

2004-2005 Accessibility Plan - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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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 Municipal Affairs and Housing. 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



As Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, it is my pleasure to present the ministry's 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan. This plan not only showcases our past accomplishments, it reinforces our commitment to offer accessible services and a workplace that complies fully with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

We have come a long way in achieving our goals and we look forward to going even further in the coming years. In recent months we have ensured that accessibility requirements and guidelines were reflected in the Ontario Building Code. We are also working to provide advice to municipalities on how they can incorporate accessibility issues in local planning.

Actions such as these reflect the real, positive change we are delivering to make Ontario strong, healthy and

prosperous. The McGuinty government is working to build strong and liveable communities that offer a high quality of life for Ontarians of all abilities.

We will continue to ensure that people with disabilities have easy access to ministry information, and can participate in our policy consultations and obtain the services of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal through our accessible Internet sites.

We want to work with Ontarians with disabilities on measures that will allow them to participate in building a strong, prosperous and healthy province. We are committed to continuing to identify and remove barriers that may hinder Ontarians from fully participating in the life of our great province.

The Honourable John Gerretsen
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Report on Achievements of 2003-2004 Planning Commitments

Introduction

Addressing accessibility issues is a top priority for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In 2003-2004, we wanted to ensure that our actions had a tangible, beneficial effect on the lives of all Ontarians.

With that in mind, we are pleased to report that we have made substantial progress in meeting the ministry's 2003-2004 commitments. With the support of our partner ministries, the outstanding commitments will be met this year.

We have worked hard to ensure that accessibility concerns are addressed in the development of policy and programs. Our achievements demonstrate our commitment to offer accessible services and a workplace that complies fully with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Commitment:

The ministry has made the Shared Services Bureau training on the ODA mandatory training for current and new managers and supervisors. The training reflects the ministry's commitment to meet the accessibility needs of OPS employees and job applicants

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

As of December 2003, 100 per cent of current managers and supervisors had received the Shared Service Bureau training on ODA.

Commitment:

Redesign the ministry's staff intranet site to be accessible as required by Section 6 of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). The redesigned intranet site ensures that all ministry staff have equal access to ministry information and opportunities.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The staff intranet site was redesigned to be accessible to staff with disabilities.

Commitment:

To develop the ministry's 2004-05 Accessibility Plan and raise awareness of accessibility issues, the ministry will:

- survey staff to identify existing barriers to accessibility at the ministry;
- develop and implement an information and education strategy for ministry staff prior to conducting research and surveys; and,
- complete a ministry accessibility quotient survey.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

A survey, requesting employees to identify potential barriers, was completed in the summer, 2003. All directors in the ministry were asked to complete an accessibility quotient survey of their work area. Both surveys included a

primer on accessibility issues and definitions. Results of the survey were shared with the ministry's ODA Advisory group and used to identify new commitments for the 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan.

Commitment:

In order to increase municipalities' awareness of accessibility issues, provide municipalities with information to help meet their accessibility requirements in the Planning Act.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

An Info Sheet entitled, Plans of Subdivision and Accessibility was published to assist municipalities with identifying accessibility issues when reviewing plans for subdivisions.

Commitment:

Continue the consideration of regulatory amendments that relate to accessibility within the Ontario Building Code, regulations to implement Bill 124, the Building Code Statute Law Amendment Act, 2002.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

As part of the development of the next edition of the Ontario Building Code, the ministry completed a public consultation on potential technical amendments, including changes related to barrier-free access, in May 2003. Building Code technical committees have reviewed the consultation results. The next edition of the Ontario Building Code is expected to take effect by 2006.

Commitment:

As part of implementing the new qualification requirements for building practitioners, the ministry is developing a qualification and registration tracking system (QuARTS). In order to ensure that the system is accessible to all building practitioners, the system is being developed in accordance with accessibility guidelines.

Status: Testing Complete

Action and Timeframe:

In July 2003, the government required designers and inspectors to become qualified and registered by 2005. QuARTS has been developed and tested to be in accordance with government accessibility guidelines including those of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The system allows applicants to file online and is expected to go-live to the public mid-2004.

Commitment:

The ministry offers training courses that cover the administration and technical requirements of the Ontario Building Code. Course content includes the barrier-free requirements set out in the Ontario Building Code to enhance uniformity of interpretation and application.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry has instituted accessibility as a standard part of its core Ontario Building Code technical training.

