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Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

2005-2006 Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The recent passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 marks a new era of accessibility in Ontario. This legislation will make Ontario one of the world leaders in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

While the government is moving forward to implement the new legislation, there will be a transition period during which government and parts of the broader public sector will continue to have planning and other obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.

Under the ODA, Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. These plans must be made available to the public. Accessibility planning efforts to date have developed a strong foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will ensure real and effective change.

This document is the third annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. It highlights achievements of the 2004-05 plan and outlines commitments for 2005-06 so that

no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

This ministry intends to build on its achievements by implementing initiatives that support the government's efforts and commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province, where people of all abilities have a chance to fully participate and achieve their potential.

Message from Minister

The Honourable Dr. Marie Bountrogianni



It is my pleasure to present the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan, and to share the many successes we have celebrated this past year in working towards the government's goal for an inclusive and accessible Ontario. Our staff has embraced the challenge of ensuring that all Ontarians have equal opportunity to live, work, and participate in the diverse activities available in our communities.

As the former Minister for Citizenship, I had the privilege of being involved in passage of the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The historic act delivers on the McGuinty government's commitment to real, positive change that will afford Ontarians of all abilities a high quality of life. I have heard first-hand how full accessibility truly benefits us all as Ontarians, and I remain committed to realizing that vision.

In this, our third accessibility plan, we will outline the ministry's achievements in identifying, removing and preventing barriers within the ministry for persons with disabilities during the past year. We will also present our commitments and strategies for the year ahead.

Many of our actions focus on internal operations and practices. In 2004-2005, the ministry demonstrated continued leadership in improving accessibility by launching the first phase of a multi-year remedial action plan to remove existing barriers that were identified in a recent audit of the ministry's physical space. Going forward, the ministry will continue its proactive and integrated approach focusing on the priorities of customer service, employment, communication and information, and the built environment or physical space. In this way, we will ensure real and effective change takes place.

The Honourable Dr. Marie Bountrogianni
Minister

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005

The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs (MIA) established an accessibility planning team in 2003.

Its mandate is to identify, remove and prevent barriers within the ministry to people with disabilities. The following are MIA's commitments and achievements from its 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will implement "phase one" of a multi-year remedial action plan to remove existing barriers that were identified in the 2003-2004 audit of the ministry's physical space.

Status

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Throughout the 2004-2005 fiscal year, MIA, using the remedial action plan produced as part of the 2003-2004 audit as a guide, made a number of changes to the ministry's physical space that removed barriers and improved accessibility. These included: the installation of automatic door openers; the installation of lever door handles on office doors; and the redesign / refurbishing of computer printing stations.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will implement the new barrier-free design guidelines, once they are released by the Ontario Realty Corporation.

Status

Complete and ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

Ontario Realty Corporation guidelines, released in October 2004, have been reviewed by the ministry's accessibility planning team and will be followed as required.

■ **Commitment**

Ministry staff will continue to consider accessibility as part of the procurement process. Formal processes and training will be communicated to staff to ensure compliance and consistency.

Status

Complete and ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

MIA's Executive Management Team was briefed on the new procurement directives and procurement staff have been trained.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will continue to ensure that the ministry's Internet site is accessible to people with disabilities.

Status

Complete and ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

All existing content on MIA's Internet was tested for accessibility in 2004. Beginning in 2005, all new content was designed and tested for accessibility as it was posted.

■ ***Commitment***

MIA will continue to provide guidance to ministry staff about the procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats.

Status

Complete and ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

MIA's Communications Branch produced written procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats in October 2004. They will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary.

■ ***Commitment***

MIA will continue to ensure that the ministry's management properly addresses the accommodation needs of employees and job applicants.

Status

Complete and ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

New managers and supervisors at MIA undertake Ontario Public Service accessibility training within three months of joining the ministry, unless they have already taken the training elsewhere in the Ontario Public Service. In addition, modifications were made to work stations to accommodate special needs.

■ ***Commitment***

MIA will continue to ensure that its human resources branch accommodates job applicants with disabilities.

Status

Complete and ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry's human resources branch regularly reviews processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

■ ***Commitment***

“Accessibility awareness” will be incorporated into the ministry’s staff orientation.

Status

In progress

Action and Timeframe:

Staff orientation information, including a component on “accessibility awareness”, will be posted on the ministry’s redesigned and expanded intranet. The redesigned intranet is now in development and expected to launch November 2005.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will ensure all branches and employees have the opportunity to provide input to the ministry’s accessibility planning.

