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Ministry of the Attorney General 2015 Accessibility Plan

The Ministry of the Attorney General’s 2015 [ODA](#) Accessibility Plan includes efforts to identify and remove barriers to people with disabilities in 2015 and the ministry’s accessibility commitments for 2016.

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Executive summary

Each year, under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*, all Ontario Public Service ministries must prepare an accessibility plan and make it available to the public. In addition, all ministries have accessibility obligations under the [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) (ASCS) and the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#). These regulations establish phased-in requirements through the following accessibility standards:

- customer service
- information and communications
- employment
- transportation
- design of public spaces

In 2012, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) released its first multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) entitled [Accessibility in the Ontario Public Service: Leading the Way Forward](#) as required under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. This multi-year plan sets key accessibility outcomes that each ministry must meet. You will find these outcomes at the start of each section of this ministry [ODA](#) plan.

The Ministry of the Attorney General’s 2015 [ODA](#) Accessibility Plan considers all of these accessibility obligations and builds on the ministry [ODA](#) plan commitments from last year. The ministry efforts made in 2015 and new commitments proposed for 2016 are guided by the key outcomes set by the [OPS](#) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan as the ministry continues on the path to accessibility. The Ministry of the Attorney General also considers its obligations to people with disabilities under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the Ontario *Human Rights Code* as part of its accessibility planning process.

Related

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[Multi-year accessibility plan for the Ontario Public Service](#)

[Ontario’s accessible customer service policy](#)

[Ministry of the Attorney General’s commitment to accessibility](#)

[List of Ontario court addresses](#)

In 2015, the Ministry of the Attorney General continued its work to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who use our services, goods and facilities and to address barriers for employees. While many efforts have continued from previous years, the ministry also initiated several new efforts in 2015. Here are some examples:

- to learn more about the barriers faced by people with print-related disabilities in using services in the justice sector, the Deputy Attorney General of the ministry hosted an Accessibility Forum. The forum included disability community representatives, senior members of the ministry and senior representatives from organizations across the justice sector.
- the Victim’s and Vulnerable Persons Division created a new pilot project to see if the use of support dogs would assist in serving some victims and witnesses.
- to improve accessibility in services, the ministry purchased over 150 wheelchairs for courthouses and tribunals. The wheelchairs are available for people who, while mobile, may need them because of fatigue, stamina, breathing or other disability-related issues.
- to continue building knowledge about serving people with disabilities, the ministry created two new job-related training sessions on accessibility. One was about serving people who are Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing.; The other session was for legal counsel on how to address human rights and accessibility obligations in their legal practice.
- a final highlight of 2015 was an audit of key accessibility features in over 125 of the ministry’s older courthouses and buildings. When the audit is complete in 2016, it will provide the ministry with the information needed to set priorities and create a long-term plan to improve accessibility in our existing facilities.

Though accessibility improvements will continue in all areas, a major focus for 2016 will be the further development of a new ministry long-term Accessibility Strategic Plan. The strategy will set clear outcomes and milestones and is being developed in cooperation with all areas of the ministry.

We know there is much more accessibility work to do in 2016 and the coming years. The ministry is strongly committed to continuing to find effective ways to address accessibility and individual disability accommodations to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Section one: report on Measures Taken by the Ministry in 2015

Customer service

OPS MYAP key outcome

People with disabilities who are OPS customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

Measures taken by the Ministry of the Attorney General in 2015

In 2015 the ministry continued a strong focus on improving accessibility and disability accommodation in services through ministry-wide, division and program level activities.

Courthouse Accessibility Coordinator Services

Just as the Accessibility Unit is the main point of contact on accessibility within the ministry, the Accessibility Coordinators and Accessibility Leads are the main point of

contact on accessibility for the public in the ministry's over 160 courthouses across the province. Providing a main point of contact on requests about accessibility helps to ensure the public has easier access to accessibility information and that requests are addressed through an effective process. For example, a main point of contact:

- allows key staff to build experience in working cooperatively with people with a wide range of different disabilities
- helps ensure the contacts are up-to-date on ministry approaches; and
- supports the ministry in continuously improving our accessibility services as coordinators and leads are able to collect accommodation information, feedback and provide advice on changes the ministry should make

Between April 2014 and November 2015, courthouse Accessibility Coordinators and Accessibility Leads recorded 1,042 requests for disability accommodation. Over half of the requests, 570, were for assistive listening devices.; The next highest group of requests was 106 for sign language interpreters. People with a wide variety of disabilities made requests for disability accommodation in court services. The largest number of accommodation requests was from people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, followed by requests by people with mobility-related disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health disabilities, and other disabilities. A total of 36 requests were received from people with vision, environmental sensitivity, brain injury and dexterity related disabilities. Note that this accounting only includes requests to the accessibility coordinators or leads in the courthouses and not those to other staff and is based on the main accommodation requested in each instance.

While there are many accommodations accessibility coordinators can provide directly, some accommodation requests that impact on court proceedings require a decision from the judicial official. To find out more about the ministry's commitment to accessibility and making requests for disability accommodation for ministry services, please see the [Our Commitment to Accessibility webpage](#) on the ministry website.

