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Office of Francophone Affairs 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

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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 Office of Francophone Affairs. 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

Mme Meilleur

Madeleine Meilleur

The McGuinty government is delivering real, positive change that will make Ontario strong, healthy and prosperous. In this second year of implementation of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, I am pleased to report on measures that the Office of Francophone Affairs (OFA) has taken in the last twelve months to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. I would also like to report on the Office's commitments and strategies for 2004-2005.

Some of the measures taken to prevent new barriers include: operating proposals put forward in the OFA's 2004-2005 business planning submission were assessed to ensure accessibility; planning templates were reviewed to ensure that accessibility is considered in all operational planning for the year; the Office has reviewed its *Violence Against Women Prevention Public Education Program* with stakeholders to ensure that the program is accessible to Francophones with disabilities and that groups requesting funding under the program are aware of the government's commitment to make Ontario's communities strong, vital and accessible to Francophones of all abilities.

In 2004-2005, the Office of Francophone Affairs will continue to work with Ontarians with disabilities on measures that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province. The office will improve awareness of the *ODA* to

individuals with disabilities within the francophone community. The office will post on its Intranet a reminder to ministries and agencies that Francophones who are hard of hearing, deafened or deaf may use Quebec Sign Language (QSL).

I am committed to working with my colleagues toward enabling francophones of all abilities to enjoy a high quality of life. This fall, we will introduce measures to make the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* strong and effective.

I look forward to continuing to work in 2004-2005 on this very important initiative. I welcome suggestions on how to improve services to Francophones with disabilities.

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

Report on Achievements of 2003-2004 Planning Commitments

As mentioned in its 2003-2004 report, the Office of Francophone Affairs is a small organization, comprised of approximately 15 people, that is responsible for the administration of the *French Language Services Act* (FLSA). The office receives its administrative services, including human resources and information technology, from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

In its 2003-2004 Business Plan, the office indicated that it would develop an accessibility plan to identify, remove and

prevent barriers to people with disabilities and would start implementing the plan. In its 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan, the Office reports on the status of its previous commitments and on its commitments for the current fiscal year.

Over the past few years, the Office of Francophone Affairs has been working to make its facilities (public and common spaces) and all aspects of its operations more accessible to people with disabilities. For example, we have taken steps to ensure that doorways are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, hallways are well lit and free of clutter to allow full and safe access, drinking fountains and public telephones are accessible to people using wheelchairs, washrooms are large and accessible with grab bars installed, a TTY is available for people who are deaf and staff have been trained to use it. Staff have also been consulted in order to identify any additional barriers.

As an employer, the office has taken measures to ensure that the needs of employees with disabilities are accommodated, wherever required, including the use of adaptive equipment and technology and modifying the office environment and common spaces. Procedures are in place to ensure the safe evacuation of employees and visitors with disabilities in case of an emergency.

Commitment:

The office's website will be made accessible to people with disabilities, as required under section 6 of the *ODA*, and all updates to the site will take into account the requirements of the *ODA*.

Status: Complete and ongoing

Commitment:

The office's publications will be available in alternate formats upon request to ensure accessibility.

Status: Complete and ongoing

Commitment:

To ensure that the office meets the needs of all clients and employees, its managers will receive training on accommodating clients and employees with disabilities.

Status: Complete and ongoing

Commitment:

The office's Accessibility Planning Working Group, including representation from all operational areas, will review the office's first accessibility plan and plan for future improvements in order to meet the *ODA's* section 10 requirements.

Status: Complete and ongoing

Commitment:

An accessibility policy will be developed to guide the office's activities. The policy will include suggestions on how to plan inclusive events, meetings and conferences.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

Operating proposals put forward in the 2004-2005 business planning submission will be assessed to ensure accessibility.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

Planning templates will be reviewed to ensure that accessibility is considered in all operational planning for the year.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

Training will be provided to staff and management on how to include accessibility in proposals and in new guidelines produced by the office on the planning, delivery and monitoring of French-language services.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

The office's operational plan will document how accessibility improvement strategies will be implemented and managed, including staff training.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

The office will review its *Violence Against Women Prevention Public Education Program* with stakeholders to ensure that the program is accessible to francophones with disabilities and that groups requesting funding under the program are aware of the government's commitment to make Ontario more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities. This review will include the design and processing of project proposals, the eligibility criteria and accessibility awareness of funding recipients.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

The office will also review the policies and guidelines developed to assist Ontario ministries and agencies with the implementation of the *French Language Services Act* to ensure that they are inclusive and do not create barriers for people with disabilities.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

The office will include a learning component on accessibility awareness in all staff 2003-2004 performance agreements.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

The office will review its management of job competitions in order to meet the requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*. This will include all stages of the process, from recruitment through orientation, training, and performance management.

Status: Complete and ongoing

Commitment:

We will examine how we communicate the accessibility features of the office to clients and stakeholders including access to the building and TTY services.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

In addition, we will review our planning practices to ensure that events organized by the office are accessible and do not prevent people with disabilities from participating fully.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

The office will review its administrative procedures to ensure that employees take into account people with disabilities when providing services such as reception/telephone services and planning meetings.

