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Office of Francophone Affairs 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA), Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to

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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 Office of Francophone Affairs (the Office). 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.

The Office 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



Madeleine Meilleur

The landmark *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* received Royal Assent on June 13th 2005. This legislation marks a new era in accessibility and will make Ontario a world leader in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

The government continues to take a leadership role in identifying, removing and preventing barriers, and improving accessibility through a participatory, proactive and integrated approach that spans the priorities of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment. We continue to build on past progress and accomplishments, and begin to lay the foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will ensure real and effective change takes place.

In 2004-05, the Office of Francophone Affairs made continued efforts to improve accessibility through a number of activities. These activities were designed

to enhance access to services for persons with disabilities in general, and particularly access to Francophones with a hearing impairment. For instance, in March 2005, the Office developed a guide called *Planification de réunions accessibles* to ensure that community events, meetings and conferences organized by the Office in partnership with Francophone organizations include an active offer of accommodation to people with disabilities.

In 2005-2006, the Office of Francophone Affairs will continue through various means to offer guidance to other ministries on how to ensure that Francophones with disabilities have access to quality and timely information in accessible formats and to allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

I look forward to continuing to work on this very important initiative.

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments

The Office was successful in achieving its planned commitments outlined in its 2004-2005 accessibility plan. September 30, 2004 was the public release date for all organizations with obligations to prepare and make public accessibility plans under the ODA, 2001. The following section provides a status report

of the Office of Francophone Affairs' achievements in helping the government achieve its goal of a more accessible Ontario.

Legislative Requirements

Commitment:

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

Status:

In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The guide, which is posted on the Office's intranet site, will be revised and designed to ensure that the needs of Francophones with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability', are addressed in the guide.

Rationale:

The Office is in the process of reviewing and updating the guide. The revised guide will provide ministries with guidance on how to ensure that Francophones with disabilities have access to quality and timely information in an accessible format (e.g., French-language Braille).

Commitment:

The Office will review the *Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act* when they are published.

Status:

In progress

Action and Timeframe:

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

Rationale:

The Ministry of Government Services released its E-module (on-line) training tool for the procurement provisions of the ODA in June 2005. As part of its 2005-2006 commitments, the Office's staff with responsibility for procurement of goods and services will take the on-line training to ensure that accessibility has been considered in the procurement of accessible goods and services.

Commitment:

The Office will consult with the Accessibility Directorate to fulfil its section 10 requirements (Ministry Accessibility Planning).

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The Office's accessibility planning working group continued to review and update its plan and monitor its implementation throughout 2004-2005.

Commitment:

Accessibility awareness training will be provided to all of the Office's managers to fulfil section 8 requirements (re: employment accommodation).

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

A refresher course was arranged for all managers.

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:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

All the materials posted on the Office's website were designed for usability by people with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability' under the ODA.

Commitment:

The Office's accessibility planning working group will continue to review and update the plan, monitor its implementation throughout the coming year and will provide regular reports to the Office's senior management committee and updates to all of the Office's staff.

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The working group continued to monitor the implementation of the Office's accessibility plan and update the senior management committee and all of the Office's staff. The working group also monitored any change in ministry policies and/or practices to ensure consistency with its accessibility plan.

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.

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The Office conducted a review of its facilities to identify areas that did not meet accessibility requirements. The

telephone located in the lobby was lowered to ensure accessibility for persons in wheelchairs. The lighting was designed to ensure optimal safety and convenience for visitors and employees with visual and other impairments. The Office's receptionist was provided with a new 19" LCD monitor to accommodate his special needs.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The Office will review proposed changes, if any, to the *French Language Services Act* (FLSA) and/or its regulations in the coming year to ensure that ODA requirements are met.

Status:

In progress

Action and Timeframe:

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

Rationale:

No changes to the FLSA or its regulations were required in 2004-2005.

Policies

Commitment:

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

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

In March 2005, the Office developed a guide called *Planification de réunions*

accessibles to ensure that community events, meetings and conferences organized by the Office in partnership with Francophone organizations include an active offer of accommodation to people with disabilities.

Programs and Services

Commitment:

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

Status:

In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The Office, through its communication with the community and through its website, will inform the Francophone community of its rights under the ODA.

Rationale: The overall OFA website is currently being reviewed to enhance its user-friendliness. This process will take into account accessibility issues.

Commitment:

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

Status:

In progress

Action and Timeframe:

The Office has a TTY (text telephone) available for people who are deaf, and staff working at the reception area have been trained to use it. As business cards and letterhead were being reordered, the Office published its TTY number on the business cards and letterhead.

Rationale:

As part of its 2005-2006 commitments, the Office will distribute its guide *"Planification de réunions accessibles"* to

ministry French-language services coordinators. The guide will be translated into English and made available to all Ontario public service staff through its intranet site. The guide provides useful information on organizing community events, meetings and conferences that are based on an active offer of accommodation to people with disabilities, such as services of sign language interpreters who use the Quebec Sign Language (QSL) to allow Francophones who are hard of hearing, deafened or deaf to participate.