Commitment:

We will develop a process to ensure that proposals for new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services are assessed to review their impact with respect to people with disabilities.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

As new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services are developed, policy staff will receive guidelines to assist in their review of potential impacts with respect to people with disabilities.

Rationale:

Guidelines will be developed in 2004-2005.

Commitment:

Review the protocol for developing Cabinet and Management Board submissions, to ensure that proposals are considered from the perspective of those with disabilities.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Review of the protocol determined that ministry staff evaluates all Cabinet and Management Board submissions. If the proposal has ODA considerations, the ministry submits the submission to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for review.

Commitment:

Assess operating proposals included in the 2004-2005 business planning submissions.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Operating proposals included in the 2004-2005 results-based planning were assessed for ODA implications. ODA

consideration was included in the Ontario Building Code operating proposal.

Commitment:

Create the ODA advisory group to assist the ODA working group in identifying potential barriers to accessibility. The ODA working group assists in developing the ministry's accessibility plan.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ODA advisory group will be an extension of the ODA working group. Additional members will be called upon as issues within the ministry are identified and require further consultation.

Commitment:

Review staff development strategies and identify potential barriers to training opportunities for personnel with disabilities.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to work with individuals, as training needs are identified.

Workplace discrimination and harassment policy information technology training was taken by all ministry employees and included sensitivity and awareness training.

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs within Management Board Secretariat guidelines.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs within Management Board Secretariat guidelines.

Commitment:

Ensure that construction and office redesign at the ministry continues to be based on good ergonomic design.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry works together with individuals to ensure that their workspaces are based on good ergonomic design and are devoid of any accessibility barriers.

Commitment:

The ministry will work with landlords of buildings leased by the ministry to ensure that all hallways are clearly lit and free of clutter and that lighting in targeted facilities provides optimal safety and convenience for visitors and employees with visual impairments.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to work with landlords to implement this commitment.

Commitment:

Ensure signage in ministry buildings is written in plain language, clearly posted, readable and at an appropriate height.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to ensure signage serves all clients and works with landlords to eliminate any barriers as they are identified.

Commitment:

Continue to include accessible website design principles through ongoing training for web publishers.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

Accessible website design principles are included in training for intranet and Internet publishers. New public material is reviewed for accessibility before approval.

Commitment:

Ensure that all future Internet content is accessible as required by Section 6 of the ODA by auditing the ministry's Internet sites annually.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

Internet content is accessible as required by the ODA. An annual review of ministry sites is scheduled for 2004-2005.

Rationale:

In the future, the ministry will be auditing the ministry's Internet sites on an annual basis.

Commitment:

Guide policy and program development staff on how to include accessibility in proposals.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

A staff member responsible for ensuring ODA compliance (ODA lead) was available to policy and program development staff for training and guidance. The primer on accessibility issues and definitions that went out to everyone in the ministry in the summer of 2003 included the ODA lead's contact information.

Commitment:

Include accessibility issues in all new program evaluations committed to in 2003-2004.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

Accessibility issues were considered in the program evaluations in 2003-2004 through consultations with the ODA and program evaluation leads.

Commitment:

Post the accessibility of venues in advertisements or promotional material for major public events hosted by the ministry.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

Information about accessibility at the major public consultation meetings around the province is included in advertising, on the web and on the call centre's recorded messages.

Commitment:

Have a practice currently in place to provide alternate formats of ministry publications.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

Customer assistance receives and coordinates requests for alternate formats through Publications Ontario.

Commitment:

Ontario Small Town and Rural Development Infrastructure (OSTAR) initiatives support barrier-free access.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

The Township of Baldwin received funding to upgrade the washroom and facilities to provide wheel chair access in the municipal building and fire hall.

Commitment:

When distributed by Management Board Secretariat, all staff with responsibility for procurement will receive the Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

Ongoing

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 formal procurement guidelines, ministry processes will be formalized in 2004-05 and communicated to staff to ensure compliance and consistency.

Commitment:

Once Ontario Realty Corporation barrier-free design guidelines are in place, the ministry will develop a process and schedule to conduct an accessibility audit in all reception/public areas. This measure is designed to identify communication and architectural barriers in regional services offices.

Status: In progress pending the release of ORC barrier-free standards.

Rationale:

The accessibility audit is deferred until the release of the Ontario Realty Corporation guidelines.

Commitment:

Continue the process of developing a regulation under the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, to prescribe the proportion of any new units created under municipal housing programs that must be accessible to people with disabilities.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry is responsible for developing a new regulation under Section 5.1 of the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, to prescribe accessibility requirements for new units under municipal housing programs. The standards to be developed include percentage of accessible units, definition of accessibility, and access system for these units. The ministry is soliciting further input from stakeholders on the specific standards to be developed.

