

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

*2004-2005
Accessibility Plan*



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Introduction

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 policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. The plans must be made available to the public.

This document is the second annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Transportation, Ontario (MTO). It highlights achievements of the 2003-04 plan and outlines commitments for 2004-05 so that no new barriers are created and existing ones are removed over time.

Ministries across government are increasing awareness of accessibility and integrating accessibility into daily business practices in a number of areas, including staff training, public information, facilities, and program and service delivery processes.

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 the Minister of Transportation



Honourable Harinder S. Takhar

I am pleased to present the Ministry of Transportation's 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan.

The ability to easily travel to and from our home and workplace contributes greatly to our enjoyment of life. MTO is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing transportation barriers so that Ontarians with disabilities can fully participate in building a stronger province.

We are working with our partners to improve public transit and ensure all Ontarians have access to safe and efficient transportation.

In 2003-04 the Ontario Transit Renewal Program (OTRP) provided over 100 million in capital funding assistance to 41 Ontario municipalities, which helped buy 289 accessible transit buses and 52 specialized accessible transit buses. We will continue to work with Ontario municipalities to improve and renew their municipal transit systems and increase accessibility.

We want to become an accessible and inclusive employer and service provider. We will improve highway signs to make our highways safer for travellers, and ensure the Official Driver's Handbook meets the needs of people of all abilities.

The achievements highlighted in this year's plan, as well as the commitments to make further improvements in the coming year, demonstrate this ministry's support of the government's efforts to make Ontario's communities strong, vital and accessible.

The government will introduce, this fall, measures to make the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) strong and effective. Together, we can build a safe and efficient transportation system that is accessible to all the people of Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "HS Takhar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Honourable Harinder S. Takhar
Minister of Transportation

Report on Achievements of 2003-2004 Planning Commitments

Commitment: In partnership with ProFac and Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), the ministry strives to ensure barrier-free access to all ministry 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.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: ORC recommended enhancements to the *Standards for Barrier-free Design Guidelines* (formerly called *Barrier-free Design Guideline*) were approved by Management Board of Cabinet and shared with MTO. Standards are currently being developed for each of the recommended items.

Rationale: Awaiting release of the enhanced *Standards for Barrier-free Design Guidelines*.

Commitment: Inspect workplaces to identify barriers to accessibility.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: Reviewed approaches to identifying barriers and conducted a pilot building review in conjunction with other ministries - April 2004.

Rationale: The ministry is currently consulting with other ministries on a standard process and opportunities to consolidate efforts.

Commitment: 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.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: The ministry sought legal advice in the course of reviewing key contracts. Consultation with legal will continue on an as needed basis. ODA language is incorporated into procurement documentation to ensure all new procurement related contracts meet the legislated requirements of ODA.

Commitment: MTO ensures 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 guidelines for implementing the procurement provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) once distributed by Management Board Secretariat.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: The recent release of the "*Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act*" was distributed to senior managers in August 2004. The Registry, Appraisal & Qualification System (RAQS) was recently upgraded to include reference to ODA compliance.

Rationale: As a general practice, ministry staff consider accessibility issues when obtaining goods and services for the ministry. With the Government's recent release of the formal procurement guidelines, ministry processes will be formalized in 2004-05 and communicated to staff with procurement responsibilities.

Commitment: MTO ensures that all new material posted to the ministry's Internet site meets the requirements under the ODA and is available in a variety of formats.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: Posted MTO Internet public documents were developed as accessible HTML documents. An alternate format (PDF) is also available for a limited number of publications where paper versions were also produced. MTO web editors follow the World Wide Web Consortium accessibility guidelines, priorities I and II, as directed by the Management Board Secretariat's e-government office. MTO uses ConnectOutloud to test content for accessibility with screen readers. The MTO web staff's active participation at the inter-ministerial GO web committee monthly meetings, in sub-committees and workshops, ensured that they are up to date on the approaches being considered by ministries of the Ontario government.

Commitment: MTO ensures that all new material posted to the ministry's intranet site meets the requirements under the ODA and is available in a variety of formats.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe: Under the MTO intranet resources section, a web accessibility checklist document is posted for web developers' reference. MTO web editors provide consultation and recommendations to program areas to ensure accessibility requirements under World Wide Web Consortium guidelines are followed.

Rationale: Efforts are made to encourage content and functionality that is accessible to people with disabilities.

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

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: The Official Driver's Handbook and the Road Worthy book are now available on audiotape for purchase through Publications Ontario. Information about the driver's handbook is found on the ministry's public website. ODA obligations under section 7 of the act were discussed with the driver's handbook committee.

