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Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs 2015 Accessibility Plan

How the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs identified and removed barriers in the Ontario Public Service in 2015 and future accessibility commitments for 2016.

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Executive summary

Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*, ministries are required to produce, and make available to the public, annual plans that describe how ministries will identify and remove barriers to accessibility.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is working toward full compliance with the [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service \(ASCS\)](#) and the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#). These regulations establish phased-in requirements in the following accessibility standards:

1. Customer Service
2. Information and Communications
3. Employment
4. Transportation

5. Design of Public Spaces

In 2012, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) released its first multi-year accessibility plan entitled [Accessibility in the Ontario Public Service: Leading the Way Forward](#).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs 2015 ODA Plan, celebrates the tenth anniversary of the AODA and demonstrates how the measures taken in 2015 and proposed for 2016 support the key outcomes and deliverables of the OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) as we continue on our path to an accessible Ontario in 2025.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs' 2015 ODA Plan demonstrates how the measures the ministry has taken and how the proposed measures for the coming years support the key outcomes and deliverables of the MYAP.

In 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs took many actions toward supporting the commitments made in the 2014 Annual ODA. Web accessibility and the design of public spaces were two areas that OMAFRA emphasized.

OMAFRA took steps toward meeting compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards as outlined in the IASR. The development of a toolkit containing resources for staff and training sessions on how to create accessible documents were part of the plan to achieve the highest level of compliance possible.

OMAFRA worked closely with the building management team and partners to ensure all were aware of the requirements under the AODA.

In addition to the measures OMAFRA committed to in the 2014-15 Accessibility Plan, OMAFRA took the extra step to post a series of accessibility blogs on the intranet site. The Accessibility Hero series of blogs was posted and provided valuable insight into topics such as creating accessible documents to honour Speech and Hearing Awareness month. The blog series led up to the University of Guelph Annual Accessibility Conference. OMAFRA has been working with the University of Guelph for three years now and plans to continue this collaboration.

For the coming year, OMAFRA has committed to maintaining accessibility – all new construction will be done in compliance with Infrastructure Ontario's guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. As well, a plan has been developed to bring OMAFRA into full compliance with the WCAG standards. Many of the commitments proposed from 2016 including creating and maintaining awareness around accessibility, diversity, and inclusion.

To access the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs' and other ministries' 2015 ODA Accessibility

Plans, visit Ontario.ca.

Section one: measures taken by OMAFRA in 2015

Customer service

OPS MYAP Key Outcome:

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

List of commitments – information taken from 2014-2015 accessibility plan

1. All new staff and management will continue to 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”.
2. OMAFRA 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.

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2015

1. All new staff and management were required to take accessible customer service training. Training was tracked and monitored throughout the year. Accessible customer service training modules included, “May I Help You? - Welcoming Customers with Disabilities”, and “May I Help Supplementary - Ten Things you need to know about Accessible Customer Service”. In addition all staff were required to take the Information and Communication Standards training.
2. To support continued business and accessibility of services, OMAFRA continued to work with our service provider partners to ensure service disruption notices were posted in a timely manner and an alternate service location was indicated.

Information and communications

MYAP Key Outcome:

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

List of commitments – Information taken from 2014-2015 Accessibility Plan

1. The ministry will continue to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards as outlined in the IASR. OMAFRA’s Web and New Media Coordinator will continue to provide subject

matter expertise to ministry staff related to web accessibility features.

2. OMAFRA staff that create PDF files will be provided with training in preparing accessible versions of PDFs if they have not previously participated in training. Additional training and resources will be offered for other file formats such as Word, PowerPoint and Excel.
3. OMAFRA will continue to review the financial services intranet site feedback to ensure all barriers are addressed. A specific project will be undertaken to review financial services documents, including templates and forms, from an accessibility lens perspective to ensure all materials, including procurement related documents, meet accessibility requirements.
4. Ministry specific project management tools and templates will also be provided in an accessible format, using best practices and guidelines for creating accessible documents.

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2015

1. The ministry continues to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards as outlined in the IASR. OMAFRA's Web Publishing Coordinator continues to review all new web content to ensure it meets accessibility guidelines. An inventory of web content was developed and reviewed to gauge the level of compliance under WCAG 2.0 standards.
2. A toolkit and resources has been developed for creating accessible file formats (Word, Powerpoint, Excel and PDF). For Information and communications developed for OMAFRA's website staff are encouraged to create files in HTML format since it is more accessible than PDF. New web publishing staff have been trained on accessible HTML, web publishing processes and best practices.
3. OMAFRA updated the ministry's procurement intranet site to include more OPS resources to assist clients completing the 'Meeting the Accessibility Obligations in Procurement' checklist and developing procurement language in the competitive document. Any financial services website feedback received has been reviewed to help identify barriers and recommendations to address accessibility requirements. Updates were implemented as deemed necessary.
4. Work has been initiated to provide Ministry project management tools and templates in an accessible format, using best practices and guidelines for creating accessible documents.