Status

Complete and ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

MIA’s accessibility planning team was expanded in October 2004 to include a representative from each of the ministry’s branches. In addition, the ministry’s annual employee survey continues to include appropriate questions about accessibility and accommodation issues.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will build on existing procedures to improve emergency evacuation procedures for people with disabilities at all ministry locations.

Status

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Emergency evacuation procedures were reviewed and revised as necessary to include specific emergency evacuation procedures for people with disabilities in October 2004.

Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

During the coming year, MIA’s accessibility planning team will continue to monitor accessibility issues and implement the ministry’s accessibility plan.

The following describes MIA’s commitments, actions and timeframes for 2005-2006 to identify, remove and prevent barriers within the ministry to people with disabilities.

Built Environment

■ Commitment

MIA will implement “phase two” of its existing multi-year remedial action plan to remove the existing barriers that were identified in the 2003-2004 audit of the ministry’s physical space. (Phase one covered the period 2004-2005. Phase two, according to the remedial action plan produced as part of the audit, begins in 2005-2006 and continues for a maximum of three years to 2007-2008.)

Action:

MIA’s accessibility planning team will review all priorities identified in phase two of the remedial action plan; recommend specific priorities to be addressed in 2005-2006; and implement necessary action as appropriate.

Timeframe:

October 2005 through March 2006.

■ Commitment

MIA will continue its commitment to implement the Ontario Realty Corporation’s Standards for Barrier-Free Design.

Action:

MIA’s accessibility planning team will ensure the Standards for Barrier-Free Design are followed/implemented in any renovation or construction of ministry office space.

Timeframe:

Ongoing in 2005-2006 as necessary.

Customer Service

■ Commitment

MIA will continue its commitment to OPS procurement guidelines to ensure that accessibility has been considered in the procurement of goods and services.

Action:

New procurement staff at the ministry will be provided with the guidelines and appropriate training.

Timeframe:

Ongoing in 2005-2006.

■ Commitment

MIA will continue its commitment to ensure the ministry’s Internet site is accessible to people with disabilities.

Action:

All new content will be tested for accessibility.

Timeframe:

Ongoing in 2005-2006 when new material is added to the Internet.

■ ***Commitment***

Membership in MIA's accessibility planning team will be expanded to include broader representation from the ministry.

Action:

Two additional staff will be added to MIA's accessibility planning team: the ministry's Corporate Projects Coordinator and a second representative from MIA's Communications Branch.

Timeframe:

October 2005.

Employment

■ ***Commitment***

MIA will continue its commitment to ensure that the ministry's management properly addresses the accommodation needs of employees and job applicants.

Action:

All new managers and supervisors at the ministry will complete training on accommodating the accessibility needs of employees and job applicants who have disabilities.

Timeframe:

Ongoing in 2005-2006.

■ ***Commitment***

MIA will continue to ensure that the ministry's human resources branch accommodates job applicants with disabilities.

Action:

The ministry's human resources branch will regularly review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Timeframe:

Ongoing in 2005-2006.

Communications and Information

■ **Commitment**

MIA will continue to promote “accessibility awareness” to all staff throughout the ministry.

Action:

A component on “accessibility awareness” will be posted on the ministry’s redesigned and expanded intranet. The redesigned intranet is now in development and expected to launch November 2005. In addition, following on the success of accessibility training workshops presented to MIA staff in 2003-2004, the ministry’s accessibility planning team will coordinate similar staff presentations.

Timeframe:

Intranet component on accessibility awareness: November 2005

Staff presentations: spring 2006

■ **Commitment**

MIA will continue to ensure that all ministry branches and employees have the opportunity to provide input to MIA’s accessibility planning.

Action:

In addition to expanding MIA’s accessibility planning team by adding the ministry’s Corporate Projects Coordinator and a second representative from MIA’s Communications Branch, the ministry’s annual employee survey will continue to include appropriate questions about accessibility and accommodation issues.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will continue to ensure that all ministry branches and employees have the opportunity to provide input to MIA’s accessibility planning.

Timeframe:

Expansion of MIA’s accessibility planning team : October 2005.

MIA’s annual staff survey: late 2005 or early 2006.

■ **Commitment**

MIA will continue to provide guidance to ministry staff about the procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats.

Action:

The ministry’s communications staff will review existing procedures for responding to request for publications in accessible formats and update them as necessary. Procedures will be included in the ministry’s communications procedure manual; posted on the ministry’s intranet; and hard copies will be provided to ministry’s administrative/front-line staff.

Timeframe:

November 2005.

Acts and Regulations

Not applicable to MIA. (The ministry has only one act, the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs Act. It describes the ministry's mandate and the roles and responsibilities of the minister.)

For more information

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

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Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web site at: <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html>. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

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