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Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs 2016 Accessibility Report

How the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs identified and removed barriers in the Ontario Public Service in 2016.

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Executive summary

Like all ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) complies with the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#). This regulation established phased-in requirements in the following accessibility standards:

- customer service
- information and communications
- employment
- transportation
- design of public spaces

The general requirements are:

- procurement
- training

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

OMAFRA's 2016 Accessibility Report demonstrates how the measures taken in 2016 support the key outcomes and deliverables of the 2012-2016 OPS MYAP.

Section one: report on measures taken by the ministry in 2016

Customer service

MYAP key outcome

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

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2016

OMAFRA is committed to providing accessible customer service to the people we serve.

All OMAFRA staff and managers are required to take accessible customer service training. OMAFRA tracked, monitored and recorded completion of mandatory AODA training for all staff and managers. Accessible customer service training modules include “May I Help You? - Welcoming Customers with Disabilities” and “May I Help You? Supplementary - Ten Things you need to know about Accessible Customer Service.” By completing this training, employees have become aware of the OPS Accessible Customer Service policy and have learned how to interact with clients with disabilities.

Event and course registration forms for ministry-led events include an area where clients can self-identify any accessibility requirements. This provides ministry staff the ability to proactively meet any accessibility requirements of clients attending events/courses. Customers have the ability to take part in ministry-led events/courses regardless of their self-identified accessibility requirements.

All Agriculture Information Contact Centre (AICC) staff have the OPS Enterprise teletypewriter (TTY) service installed on their computers. This allows all AICC staff to respond efficiently and effectively to any inbound TTY call received. Enterprise TTY training is offered as part of the AICC new staff onboarding process. As well, the AICC and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Information Centre conduct monthly tests of each centre's TTY service to ensure it is working correctly.

When disruptions to building services occurred, OMAFRA distributed notification of the service disruption in a timely manner and as required.

Information and communications

MYAP key outcome

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

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2016

The ministry continued to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA standards for all public-facing web content.

The ministry internally supports the creation of fully accessible documents. Content creators have access to resources that provide information on accessibility requirements and best practices. Content creators can also consult with the ministry's Communications Branch on creating accessible documents.

All documents are available in alternative formats upon request.

OMAFRA developed a series of resources and tools for the design/development of online learning, such as templates, checklists, testing procedures and guidance documents, and delivered a session to help staff:

- understand AODA requirements for online learning
- develop accessible eLearning and associated documents that are compliant with the WCAG 2.0 Level AA guidelines
- develop engaging material that is usable by all clients regardless of ability

Employment

MYAP key outcome

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

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2016

OMAFRA is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities.

As part of the ministry's annual performance planning process all managers and executives were required to include the following commitment in their performance development plans: "Actively apply inclusive leadership practices and promote an accessible and inclusive workplace." Performance reviews are conducted bi-annually and results are recorded.

All staff were required to take the training module "Working Together - The Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA." Managers and HR professionals were required to complete additional online training about the requirements of the Employment Standards under the AODA.

The OPS has a process to notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation during the recruitment process. OMAFRA managers were reminded of this requirement.

All expressions of interest and job ads indicate that: **the Ontario Public Service is an inclusive employer, and accommodation is available under the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#).**

The 2016-17 Diversity Career Champions Program was launched in September 2016. The program encouraged participation by employees in under-represented categories, including people with disabilities. Throughout the year, Employee Partners engage Executive Champions in a series of discussions focused on career development. Participants were supported by a dedicated program lead and orientation process that provided the tools and resources to support a successful partnership.

Design of public spaces

MYAP key outcome

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

Measures taken by OMAFRA in 2016

OMAFRA continued to ensure that accessibility was factored into all new construction and renovations.

Through the Building Administration Relations Committee, OMAFRA continues to champion and ensure that accessibility is a consideration for all new and renovated spaces within the facility located at 1 Stone Road in Guelph.

Annually, the ministry conducts a training session for all emergency evacuation staff volunteers to ensure they are fully aware of their responsibilities. The training session includes a segment on the buddy system for staff in need of assistance. OMAFRA also conducts a follow-up with managers four (4) times per year to ensure every staff member who requires assistance in an emergency is 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 taken by OMAFRA in 2016

OMAFRA has staff representation on the OPS Disability Advisory Council. The council is comprised of staff from participating ministries who have lived experience with a disability. The council meets quarterly to

provide input and advice on OPS policies and initiatives, and to work toward fulfilling their mandate as an OPS employee network dedicated to employees with disabilities.

OMAFRA provided resources and support to ensure that accessibility was considered in the purchase of goods and services. OMAFRA's Procurement Specialists continued to provide support and assistance to staff involved with procurement activities. Processes are in place to ensure accessibility criteria and features are incorporated into all stages of the procurement process.

To foster learning about the identification, prevention and removal of barriers to accessibility, OMAFRA collaborated with the University of Guelph for a fourth year, on the planning and delivery of the 2016 Accessibility Conference. The conference was a major success, with 50 facilitated sessions delivered by 82 speakers over the course of the two-day conference. There were 256 attendees representing the following groups: 55% university/college, 30% government and 15% private sector. Three additional workshops were also offered on Accessible Word and PDF, PDF Remediation and Accessible Fillable Forms. All workshops were full with 42 participants each. Captioning services were provided by the Canadian Hearing Society.

Section two: addressing the identification of barriers in legislation and implementation frameworks

Introduction

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.

As a result of this review, the government made changes to 11 statutes spread across seven ministries to ensure that Ontario laws better reflect accessibility considerations. The changes to the 11 statutes were included in the government's 2016 Budget bill, which received Royal Assent on April 19, 2016.

Each ministry continues to be responsible for identifying and addressing barriers in their legislation and the policies and programs through which that legislation is implemented, and for reporting on results through its accessibility report.

Our ministry remains committed to the goal of ensuring that Ontario legislation and implementation frameworks do not create barriers to persons with disabilities.

Measures in place in 2016

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:

The 2017-2021 OPS Multi-year Accessibility Plan was released in December 2016. OMAFRA has an accessibility governance structure in place and is well-positioned to respond to ministry accountabilities within the plan.

Subject matter experts from across the ministry are involved in establishing commitments and reporting on outcomes aimed at eliminating barriers to accessibility as part of an annual accessibility reporting process.

OMAFRA-specific training on the OPS Inclusion Lens was developed by the ministry’s Diversity and Inclusion Working Group and delivered to staff. This training focuses on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in policies, programs, practices and services using a comparative analysis against various dimensions of diversity, including disability.

Actions taken in the past year

“Inclusion Lens Training” was delivered to business development staff and OMAFRA emerging leaders in 2016. This two-part training included a pre-session exercise to increase awareness of hidden biases, followed by an interactive session on how to apply the principles of the Inclusion Lens. Participants learned how to analyze various dimensions of diversity, including disability. Recognizing accommodation barriers in recruitment was featured as part of the session.

Further, OMAFRA has a well-established feedback processes in place for clients and staff to report any barriers to accessibility they have encountered. Various feedback channels and methods are available, including the use of surveys and evaluations to solicit feedback. Response mechanisms are in place to ensure feedback received on accessibility-related matters continues to inform improvements to the way OMAFRA conducts business.

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Related

- [All 2016 ministry accessibility reports](#)
- [2012-2016 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#)
- [A guide to accessibility directives and policies in the Ontario Public Service](#)

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An accessible Ontario by 2025

Ontario is the first Canadian Province to pass a law to improve accessibility in the areas that impact the daily lives of people with disabilities.

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