Status: Complete

Commitment:

As a part of our ongoing activities to identify and prevent barriers, the Office of Francophone Affairs will:

- conduct an accessibility audit of public and common spaces to identify communication and architectural barriers;
- organize an information session for managers and staff on the office's obligations under the *ODA* and on how best to provide services to clients with disabilities; and
- remind managers of the obligation to provide accommodation for office employees and job applicants who have disabilities.

Status: Complete

Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

The office's planning commitments for 2004-2005 include the 2003-2004 commitments that the office was not able to complete during the year, or that are ongoing.

Legislative Requirements

Commitment:

The office will review its *Guide to French Language Communications in the Government of Ontario* to include mention of meeting the needs of Francophones with disabilities.

Action: The revised *Guide to French Language Communications in the Government of Ontario* will provide

directions on how to ensure that francophones with disabilities have access to quality and timely information in an accessible format.

Timeframe: March 2005

Commitment:

The office will implement the "Guidelines for procurement of accessible goods and services obligations under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004-2005*" when they are published.

Action: All staff with responsibility for procurement of goods and services will receive training based on the guidelines.

Timeframe: 2004-2005

Commitment:

The office will consult with the Accessibility Directorate to fulfil its section 10 requirements.

Action: Consultation with the Accessibility Directorate will be undertaken as required.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

Accessibility awareness training will be provided to all OFA Managers to fulfil section 8 requirements (re: employment accommodation).

Action: Accessibility awareness will be incorporated into the orientation of new managers. A refresher course will be arranged for all managers.

Timeframe: Throughout 2004-2005

Commitment:

The office's website will be made accessible to people with disabilities, as required under section 6 of the *ODA*, and all updates to the site will take into account the requirements of the *ODA*.

Action: The office will continue to ensure that all new material posted on its Internet site is tested for usability by people with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability' under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

The office's Accessibility Planning Working Group will continue to review and update the plan and monitor its implementation throughout the coming year and will provide regular reports to the office's Senior Management Committee (SMC) and updates to office staff.

Action: The Working Group will monitor the implementation of the Office's accessibility plan and update Senior Management Committee and Office staff. The Working Group will also keep abreast of any change in policies and/or practices that may affect the plan and will propose changes accordingly.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

The office will improve the accessibility of the working environment by ensuring that lighting and other aspects of the physical environment provide optimal safety and convenience for visitors and employees with visual and other impairments.

Action: We will install signage that serves all clients. Signs will be written in plain language, in both English and French, clearly posted, readable and at an appropriate height. A new doorbell will be installed at an appropriate height to ensure accessibility for people in wheelchairs.

Timeframe: March 2005

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The office will review any proposed change to the *FLSA* and/or its regulations in the coming year to ensure that *ODA* requirements are met.

Action: Any changes to the Act or to its regulations will be developed and examined with a view to meeting the requirements of the *ODA*.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Policies

Commitment:

The office will develop a guide on how to improve accessibility for people with disabilities to be shared with community organizations receiving support from the office for community events and activities.

Action: A guide on planning inclusive events, meetings and conferences will be developed in 2004-2005 to ensure that office sponsored events include an active offer of accommodation to people with disabilities.

Timeframe: March 2005

Programs and Services

Commitment:

Improve awareness of the *ODA* to people with disabilities within the francophone community.

Action: The office, through its communication with the community and through its website, will inform the francophone community of its rights under the *ODA*. It will also consult organizations working with francophones

with disabilities to obtain their feedback on how the government could improve their access to services in French.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

Improve services targeted to those who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing within the Francophone community.

Action: We will post on the office's intranet, a reminder to ministries and agencies that francophones who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing may use Quebec Sign Language (QSL); this is an important factor to take into account when organizing meetings or conferences attended by francophones who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.

Timeframe: September 2004

Commitment:

Improve services targeted to those who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing within the francophone community.

Action: We will publish the office's TTY number on business cards and letterhead.

Timeframe: When business cards and letterhead are reordered.

Practices

Commitment:

The Office of Francophone Affairs will continue to work with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) and Management Board Secretariat (MBS) to ensure that the implementation of the government's obligations under the ODA takes into account the needs of francophones with disabilities.

Action: The office will work with the Accessibility Directorate and Management Board to ensure that the needs of

francophones with disabilities are given due consideration by the Government of Ontario.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

Accessibility awareness training will be provided to all staff.

Action: Accessibility awareness will be incorporated into the orientation of new staff. A refresher course will be arranged for all staff.

Timeframe: Throughout 2004-2005

Commitment:

Review of the office's intranet site to ensure that its commitments under *ODA* are accessible to all government employees.

Action: We will review our intranet site to ensure that Ontario Public Sector employees do not experience barriers when accessing information.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

The office's publications will be available in alternate formats upon request.

Action: All new publications will be conceived to be made available in alternate formats, if requested, to ensure accessibility.

Timeframe: Ongoing

For more information

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

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Relations Branch

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1-800-268-7507

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Ministry website address:

www.ofa.gov.on.ca/www.oaf.gouv.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.

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