Commitment:

As part of the five-year review, consider changes to the Provincial Policy Statement to reflect ODA requirements.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The Provincial Policy Statement review is currently in the process of public consultation. The draft policy addresses accessibility.

Commitment:

Publish a Planning for Barrier Free Development guide. This handbook is intended to guide municipalities in considering accessibility issues and eliminating barriers to accessibility when designing public spaces.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The Planning for Barrier Free Development guide is in development.

Commitment:

Issue a ministry-wide communication reminding staff that all public meetings must be fully accessible. This includes logistics of meetings, physical and communication requirements, including such aids as sign language interpreters, real-time captioning etc. available upon request.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

Planned for 2004-2005

Commitment:

Develop a process and a multi-year schedule to review all existing ministry acts and regulations to ensure the appropriate use of language with respect to barriers to people with disabilities.

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry has begun to develop a process and a multi-year schedule to review all existing ministry acts and regulations.

Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

Introduction

Our commitments for 2004-2005 build on our successes of the past year. We will continue to encourage awareness of accessibility issues wherever we can. For ministry staff and potential employees, we will provide accessible workplaces, ergonomic workstations and employment accommodation.

For the public, we will continue to ensure that people with disabilities have easy access to ministry information and can participate in our policy consultations through our websites.

We will also work to improve accessibility in the community by increasing awareness of accessibility issues among municipal and building officials.

Legislative Requirements

Commitment:

The ministry will encourage awareness of accessibility issues and identify any potential barriers by soliciting staff input and ideas. Staff input and ideas will be used to identify new commitments for the 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan.

Action:

The ministry will provide opportunities for staff to provide input and ideas.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

The ministry will publicize the updated manager's guide to the OPS Employment Accommodation Fund on the ministry intranet.

Action:

Provide information on how this fund can be accessed for training purposes.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

The ministry will ensure that Shared Services Bureau's generic training on ODA meets the accessibility needs of OPS employees and job applicants.

Action:

Shared Service Bureau's generic training on ODA will be part of mandatory training for new managers and supervisors.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs within Management Board Secretariat guidelines.

Action:

Continue to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs as they are identified.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Review staff development strategies and identify potential barriers to training opportunities for personnel with disabilities.

Action:

The ministry will continue to work with individuals, as training needs are identified.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Once Ontario Realty Corporation barrier-free design guidelines are in place, the ministry will develop a process and schedule to conduct an accessibility audit in all reception/public areas. This measure is designed to identify communication and architectural barriers in regional services offices.

Action:

Once the Ontario Realty Corporation barrier-free design guidelines are in place, the ministry will begin its accessibility audit of reception/public areas.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to work with landlords of buildings leased by the ministry to ensure that all hallways are clearly lit and free of clutter and that lighting in targeted facilities provides optimal safety and convenience for visitors and employees with visual impairments.

Action:

The ministry will continue to work with landlords and staff to identify and remove accessibility barriers.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Continue to ensure signage in ministry buildings is written in plain language, clearly posted, readable and at an appropriate height.

Action:

The ministry will continue to ensure signage serves all clients and work with landlords to eliminate any barriers as they are identified.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Continue to ensure that construction and office redesign in ministry buildings continues to be based on good ergonomic design.

Action:

The ministry will continue to work together with individuals to ensure that their workspaces are based on good ergonomic design and are devoid of any accessibility barriers.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

The ministry will publicize procurement accessibility issues information on the ministry internal staff intranet site.

Action:

The ministry will publicize information about procurement accessibility issues on the ministry’s internal staff intranet site.

Timeframe:

March 2005

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.

Action:

In Progress

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Continue to ensure that all future Internet content is accessible as required by Section 6 of the ODA

Action:

Internet content will be accessible as required by the ODA. An annual review of ministry sites is scheduled for 2004-2005.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Continue to include accessible website design principles through ongoing training for web publishers.

Action:

Accessible website design principles are included in training for intranet and Internet publishers.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Have a practice currently in place to provide alternate formats.

Action:

Customer assistance will continue to coordinate requests for alternate formats through Publications Ontario.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Assess operating proposals included in the 2005-2006 business planning submissions.

Action:

Operating proposals will be reviewed by a senior policy adviser to ensure ODA compliance.

Timeframe:

March 2005.

