MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

2003-2004
Accessibility Plan

Ontario

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Introduction

In 2001, there were an estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario with self-disclosed disabilities. This number is expected to increase as the population ages.

In December 2001, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was passed into law. Its purpose is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

One of the requirements under the ODA is that Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities, and public transportation organizations develop annual accessibility plans to make programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. The plans must be made available to the public.

In the Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 20, 2003, the Ontario Government confirmed its commitment to working with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

This document is the first annual accessibility plan for the Ministry of Transportation. The plan describes improvements to accessibility that the ministry has made to date and its commitments for the balance of the 2003-2004 fiscal year.

Report on Achievements

Prior to the passing of the ODA, the ministry has been vigilant in identifying barriers and removing them. The following lists recent achievements in improving accessibility.

Accessibility planning has been incorporated into the annual business planning process for 2003-2004 to ensure that the strategic and continuous improvement of accessibility for people with disabilities is an ongoing consideration. Included, as part of MTO's Key Ministry Strategies is major funding support for municipalities and public transportation organizations to ensure the requirements of the ODA are met, a comprehensive review of the Disabled Person Parking Permit (DPPP) Program and an accessible Internet site.

At this time, 100 per cent of MTO managers have completed the ODA on-line training as per Section 8 of the ODA. In addition, MTO has provided individual accommodation for its employees and prospective employees, as the need has arisen. Employee accommodation has included ergonomic assessments, the removal of physical and cognitive barriers, an increased number of designated parking spaces, monitoring of disabled person parking permits, providing alternate work arrangements, providing specialized equipment on an as-needed basis, and ensuring that all accommodation needs are met during the recruitment and selection process.

In February 2002, the government announced the Ontario Transit Renewal Program (OTRP) to help Ontario municipalities improve and renew their municipal transit systems. $100 million was allocated to 65 municipalities towards the purchase and refurbishment of buses. Municipalities' transit vehicle management plans must be consistent with the requirements as set out in the ODA.

The ministry has been undertaking a major initiative called "The Regional Transportation Directions" process. The four regions are Northern, Eastern, Southwestern, and Central. One of the key objectives is to recognize the need for mobility through the development of an integrated transportation system that is safe, efficient, and provides reasonable choice and accessibility.

The ministry has been working on highway signage initiatives to improve travel for all highway users, with a particular focus on aging drivers and others with visual disabilities. These initiatives include the redesign and upgrade of highway signs to increase the level of reflectivity and comprehension, as well as improved highway visibility through the installation of better lighting and use of retroreflective paint and/or raised pavement markers.

MTO partnered with the Ministry of Citizenship, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Toronto Police Service Disabled Liaison unit, members of the disabled community and other key stakeholders to review the Disabled Person Parking Permit (DPPP) Program. This comprehensive review resulted in increased penalties and additional offences under s.27 of the Highway Traffic Act. Effective September 20, 2002, it is

illegal to have more than one permit, make counterfeit permits, and either to lend or sell disabled person parking permits.

Effective December 31, 2002, as required under Section 6 of the ODA, MTO has successfully revised its Internet site (www.mto.gov.on.ca) to ensure accessibility.

The ministry is working with Publications Ontario as per Section 7 of the Act, to ensure that all MTO publications are provided in accessible formats upon request. To this end, the Official Driver's Handbook is available on audiotape for purchase through Publications Ontario. Information about all Driver's Handbooks can be found on the ministry's public website.

Section 5 of the Act requires that we consider the accessibility of goods and services that we are buying for internal and external use. As a result, effective November 2002, all Public Information Centres that were held during highway planning and highway reconstruction studies were located in universally accessible facilities within the project study area, provided these facilities were available.

MTO's Driver Improvement Counsellors are responsible for conducting interviews with members of the public regarding demerit points, collision involvement, school bus and driver instructor licensing, medical reviews, the remedial measures program, and senior driver licence renewals. All counsellors received training that included the following topics: (a) Service With a Difference-Intercultural Communication; (b) Principles of Service Equity; (c) Effective Approaches in Serving Seniors; and, (d) Practical Suggestions when Interacting with People with Disabilities.