Employment

MYAP Key Outcome:

OPS employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

List of commitments – Information taken from 2014-2015 Accessibility Plan

1. The ministry will continue to support accessibility performance commitments as part of annual performance planning at all levels of management. Ministry management has a dedicated

corporate performance commitment in its performance plan related to inclusion and accessibility that has specific activities that they are required to fulfill based on their management level, and consistent with the commitments provided by the OPS Diversity Office. For example, managers are to ensure compliance with AODA requirements and that all written communications are accessible.

2. The results of the 2014 OPS Employee Engagement survey revealed that a percentage of OMAFRA respondents who require an employment accommodation for their disability did not request it. To assist employees in getting the accommodations they require to perform their job duties, managers will be encouraged to inquire about accommodation requirements as part of the bi-annual performance and learning plan process.
3. IASR and Human Rights Code training will continue to be required of all new employees. Training will be maintained and monitored throughout the year. All managers and HR professionals were required to complete further on-line training about the requirements of the Employment Standards under the AODA by June 30, 2014. All staff will continue to be encouraged to complete the training.

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2015

1. All levels of management continued to have inclusion and accessibility performance commitments included in their annual performance management plans.
2. Management was encouraged to inquire about accommodation requests in bi-annual performance discussions. Mandatory manager and HR Professional accessibility training encourages managers to be more aware of their obligation to connect with staff and act on accommodation requirements.
3. IASR and Human Rights Code training were required of all new employees. Training was monitored throughout the year. Managers and HR professionals were required to complete further on-line training about the requirements of the Employment Standards under the AODA.

Built environment

MYAP key outcome:

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

List of commitments – Information taken from 2014-2015 Accessibility Plan

1. The ministry will continue to partner with building service providers to increase awareness of the OPS barrier-free requirements for government facilities, as well as requirements for public spaces.
2. OMAFRA will consult people with disabilities on accommodation planning within existing infrastructure.
3. The ministry will continue to comply with the requirements of the built environment and design requirements of the Ontario Building Code and the Design of Public Spaces standards as part of

our on-going accommodation planning.

4. The ministry will continue to incorporate barrier free design, according to OPS Barrier Free design guidelines when designing space options for the 11th Floor office space in Grenville-Toronto; as well as space design concepts for the 2nd Floor Stone Road alignment.

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2015

1. The ministry continued to work with the building management team and building tenant partners to ensure all are aware of the requirements. The topic of accessibility has been added as a standing item on the Building Committee agenda in order to ensure the building meets the requirements for the design of public space and the barrier-free design requirements.
2. The ministry continued to consult with employees to obtain their vision and feedback on accessibility improvements and solutions. OMAFRA's Inclusion Working Group is also a primary source for disability advisory services.
3. The ministry continued to work with building management to ensure the building meets the requirements for the design of public spaces and the barrier-free design requirements under the Ontario Building Code.
4. Throughout the planning and design process for the mentioned projects, the ministry ensured that the design was free of barriers and aligned with the accessibility requirements. OMAFRA staff whose duties include accommodations planning, completed the necessary training outlined in the AODA IASR Design of Public Spaces (formerly the Built Environment) that went into effect on January 1, 2015. The ministry remained on track to meet the requirements for the design of public spaces and the updated barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code (OBC).

General Outcomes

MYAP Key Outcome:

OPS staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility, in OPS policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

List of commitments – Information taken from 2014-2015 Accessibility Plan

1. Accessibility will continue to be a strong organizational commitment at OMAFRA. The ministry's Inclusion Working Group will be offering facilitated training sessions to staff on how to apply the OPS Inclusion Lens to the work they do. This process facilitates an analysis of various dimensions of diversity, including disability, in the review or development of projects to prevent and remove barriers.
2. The 2014-15 Diversity Mentoring Partnership program will encourage employees in under-represented categories including people with disabilities to participate in a series of discussions with

executive partners throughout the year to foster reciprocal learning.

3. For a third year, the ministry will endeavour to collaborate with other government partners on the planning and delivery of an accessibility conference to raise awareness and promote AODA compliance assistance information and resources among all sectors.
4. OMAFRA also supports membership on the OPS Disability Advisory Council to fulfill a mandate for the sustainability of an OPS employee network dedicated to employees with disabilities.

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2015

1. The Ministry's Inclusions Working Group developed a training session on how to apply the OPS Inclusion Lens. Training is expected to commence in 2016.
2. The 2014-2015 Diversity Mentoring Partnership program encouraged employees in under-represented categories including people with disabilities to participate in a series of discussions with executive partners throughout the year to foster reciprocal learning.
3. OMAFRA collaborated with the University of Guelph on the planning and delivery of the 2015 Accessibility Conference, which included participation and attendance by members of the government, broader public sector, and private business. The conference aims to raise awareness and encourage action by participants with the goal of creating an accessible province by 2025.
4. In partnership with the OPS Disability Advisory Council, OMAFRA developed marketing material to launch an OPS-wide awareness campaign aimed to reduce barriers featuring employees with disabilities.