Commitment: 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.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe: The ministry is working with Publications Ontario to ensure that MTO publications are provided in accessible formats upon request. An internal process was developed, communicated and posted as of September 2004.

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

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe: MTO staffing guidelines and competition process was reviewed. Meanwhile, accommodation needs are met during the recruitment and selection process.

Rationale: Report and recommendations for improvements for implementing staffing guidelines submitted to human resources senior management for their consideration.

Commitment: 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.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe: Project initiation phase completed including preliminary consultations with other ministries. Objectives clearly defined and shared with the ministry's ODA planning team for input and review.

Rationale: Consolidation efforts with other ministries that have a similar commitment are being considered.

Commitment: MTO will inform the public of its ODA obligations by including information in mailings of licence renewal notices.

Status: Deferred until further notice

Action and Timeframe: Consultation with program areas completed in April 2004. Practice of mailing information with licence renewal notices is no longer feasible.

Rationale: Alternate, more cost effective methods are being considered.

Commitment: MTO ensures that the ministry's 2003-04 business plan is aligned with our responsibilities under the ODA.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe: Accessibility planning was incorporated into the annual business planning process in 2003-04 to ensure that the strategic and continuous improvement of accessibility for people with disabilities is an ongoing consideration.

Commitment: Prepare and publish an annual accessibility plan. This plan will be made available to all employees and to members of the public through MTO's website, which will offer a variety of formats.

Status: 2004-05 plan completed

Action and Timeframe: In consultation with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, this is MTO's second published annual accessibility plan. The MTO accessibility plan is made available to employees and members of the public through MTO's public website. The accessibility plan is offered in a variety of formats upon request.

Commitment: The ministry will establish an ongoing accessibility team. ODA team will administer, implement commitments stated in the plan, monitor implementation progress, evaluate and provide progress reports to the CAO and updates to the ministry staff.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: An MTO ODA planning team with cross-divisional representations was established. The team assisted in the administration and implementation process and meets regularly to ensure that progress in meeting commitments is monitored and measured.

Commitment: The team will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate on implementation of MTO's accessibility plan. The ministry will liaise with other ministries to explore potential cross-ministry initiatives related to ODA.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: The ministry actively participates on the ODA inter-ministerial working group committee led by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. This facilitates ongoing consultations with sister ministries on related ODA commitments. Members of the MTO ODA planning team participated in assisting with the preparation of GO Transit's comprehensive 2004 accessibility plan.

Commitment: MTO will promote awareness by establishing and maintaining an ODA website and e-mail address to help employees and members of the public understand the ODA and to encourage input into the yearly plan.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe: Process to manage input and enquiries through the ODA e-mail address (oda@mto.gov.ca) was developed and implemented across the organization. Enquiries, issues and input received from members of the public since implementation were acknowledged and addressed.

Commitment: A list of all MTO specific acts and regulations will be assembled over the next year.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe: Twenty-seven acts were identified and listed in preparation for language appropriateness review with respect to people with disabilities. Review will be done over the next few years.

Commitment: 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.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: In fiscal year 2003-04 the Ontario Transit Renewal Program (OTRP) provided over 100 million in capital funding assistance to 41 Ontario municipalities. The OTRP provides up to one third of eligible costs for the replacement or major refurbishment of aging municipal transit vehicles. OTRP assisted in the acquisition of 289 accessible conventional transit buses and 52 accessible specialized transit buses.

Commitment: The ministry is committed to reviewing the installation of Teletypewriter (TTY) in call centres throughout the province. 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.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: Initial consultation and research with disability groups and program areas completed. MTO Info TTY numbers are now published on the MTO public website in various locations. MTO Info TTY 800 number is now also published on the public government Internet site, INFO-GO. Request to update the blue pages was submitted and next printed edition will reflect changes. MTO Info staff are trained on use of TTY and easy to follow instructions are well displayed for operating staff. TTY is equipped with an uninterrupted power supply. Usage is monitored. MTO publications up for review are to be updated to include MTO Info TTY numbers.

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

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration public consultation results were communicated broadly. ODA website for staff and e-mail address for the public and staff available. Process to manage enquiries and input was developed, communicated and implemented. The MTO 2003-04 accessibility plan is available in a variety of formats and is published on both the intranet and Internet websites. Disabled person parking permit review completed January 2004 and included initial consultation with over 50 stakeholder groups.

Commitment: 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.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe: Options to best meet this commitment were identified and are being assessed.

Rationale: Other options aside from hiring an external consultant are being considered in light of the government's commitment to being fiscally responsible including partnerships with disability groups who may possess such expertise.