Members of MTO's Accessibility Planning Team participated in the completion of GO Transit's current Accessibility Plan.

As per Section 4 of the ODA, the ministry has worked with Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) and its service providers, contractors and consultants to ensure Ontario Building Code (OBC) compliance is met or exceeded on all accommodation construction projects (i.e., the construction of driver examination centres).

Commitments and Strategies for 2003-2004

The Ministry of Transportation will make the ODA part of its annual business planning process, allocate appropriate funding, and prepare and publish an annual accessibility plan. This plan will be made available to all employees and to members of the public through its website , which will offer a variety of formats. MTO will inform the public of its ODA obligations by including information in mailings of licence renewal notices, reviewing the Official Driver's Handbook to determine if the content meets the needs of all people with disabilities, and researching and recommending improvements to various media such as telephone directories to identify accessibility telephone numbers.

Additionally, the ministry will establish an ongoing accessibility team to administer, monitor and evaluate the ministry's ODA obligations; to maintain and improve current translation, interpreter, ~~and~~ sign language, and note-taking services; and, to inspect workplaces to identify barriers to accessibility. The ministry will use staff expertise and existing committee structures where possible and hire a consultant with expertise in invisible disabilities with a focus on cognitive and attitudinal barriers.

MTO will promote awareness by establishing and maintaining an ODA website and email address to help employees and members of the public understand ODA and to encourage input into the yearly plan. The ministry will establish and maintain relationships with disability advocate groups in the community to enlist their expertise and assistance in identifying, preventing and removing barriers. The ministry will also liaise with other ministries to explore potential cross-ministry initiatives related to ODA.

Methods to be taken to prevent new barriers

Through a variety of initiatives, the Ministry of Transportation will endeavour to heighten awareness and promote a better understanding of the advantages of a barrier-free environment for all. During the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the ministry will:

- Establish and maintain an ODA Accessibility Planning Team to ensure all requirements are integrated into the ministry's annual planning cycles;

- Establish and maintain an ODA website and an email address that will encourage employees and members of the public to provide feedback and evaluate the ministry's success in implementing the ODA;

- Communicate information, through its senior executives, to staff and stakeholders about its obligations to implement the ODA;

- Assess all new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services to ensure that they are barrier-free and meet the requirements of the ODA.

By implementing these measures, the ministry will be better able to provide a barrier-free environment for the public, its employees and stakeholders. MTO will ensure that their obligations under the ODA are met as they relate to Section 4, accessibility to government buildings, structures and premises; Section 5, accessibility in procurement of goods and services; Section 6, improvements in accessibility of ministry Internet site; Section 7, publications in alternate formats; Section 8, employment accommodation; and Section 9, government-funded capital programs.

Business areas to be reviewed

The Ministry of Transportation focuses on the following core businesses to achieve its service delivery objectives: (a) Transportation Policy and Planning; (b) Provincial Highway Management; (c) Road User Safety; (d) Business Support; and (e) Transportation Information and Information Technology Cluster.

During 2003-2004, MTO will initiate a review of all new contractual agreements in all core business areas to ensure that they meet both the spirit and the legislated requirements of the ODA. It will also review partnerships with the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) to ensure physical locations are barrier-free and to solicit feedback from the public sector on all service delivery areas in order to enlist their help in identifying, preventing and removing barriers.

Acts and Regulations

A list of all MTO specific Acts & Regulations will be assembled over the next year in order that the Accessibility Planning Team can begin the process of ensuring that the language used is not creating systemic barriers for people with disabilities. This review will continue over the next three years.

Policies and Programs

Policy 1 – Staffing Policy

Human Resources staff will review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality of service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Program 1 – Ministry of Transportation Business Plan

MTO will ensure that the ministry's Business Plan is aligned with our responsibilities under the ODA.

