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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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 Municipal Affairs and Housing. 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 the Minister



I'm pleased to present the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Accessibility Plan for 2005-06. This is the ministry's third annual accessibility plan as we continue our commitment to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people of all abilities. It highlights some of our recent accomplishments and demonstrates our ongoing efforts to help make Ontario communities strong, vital and accessible.

In 2004-05, this ministry demonstrated leadership in improving accessibility to public policy consultations through accessible meetings and websites. Persons with disabilities were able to contribute feedback online, providing all

Ontarians an equal opportunity and a voice in issues that affect their everyday lives.

We have taken a proactive approach in meeting our priorities of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment. Since the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 was implemented, the ministry has actively consulted on the Ontario Building Code, including accessibility issues. Building practitioners, including building officials and designers, now pass examinations to evaluate their knowledge of the Ontario Building Code, including accessibility requirements.

Our objective is to ensure that people with disabilities have easy access to ministry information, are able to participate in our policy consultations and may obtain the services of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. By building on our past progress and accomplishments, we are laying the foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will ensure that real and effective changes take place.

With the recent passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 comes a new era of accessibility in Ontario. As we support the government's efforts to make Ontario a province that is inclusive and accessible to all, we are building an Ontario that is strong, prosperous and healthy with a quality of life that is second to none.

The Honourable John Gerretsen
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments

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 Municipal Affairs and Housing. 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.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry published the [Planning for Barrier-Free municipalities](#) guide in March 2005. It is available on the ministry's website.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

PPS five-year review and consultation completed. The new PPS came into effect on March 1, 2005. The PPS was changed by adding a section 1.1.1 which sets out matters required for healthy liveable and safe communities.

Commitment:

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

Status: In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry has actively consulted on the Ontario Building Code, including accessibility issues. MMAH is working with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario in making amendments to the Building Code that would enhance barrier-free access to buildings.

Rationale:

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

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

As the Ontario Building Code requires building practitioners, including building officials and designers, to pass examinations that evaluate their knowledge of the Ontario Building Code within their area of practice, including accessibility provisions, the ministry has developed training aids 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. Courses are available by ministry delivery agents and contain specific content on barrier-free requirements. Practitioners have until January 1, 2006 to comply with qualification and registration requirements.

Commitment:

Improve accessibility of qualification testing and information that is available on the qualification and registration tracking system (QuARTS). QuARTS is a web-based system that allows building practitioners to apply for examinations and file their qualification information with the ministry.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

QuARTS is available to the public and was developed in consideration of accessibility requirements.

Commitment:

Provide user-friendly information about accessibility issues to stakeholders.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry's website was reviewed to ensure information on accessibility is easy to locate and written in language that is easy to understand. The ministry website features a link to accessibility documents on the front page.

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.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

In March 2005, the ministry developed an intranet page to educate staff on accessibility issues. The intranet page has a Suggestion Box, which was advertised with the launch of the site. As well, both staff and the public could provide input through the ministry's ODA email address, which was included in the 2004-05 Accessibility Plan.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Suggestions proposed in the staff and management surveys were reviewed and evaluated. A respondent suggested that the ministry provide information and education on accessibility issues and awareness. As a result, the accessibility site on the ministry's intranet includes such a section.

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.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

In February 2005, guidelines were developed and posted on the ministry intranet site.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

A training package was developed to ensure that Cabinet and Management Board submissions are considered from the perspective of those with disabilities and sent to applicable staff in March 2005.

Commitment:

Encourage understanding and sensitivity to accessibility issues within the ministry.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

A web page on the ministry intranet site was launched in March 2005. The site provides useful tips and advice on numerous everyday activities to ensure accessibility. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario recognized the site as a best practice

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

This information is provided on the ministry's intranet site and an E-news update was sent to ministry managers in August 2004.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Ontario Shared Service's generic training on ODA is a part of the mandatory training for new managers and supervisors. Reference to it is also included in the new employee's orientation package launched in February 2005.

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs within Cabinet Office, Centre for Leadership and Human and Resource Management guidelines.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continued to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs as they were identified.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continued to work with individuals, as training needs were identified.

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: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The process and schedule to conduct an accessibility audit are now in place.

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.

Status: Ongoing

Action and Timeframe:

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

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

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

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry publicized information about procurement accessibility issues on the ministry's internal staff intranet site in October 2004.

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

Action and Timeframe:

Accessibility issues were included in staff procurement training to ensure compliance and consistency.

Commitment:

Continue to ensure that all future Internet content is accessible to people with disabilities.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry website meets accessibility standards. People with disabilities were able to participate in public consultations through accessible websites and online questionnaires.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

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

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry customer assistance service was prepared to accept requests for alternate formats through Publications Ontario.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

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

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: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

A ministry-wide communication was issued and posted on the ministry's intranet site for all staff in March 2005.

Commitment:

Ontario Small Town and Rural Development (OSTAR) Infrastructure initiative supports barrier-free access.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The application of the Township of Douro-Dummer was approved to ensure barrier-free access to persons with disabilities for the Community Centre (Warsaw Arena) and Community Hall on the second level of the facility. The application of the County of Simcoe was approved for funding to make the County Administrative Centre, and in particular, the council chambers, barrier-free to persons with disabilities. The municipality received its first payment for the project on September, 2004.