Commitment: The ministry will communicate information through the senior executive team to staff and stakeholders about our obligations under the ODA. Information sessions will be provided to staff as well as training opportunities at

all levels of the organization through various forums. 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.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: Senior executives support and demonstrate their commitment to ODA through various communications to staff.

Commitment: Maintain and improve current translation, interpreter, and sign language, and note-taking services.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe: Preliminary assessment with government information centre front line staff in June 2004 confirmed adequate services are provided to walk-in customers with a hearing loss. Front line staff are able to access appropriate services and options are offered to clients as appropriate.

Commitment: 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.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe: Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's public consultation results communicated broadly. Findings were considered in the development of this year's plan.

Rationale: Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration public consultation established formal relationship with disability stakeholder groups.

Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

Legislative Requirements

Commitment: MTO will strive to ensure barrier-free access to ministry 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 entranceways.

Action: Once released, the ORC barrier-free design guidelines will be communicated to MTO facility management staff and regional business service managers.

Timeframe: Distribution to affected staff will be within one month of the release of the ORC barrier-free design guidelines.

Commitment: Continue to assess the various MTO workplaces and emergency evacuation processes to identify accessibility barriers. Request accessibility changes from landlords and their agents including ORC and ProFac.

Action: Conclude consultation with other ministries on a standard process and opportunities to consolidate efforts. A strategy detailing priorities in conducting the inspections will be developed. Findings of review will be compiled and priorities will be established for use in addressing results recognizing that any facilities issues will be the obligation of ORC unless it is a clear MTO tenant responsibility. Will build on existing procedures already in place to continue to improve emergency evacuation processes for people with disabilities.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: MTO will take steps to ensure that future contractual agreements are consistent with ODA.

Actions: MTO will review contractual agreements that affect accessibility and determine whether there should be recommendations to address accessibility issues. In consultation with legal counsel, MTO will consider ODA requirements in dealing with future contracts.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: MTO will continue to consider accessibility in the purchase of goods and services, under section 5 of the ODA.

Action: Staff responsible for procurement will receive the *Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. MTO will provide guidance to MTO managers on accessibility in procurement as required. Management Board Secretariat guidelines will be posted on MTO intranet site for users' reference.

Timeframe: 2004-2005

Commitment: Assess whether new materials posted on the ministry's Internet site meet the requirements of ODA, section 6. Continue to provide advice and guidance to MTO web developers on ODA requirements. Attend on an ongoing basis the inter-ministerial GO web committee meetings and workshops. Extend invitations to web developers and content providers to attend sensitivity training on barriers to accessibility. When distributed by Management Board Secretariat, follow revised web standards for intranets reflecting accessibility development guidelines.

Action: Continue to follow World Wide Web Consortium accessibility guidelines, priorities I & II. Continue to provide consultation and recommendations to web developers. Identify web staff who should attend ODA sensitivity training.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: Scheduled review of the Official Driver's Handbook will take into consideration ODA requirements. MTO will support accommodation requests on an as needed basis. Requests for alternate formats will be actioned through Publications Ontario.

Action: ODA planning team will provide guidance and assistance to the Driver's Handbook Committee to ensure needs of people with disabilities are considered. ODA planning team will attend committee meetings as required to provide support and direction around the application of the ODA.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: Continue to review alternative communication systems, with a focus on TTY devices, throughout the organization to facilitate accessibility to information by persons who are deaf or speech impaired.

Action: Research and recommend improvements to various media and MTO publications to identify accessibility telephone contact numbers. Communicate TTY numbers to key stakeholders. Develop and communicate best business practices to MTO information counsellors. Test TTY numbers for usability.

Timeframe: September 2005

Commitment: MTO will continue to review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality of service and accommodation for people with disabilities

Action: Revised MTO staffing guidelines will be distributed to MTO's human resource staff. Managers will be trained as required.

Timeframe: March 2005

Commitment: MTO will continue to provide individual accommodation for its employees and prospective employees, as the need arises. Will continue to provide accommodation, as requested, to individuals involved in a competitive process. Respond to individual staff requests for accommodation as it relates to their employment.

Action: Employee accommodation includes ergonomic assessments, the removal of physical and cognitive barriers, providing alternate work arrangements, providing specialized equipment on an as-needed basis. Manager and supervisor education will be provided as needed regarding employment accommodation with respect to accessibility needs of people with disabilities.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: Continue to assess the level of knowledge of accessibility issues among staff and provide employees with an opportunity to assist in identifying and removing barriers

Action: Development of an employee questionnaire. Results of questionnaire will be analysed by the ODA planning team.

Timeframe: February 2005

Commitment: MTO will continue to consider public input through consultation with key stakeholders in the identification of barriers in the delivery of our services.