Program 2 – Ontario Transit Renewal Program (OTRP)

MTO will continue to work with Ontario municipalities to improve and renew their municipal transit systems and ensure that their transit vehicle management plans are consistent with the requirements as set out in the ODA.

Practices and Services

Practice/Service 1 – Communication with the public

MTO will develop a communication strategy with an aim to consulting with the public to identify barriers in the delivery of our services.

Practice/Service 2 – Direct Service Delivery

A process for reviewing all new MTO contractual agreements will be established to ensure that they meet both the spirit and the legislated requirements of the ODA, with a particular focus on the Private Issuer Network, the Service Company (Serco), Area Maintenance Contracts and Managed Outsourcing.

Practice/Service 3 – Partnership with ORC

In partnership with ORC, the ministry will strive to ensure barrier-free access to all ministry buildings.

Practice/Service 4 – Official Driver's Handbook

This handbook will be reviewed to ensure the contents meet the needs of all people with disabilities.

Actions to be taken

Barrier identification and prevention

The Accessibility Planning Team will monitor implementation of this plan throughout the coming year, and will provide regular reports to the CAO and updates to the ministry staff. The Team will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate on implementation of MTO's accessibility plan, and on the preparation of the 2004-2005 plans, as required under Section 10 of the ODA.

An employee survey will be developed to assess the level of knowledge of accessibility issues among staff and provide employees with an opportunity to assist in identifying and removing barriers.

Workplaces will be inspected to identify accessibility barriers.

Information sessions will be provided to staff as well as training opportunities at all levels of the organization through various forums.

MTO will establish and maintain relationships with disability advocate groups in various communities to enlist their expertise and assistance in identifying and preventing barriers. This will include an expert in identifying and preventing barriers to individuals with invisible disabilities, with a focus on cognitive and attitudinal barriers.

The ministry will review and determine how best to liaise with the public by including information on ODA in mailings of licence renewal notices. It will research and recommend improvements to various media forums, such as telephone directories, to identify accessibility telephone contact numbers, including the MTO TTY number.

The Official Driver's Handbook will be reviewed to ensure the content meets the needs of all individuals with disabilities.

MTO will ensure that ministry program managers and supervisors are given guidance on accessibility in all procurement activities, as required under Section 5 of the ODA. All staff responsible for procurement will receive the "Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act," once distributed by Management Board Secretariat.

Improved accessibility in communications

The ministry will communicate information through the senior executive team to staff and stakeholders about our obligations under the ODA.

An ODA website and an email address will be established and maintained to encourage both employees and members of the public to provide feedback and assist in evaluating the ministry's success in implementing ODA.

All ministry staff will be provided with a communication document that outlines the procedures for responding to requests from the public for publications in accessible formats.

Improved accessibility of facilities

The ministry's Facilities and Business Services Branch will work closely with MBS, ORC and third party landlords to ensure barrier-free access to buildings with a focus on entrances and points of egress, accessibility to corridors, washrooms and common work areas, and signage related to both interior and exterior entrance ways.

Improved accessibility in technology

MTO will ensure that all new material posted to the ministry's Internet and intranet sites is tested for accessibility by people with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability' under the ODA.

The ministry will ensure that all new material posted to the ministry's Internet and intranet sites is available in a variety of formats.

The ministry is committed to the installation of TTY in all call centres throughout the province. The ministry will also train staff on TTY in partnership with the Bell Telephone Company.

For more information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (416) 235-3885

TTY number: (905) 704-2426

1-800 number: 1-800-268-4686

E-mail: oda@mto.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.mto.gov.on.ca

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship's Accessibility Ontario web portal at: www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

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

Publications Ontario
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In Ottawa, call (613) 238-3630 or toll-free: 1-800-268-8758
TTY Service: 1-800-268-7095

Queens Printer for Ontario

ISSN 1708-4350

Ce document est disponible en français.