Section two: report on commitments proposed by OMAFRA for 2016:

Customer service

MYAP Key Outcome

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

Commitments proposed by OMAFRA for 2016:

1. All new staff and management will continue to 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".
2. The ministry will continue to ensure service disruption protocols are followed fully to meet the requirements of the ASCS.

Information and Communications

MYAP Key Outcome

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

Commitments proposed by OMAFRA for 2016:

1. OMAFRA will begin a broader review of intranet sites in preparing for the 2020 timeline requirements under the Information and Communications standard.
2. Continue to provide resources to ensure file formats such as Word, Powerpoint and Excel are compliant with AODA standards.
3. The ministry will continue to meet web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) standards as outlined in the IASR. OMAFRA Web and New Media Coordinator will continue to provide subject matter expertise to ministry staff related to web accessibility features.

Employment

MYAP Key Outcome

OPS employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Commitments proposed by OMAFRA for 2016:

1. The ministry will continue to support accessibility performance commitments as part of annual performance planning at all levels of management. Ministry management has a dedicated corporate performance commitment in their performance plans related to inclusion and accessibility based on their management level, and consistent with the commitments provided by the OPS Diversity Office.
2. IASR and Human Rights Code training will continue to be required of all new employees. Training will be maintained and monitored throughout the year.
3. Managers will continue to be encouraged to inquire with staff around any accommodations they may require.

Built Environment

MYAP Key Outcome

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

Measures proposed by OMAFRA for 2016:

1. The Ministry will continue to work with the building land management service provider to ensure that all newly built or renovated spaces will meet or exceed the Ontario Building Code and Infrastructure Ontario (IO) Guidelines for Barrier Free and Design of Ontario Government Facilities 2012.
2. OMAFRA will demonstrate its commitment to greater accessibility within and around the buildings and public spaces that it occupies. All new construction, as well as alterations to facilities and improvement projects, will be designed and built in compliance with Infrastructure Ontario's (IO) Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities.
3. Emergency evacuation plans will continue to be reviewed and enhanced to ensure staff and evacuation staff understand accessibility requirements of their building and that those who have identified a need with respect to mobility requirements are accommodated.

General outcomes

MYAP Key Outcome

OPS staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility in OPS policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures proposed by OMAFRA for 2016

1. The ministry's Inclusion Working Group will deliver facilitated training sessions to staff on how to apply the OPS Inclusion Lens to the work they do. This process facilitates an analysis of various dimensions of diversity, including disability, in the review or development of projects to prevent and remove barriers.
2. For a fourth year the ministry will endeavour to collaborate with other government partners on the planning and delivery of an accessibility conference to raise awareness and promote AODA compliance assistance information and resources among all sectors.
3. OMAFRA will continue to participate in and contribute to the OPS Disability Advisory Council to fulfill a mandate for the sustainability of an OPS employee network dedicated to employees with disabilities.

Section three: Addressing the identification of barriers in legislation

Introduction

The ODA establishes that a ministry's accessibility plan shall include the measures in place to address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in the Acts, regulations, policies, programs and services administered by the ministry.

In 2005, the government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, with the goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. In support of this goal, the government subsequently committed to review Ontario legislation to identify and address accessibility barriers, and undertook a coordinated review of 51 statutes considered to have a high impact on persons with disabilities. This review has now been completed.

Our ministry remains committed to the goal of ensuring that Ontario legislation does not create barriers to persons with disabilities. We will continue to report through our accessibility plan, the actions taken to identify and remove barriers in ministry Acts, regulations, policies, programs and services and those to be reviewed in the coming year. The findings of the coordinated review of high impact statutes will inform our ministry’s approach to carry out this work.

Measures currently in place

The following measures are in place to assess our ministry’s proposals for new Acts, regulations, policies and programs and services to determine their effect on persons with disabilities:

In support of the ministry’s commitment to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, OMAFRA will continue to review the ministry’s Acts and regulations using the OPS Inclusion Lens, as part of a broader review of OMAFRA’s Acts and regulations under the ministry’s Open for Business initiative.

OMAFRA recently developed a Rural Lens to ensure that policy advice to government recognizes the realities of rural Ontario including people with disabilities. The Lens was developed in partnership with an OMAFRA-led, multi-ministry working group including the OPS Diversity Office. The Lens offers a substantive profile of rural Ontario, which is already informing work within OMAFRA and our partner ministries. The Rural Lens enhances the OPS Inclusion Lens.

OMAFRA specific training on the OPS Inclusion Lens has been developed by the ministry’s Inclusion Working Group and will be delivered to staff. This training focuses on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in policies, programs practices and services through an analysis against various dimensions of diversity including people with disabilities.

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An accessible Ontario by 2025

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