Practices

Commitment:

The Office will continue to work with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to ensure that the implementation of the government's obligations under the ODA takes into account the needs of Francophones with disabilities.

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The Office continued to work with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to ensure that the needs of Francophones with disabilities are given due consideration.

Commitment:

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

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The Office designed the materials posted on its intranet site for usability by people

with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability' under the ODA.

Commitment:

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

Status:

Completed

Action and Timeframe:

All new publications by the Office published in 2004-05 were designed in a way that allowed the provisions of alternate formats, upon request. None were requested in 2004-2005.

Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) received Royal Assent on June 13, 2005, and the Ministry of Community and Social Services is now moving forward on implementation.

We are in a transition period during which government ministries and public sector organizations will continue to have legal obligations under the ODA 2001. Obligations under the ODA are in force until repealed, thus this plan was prepared in accordance with ODA 2001.

This section represents the Office's plan, including new commitments and initiatives for the coming year. September 30, 2005 is the public release date for all organizations with obligations to prepare and make public accessibility plans under the ODA, 2001.

Customer Service

Commitment:

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

Action:

The Office, through its website, will inform the Francophone community of its rights under the ODA. **Timeframe:**

The Office is currently reviewing its overall website and this information will be added. The review is scheduled to be completed by the end of fall 2005.

Employment

Commitment:

The Office will ensure the new Ministry of Government Services E-module (on-line) training tool for the procurement provisions of the ODA is reviewed by all staff that have procurement responsibilities in order to ensure that accessibility has been considered in the procurement of accessible goods and services, both for use of employees and the general public.

Action:

Staff members who have procurement responsibilities will be required to review the MBS E-module training tool for the procurement provisions of the ODA.

Timeframe:

Follow-ups will be done in 2005-2006 to track completion of the E-module training by staff with procurement responsibilities.

Commitment:

The Office's accessibility planning working group will continue to review and update the plan, monitor its implementation throughout the coming year and provide regular reports to the

Office's senior management committee and updates to all of the Office's 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 monitor any change in policies and/or practices that may affect the plan and will propose changes accordingly.

Timeframe:

Monitoring will be ongoing while updates will be provided on a regular basis throughout 2005-06.

Commitment:

Accessibility awareness training will be provided to all the Office's staff, including recently hired senior managers, to fulfil section 8 requirements (re: employment accommodation).

Action:

All the Office's staff will be advised of the requirement that they undertake accessibility awareness training.

Timeframe:

The accessibility awareness training of all the Office's staff will be completed by end of March 2006.

Communications and Information

Commitment:

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

Action:

The Office is in the process of reviewing the guide. The revised document, which will be posted on the Office's intranet

site, will provide ministries with guidance on how to ensure that Francophones with disabilities have access to quality and timely information in an accessible format.

Timeframe:

The review of the guide is scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2006.

Commitment:

The Office will disseminate useful information on how to make community events, meetings and conferences accessible to Francophones with disabilities.

Action:

The Office will distribute its guide "*Planification de réunions accessibles*" to ministry French-language services coordinators. The guide will be translated into English and made available to all Ontario public service staff through the OFA's intranet site. The guide provides useful information on organizing community events, meetings and conferences that are based on an active offer of accommodation to people with disabilities, such as services of sign language interpreters who use the Quebec Sign Language (QSL) to allow Francophones who are hard of hearing, deafened or deaf to participate.

Timeframe:

The guide will be distributed to ministry French-language services coordinators and made available on the Office's intranet site by the end of March 2006.

Commitment:

All updates to the Office's internet and intranet sites will take into account the requirements of the ODA.

Action:

The Office will continue to ensure that all new materials posted on its website and intranet sites are designed for usability by people with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability' under the ODA.

Timeframe:

New materials will be designed for usability by people with disabilities prior to be posted on the Office's Internet and intranet sites.

Commitment:

The Office will continue to ensure that its publications be available in alternate formats, upon request.

Action:

All new publications will be designed to allow for the provision of alternate formats, upon request.

Timeframe:

Ongoing

Built Environment

Commitment:

The Office will complete a review of its facility to implement the Ontario Realty Corporation *Standards for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities*.

Action:

The Office will take steps to install a door bell with English and French-language Braille in the lobby next to the telephone in order to facilitate access to the reception area for persons with visual impairments. The doorbell would be installed to ensure easy access for persons in wheelchairs.

Timeframe:

This initiative will be implemented by end of Fall 2005.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The Office will review proposed changes, if any, to the *French Language Services Act* and/or its regulations in the coming year to ensure that ODA requirements are met.

Action:

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

Timeframe:

Requirements under the ODA would be considered and complied with prior to any changes being made to the FLSA and its regulations.

For more information

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

Please contact:

General inquiry number: 416 325-4949

TTY number: 416 325-0017

Toll-free: 1-800-268-7507

E-mail: ofa@ofa.gov.on.ca

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

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web site at: <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html>. 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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