Action: In consultation with Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and other Ontario Public Service organizations, MTO will provide opportunities for members of the public and disability groups to provide input into initiatives related to ODA. To that effect, MTO will continue to maintain an ODA website and e-mail address and will monitor enquiries to ensure comments and issues are dealt with.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Acts and Regulations

Commitment: Language used in the existing and proposed ministry acts and regulations will be reviewed to ensure appropriate language is used with respect to people with disabilities.

Action: Determine divisional administration of MTO's acts and regulations. ODA planning team will develop criteria to assist in prioritizing review schedule. Conduct initial review. In consultation with legal branch, develop recommendations identifying appropriate amendments.

Timeframe: Over next two years with completion date of September 2006 – subject to timing priorities of legislature.

Policies

Commitment: MTO continues to work on the Greater Toronto Area Transportation Strategy, one of several initiatives of the government's priority to build strong accessible communities. This strategy will also support the transportation objectives of the government's growth plan, developed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The Greater Toronto Area Transportation Strategy will make the critical connections between land use and transportation.

Action: The strategy will identify short, medium and long-term strategies for the future development of inter-regional transit and the various transportation corridors that support growth of the GTA that is safe, efficient and provides reasonable choice and accessibility.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: MTO will continue to work on highway signing initiatives to improve travelling for highway users, particularly for senior drivers and other people with visual impairments.

Action: Complex highway signs are continually being upgraded to higher levels of reflectivity to improve comprehension. To improve highway visibility, better lighting is being installed and markings are being upgraded. A new series of technical manuals will be developed. These manuals will provide road authorities across Ontario with up-to-date information on the proper selection and application of traffic control devices such as signs, traffic signals and pavement markings.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Programs and Services

Commitment: Consult with program areas on ODA.

Action: Members of the ODA planning team provide, as required, advice and recommendations to program areas on ODA.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: The ODA planning team will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate on the development and implementation of MTO's accessibility plan. The ministry will liaise with other ministries to explore potential cross-ministry initiatives related to ODA.

Action: Where appropriate, MTO will team up with other ministries to address similar commitments. Members of the ODA planning team are participating in the development of GO Transit's 2005 accessibility plan.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: Continue to maintain and improve current translation, interpreter, and sign language, and note-taking services.

Action: MTO will continue to assess current services. Findings and recommendations to maintain and improve services will be outlined in a report. Action plan to address results will be prepared.

Timeframe: September 2005

Commitment: 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.

Action: MTO will work/liaise with Ontario municipalities.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: Continue the review of the disabled person parking permit program eligibility.

Action: Discuss the review results and make recommendations on new eligibility criteria with critical stakeholders. Identify strategies to deter fraud and misuse of the disabled person parking permit and ensure only those persons who have the greatest need have access to the permit privileges.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Practices

Commitment: The ODA planning team will continue to develop the annual ODA Plan and will consider its commitments in light of results-based planning priorities to ensure that commitments to accessibility are linked. Additionally, the team will administer and implement commitments stated in the plan, monitor implementation progress, evaluate and provide progress reports to the Chief Administrative Officer and provide updates to ministry staff.

Action: The ODA planning team will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate on the development and implementation of MTO's accessibility plan as well as liaise with other ministries to explore potential cross-ministry initiatives related to ODA. ODA planning team will ensure that appropriate membership representation is in place.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment: Develop accessibility guideline on best practices for proposed publications for simplified Internet posting and easier conversion to alternate formats.

Action: Identify most popular MTO government publications and determine program areas administration. Communicate obligations under the ODA and distribute the *Guide to Multiple Formats for Communications* to respective areas. Post notice on website stating alternate formats are available and provide information about how to obtain them.

Timeframe: December 2004

Commitment: Increase MTO staff knowledge and awareness in regards to accessibility issues with a focus on cognitive and attitudinal barriers.

Action: In consultation with various internal and external stakeholders, the ministry will educate and inform staff on accessibility issues and the ODA. The IT standards for government intranets are under review. The revised standards, when available, will incorporate the principles of accessibility best practices.

Timeframe: June 2005

Commitment: New managers will receive ODA Workforce Information Network training.

Action: A process will be developed, communicated and implemented across the organization. ODA planning team will monitor and report progress. Follow up as required.

Timeframe: Ongoing

For more information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (416) 235-3885 (GTA area)

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

TTY number: (905) 704-2426 (St. Catharines area)

TTY 1-866 number: 1-866-471-8929

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

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

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Accessibility Ontario website 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.

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Queen's Printer for Ontario

ISSN 1708-4350

Ce document est disponible en français.