Commitment:

Assess operating proposals included in the 2005-2006 Results-based Planning submissions in order to identify any potential barriers to people with disabilities.

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Operating proposals included in the 2005-2006 Result-based Planning submissions were reviewed by a senior policy adviser to ensure ODA compliance.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry did not initiate any new program reviews in 2004-2005.

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The following acts and regulations have been reviewed:

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

Commitment:

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The following policies have been reviewed:

- Strong Rural Communities - Ontario's Rural Plan
- Provincial Policy Statement

Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

This section represents the ministry's plan to build on our successes and achievements by being proactive and meeting our priorities of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment. We are committed to addressing accessibility issues that will make Ontario a province that is inclusive and prosperous for people of all abilities.

Customer Service

Commitment:

Where feasible, the ministry will include an electronic component to ministry consultations to allow citizens who may have difficulty attending public events, to participate in ministry consultations.

Action:

Where applicable, the ministry will continue to include ODA compliant web pages to enable people with disabilities to contribute feedback online to ministry consultations.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

All public meetings and events will be fully accessible.

Action:

Accommodations for people with disabilities will continue to be available upon request.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

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

Action:

Information about accessibility for major public events will continue to be included in advertising and/or on the web.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

The ministry will ensure that an accessibility assessment for people with disabilities is conducted for all procurements of \$5000 and over, regardless of procurement method, and the assessment is documented on file.

Action:

The ministry has incorporated accessibility assessment for procurements of \$5000 and over as one of the mandatory requirements in its procurement policies. The ministry has developed an Accessibility Assessment for Procurement template for program areas to conduct the assessment.

Timeframe:

May 2005

Commitment:

The ministry will promote staff's awareness of mandatory accessibility assessment for procurements of \$5000 and by internal staff intranet site and information sessions.

Action:

Policies and information regarding accessible procurements are published on the internal staff intranet site.

Information sessions on ministry procurement policies, including accessibility assessment requirements pertaining to procurements, were conducted in June 2005.

Timeframe:

June 2005

Commitment:

Ensure that all future Internet content is accessible as required by the ODA.

Action:

Internet content will continue to be accessible as required by the ODA.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Include accessible website design principles through ongoing training for web publishers.

Action:

Accessible website design principles will continue to be included in training for intranet and Internet publishers.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

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

Action:

The Ontario Building Code requires building practitioners, including building officials and designers, to pass examinations that evaluate their knowledge of the Ontario Building Code within their area of practice, including accessibility provisions. Accordingly, the ministry has developed training aids 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. Courses are available by ministry delivery agents and contain specific content on barrier-free requirements. Practitioners have until January 1, 2006 to comply with qualification and registration requirements.

Timeframe:

January 2006

Commitment:

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 2006-2007 Accessibility Plan.

Action:

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

Timeframe:

March 2006

Employment

Commitment:

The Ontario Shared Services' generic training on ODA will be part of mandatory training for new managers and supervisors.

Action:

The Ontario Shared Services' generic training on ODA will be included in the manager's orientation guide. 100per cent of managers will complete the ODA training.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs within Cabinet Office, Centre for Leadership and Human and Resource Management guidelines.

Action:

The ministry will continue to meet employees' and job applicants' accommodation needs when they are identified, and will encourage all applicants to self-identify their accommodation needs as part of the interview process.

Timeframe:

March 2006

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:

March 2006

Commitment:

Encourage understanding and sensitivity to accessibility issues within the ministry.

Action:

Continue to hold ministry learning events on accessibility.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Communications and Information

Commitment:

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

Action:

The ministry customer assistance service will be prepared to accept requests for alternate formats through Publications Ontario.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

Review the Planning for Barrier-Free Municipalities guide for compatibility with the newly enacted Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

Action:

Review and where necessary, update the Planning for Barrier-Free Municipalities guide to reflect enactment of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Built Environment

Commitment:

Ontario Realty Corporation Barrier Free Design Guidelines will be incorporated into all new construction and minor renovations.

Action:

Ontario Realty Corporation Barrier Free Design Guidelines will continue to be incorporated into all new construction and minor renovations.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

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.

Action:

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

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Commitment:

The ministry will 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:

The ministry will 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:

March 2006

Commitment:

The ministry will ensure that capital grant program projects meet the accessibility standards of the Ontario Building Code.

Action:

The ministry will ensure that capital grant program projects meet the accessibility standards of the Ontario Building Code.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

Review new and existing policies 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 2005-2006:

- Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act
- Municipal Elections Act, 1996
- City of Toronto Act
- City of Ottawa Act

Timeframe:

March 2006

Commitment:

Review new and existing policies to identify potential barriers to people with disabilities.

Action:

The following policies will be reviewed in 2005-2006:

- Role of the Ontario Municipal Board in municipal planning

Timeframe:

March 2006

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. MMAH is working with the Accessibility Directorate in making amendments to the Building Code that would enhance barrier-free access to building.

Timeframe:

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

Commitment:

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

Action:

Ministry staff evaluate all Cabinet submissions, Management Board submissions and operating proposals which impact the MMAH mandate. If a ministry submission or proposal has ODA considerations, the ministry submits the submission or proposal to the Accessibility Directorate for review.

Timeframe:

March 2006

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

1-800 number: 1-866-220-2290

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

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

Visit the [Ministry of Community and Social Services 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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