Commitment:

Ontario Small Town and Rural Development Infrastructure (OSTAR) initiatives support barrier-free access.

Action:

The ministry will continue the funding for currently approved projects.

Timeframe:

All funding approvals are confirmed under this initiative. No new approvals will be made.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

Review new and existing acts and regulations to ensure the appropriate use of language with respect to barriers to people with disabilities.

Action:

The following acts and regulations will be reviewed in 2004-2005:

- Municipal Act, 2001
- Tenant Protection Act, 1997
- Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004
- Ontario Building Code
- Social Housing Reform Act, 2000

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

The ministry will continue the review of potential regulatory amendments to the Ontario Building Code that would enhance barrier-free access to buildings.

Action:

The ministry has actively consulted on the Ontario Building Code, including accessibility issues.

Timeframe:

The next edition of the Ontario Building Code is expected to take effect in 2006.

Commitment:

Improve accessibility of qualification testing and information that is available on the qualification and registration tracking system (QuARTS).

Action:

Launch web-based applications, testing, and test information to enhance access for designers, municipal building officials, and stakeholders.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Policies

Commitment:

Review new and existing policies to ensure the appropriate use of language with respect to barriers to people with disabilities.

Action:

The following policies will be reviewed in 2004-2005:

- Planning Reform
- Rural Plan
- Provincial Policy Statement

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Publish a Planning for Barrier Free Development guide. This handbook is intended to guide municipalities in considering accessibility issues and eliminating barriers to accessibility when designing public spaces.

Action:

The ministry will publish the handbook upon final approval.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

As part of the five-year review, the ministry will consider changes to the Provincial Policy Statement to reflect ODA requirements. The Provincial Policy Statement provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land-use planning and development.

Action:

Upon completion of public consultation, the Provincial Policy Statement will be reviewed and amended as appropriate.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

Provide user-friendly information about accessibility issues to stakeholders.

Action:

Review the ministry’s website to ensure information on accessibility is easy to locate and written in language that is easy to understand.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Programs and Services

Commitment:

Post the accessibility of venues in advertisements or promotional material for major public events.

Action:

Information about accessibility for major public events will be included in advertising, on the web and/or on the call centre's recorded messages.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Issue a ministry-wide communication reminding staff that all public meetings must be fully accessible. This includes logistics of meetings, physical and communication requirements, including such aids as sign language interpreters, real-time captioning etc. available upon request.

Action:

Issue a ministry-wide communication and post on intranet site for all staff.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

Provide training and examine building practitioners on the barrier-free provisions of the Ontario Building Code.

Action:

1. In July 2003, the government made changes to the Building Code Act, 1992 and the Ontario Building Code requiring building practitioners, including building officials and designers, to pass examinations that evaluate their knowledge of the Ontario Building Code within their area of practice. Among other matters, the examinations evaluate the candidate’s knowledge of the Ontario Building Code’s accessibility provisions and the practitioner’s legal obligation to enforce and apply them. Under the legislation, practitioners have until July 1, 2005 to pass the examinations and have ongoing qualification requirements beyond 2005.
2. The ministry is currently developing new training targeted at helping building practitioners prepare for new qualification requirements resulting from recent changes to the Building Code Act, 1992 and the Ontario Building Code. These new courses are expected to be available by the Fall 2004, and will include specific content on barrier-free requirements.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Best Practices

Commitment:

Encourage understanding and sensitivity to accessibility issues within the ministry.

Action:

Create a web page on the ministry intranet site that provides useful tips and advice on numerous everyday activities to ensure accessibility.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

We will develop guidelines to ensure that proposals for new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services are assessed to review their impact with respect to people with disabilities.

Action:

Create a guideline for policy staff to help them identify accessibility issues as they develop new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

Identify accessibility issues in all new program reviews committed to in 2004-2005.

Action:

Address accessibility issues in all new program reviews committed to in 2004-2005.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

Ensure that Cabinet and Management Board submissions are considered from the perspective of those with disabilities.

Action:

Provide training to ministry staff responsible for reviewing Cabinet and Management Board submissions.

Timeframe:

March 2005

Commitment:

Review, evaluate and where appropriate, implement suggestions proposed in the staff and management surveys.

Action:

Where suggestions have been identified for implementation, develop plans and begin implementation.

Timeframe:

March 2005

For more information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: 416-585-7041

TTY number: 416-585-6991

or toll free: 1-866-220-2290

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

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

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's [Accessibility Ontario web portal](#). 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:

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