue to review government acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services, to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Acts, Regulations and Policies Reviewed in 2012 - 2013

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.

OMAF and MRA statutes were not among those identified as high-impact based on the criteria established by the OPS Diversity Office and Ministry of the Attorney General.

Acts, Regulations and Policies to Be Reviewed in 2013 - 2014

OMAF and MRA will continue to review the ministries' Acts and regulations using the OPS Inclusion Lens, as part of a broader review of OMAF and MRA's Acts and regulations which are being undertaken as part of the ministries' commitment to the Open for Business initiative.

In addition, the ministries apply the OPS Inclusion Lens when developing proposed new Acts and regulations.

Glossary of Terms and/or Acronyms

AODA - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

IASR - Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

MYAP - Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

OPS - Ontario Public Service

HROntario - Human Resources Ontario

ODA - Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

TTY - Telephone Typewriter or Telecommunication Device for the Deaf

WCAG - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

OMAF and MRA - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs

How to Contact us

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

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