A sample of requests addressed by courthouse Accessibility Coordinators and Leads across the province included:

- an individual who is hard of hearing and visually impaired was provided with an assistive listening device, Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) and a Deaf-Blind Intervenor. The Intervenor used the CART notes to relay information that the individual wanted to clarify
- a legal counsel was provided a courtroom close to an exit from the building
- a mental health worker was able to act as a support person for meetings between the crown attorney and a witness with a mental health disability
- a courthouse that had two wheelchairs required a third and was able to rent one to address the additional need
- in a new courthouse, a temporary courtroom for a person with a multiple chemical sensitivity was set up in an area of the building that was cement as the building materials in that area did not emit any chemicals from new materials that would affect the person
- the lighting was adjusted in the courtroom for a witness who required a darkened room
- a quiet space was provided for an individual with a mental health disability to wait
- a portable wheelchair was flown in to a remote satellite court along with the court team to meet the needs of an accused person
- with Judicial approval an accommodation request was granted to permit a client to

be accompanied by their Support Person in all matters without separate requests for every court appearance

- under the direction of the judiciary, a courthouse provided a private, secure and safe outdoor area to allow a medical marijuana user the opportunity to use their medication

To ensure that members of the public can find contact information for the courthouse accessibility coordinator and the key accessibility features of a courthouse, the ministry Communications Branch maintains a comprehensive list of accessibility features and services available at each courthouse on the ministry's website. The branch also posts notices to the website to inform the public about any disruptions to accessibility services in a timely manner. To find out more please see the [Court Addresses page](#) of the ministry website.

The ministry continued its efforts to prepare in advance for common disability accommodation requests in courthouses and tribunals. The Court Services Division and Corporate Services Management Division with advice from Accessibility Unit worked together to purchase an additional 39 portable assistive listening devices to assist those who are hard of hearing in courthouses and tribunals as this is one of the most common accommodation and several sites were finding a need for more devices. Over 150 wheelchairs were also purchased to address the needs of people who may be mobile but due disability-related reasons find a wheelchair useful in accessing courthouse services. The wheelchairs have already been used in 54 situations.

Additional customer service efforts

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program of the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division was involved in the creation of pilot projects in Brampton, Newmarket and Kingston to evaluate the impact of using Support Dogs while delivering services to vulnerable victims of crime, including child victims and victims of sexual assault. Trained support dog handlers work with the animals as they provide emotional support and comfort throughout the court process. The pilot will continue in 2016.

Eligible clients continue to have access to the Vulnerable Victims and Family Fund (VVFF) which helps victims of crime and families of homicide victims participate more fully in the criminal court process. The fund can be used to support people with disabilities who are victims of crime or family members by assisting with travel to attend court during key points in a criminal proceeding or ensuring those with disabilities have appropriate supports for participating in the court process.

In 2015 the Court Services Division developed and launched a pilot project in two court locations which is intended to help court counter staff and court users better understand the distinction between legal information and legal advice. One of the issues considered for inclusion as part of the pilot development was guidance on disability-related requests for help in completing court forms.

Other examples of accomplishments in providing accessible customer service from across the ministry included:

- the Provincial Jury Centre (PJC) provided a braille copy of the Jury Questionnaire upon request by a member of the public who is blind
- one courthouse worked with Literacy Agencies to provide days and times that a volunteer could be available at the courthouse to assist the public, including those with disabilities, with reading and writing
- Sign Language Interpretation services have been provided for a parent for visits through one of the ministry-funded Supervised Access Program Centres. The

centres offer settings for fully supervised on-site visits with children of separated parents in a group setting or supervised exchanges when access occurs off-site

Promoting awareness of fragrance sensitivities

The Accessibility Unit continued to provide advice on promoting awareness of fragrance sensitivities. Activities have continued to occur at various ministry sites including the following examples:

- in the Kenora courthouse, posters about fragrance sensitivity have been placed around the building and notices were provided to all persons working within the building
- at the Hamilton courthouse, the fragrance sensitivity policy is reviewed with staff at staff meetings and signage is posted in both staff and public areas
- in the Central East Region, signage has been placed throughout the courthouse both in the public areas and staff areas. The courthouse has also started using chemical free cleaning products through discussions with cleaning staff
- in Ottawa staff have been offered education about fragrances and health impacts, signs were posted and a procedure is in place for staff to provide an alternative isolated space for the public with fragrance sensitivity to review their files or work with staff
- in the West Region signs are posted in various offices across the region, notices sent out to staff and stakeholders, and information on fragrance awareness is included on a courthouse electronic scrolling information board
- the Agencies and Tribunals Relation Division in downtown Toronto has been a scent free work place since February of 2014, and continues to send out reminders to staff and colleagues
- the ministry Communications Branch and the Business Fiscal Planning Branch are also scent-free work sites

In 2016-17, the Accessibility Unit plans to provide further resources on Fragrance Sensitivity and share best practices developed across the ministry.

Accessibility feedback process

As before, the ministry encourages and accepts feedback on accessibility through a variety of processes and at all levels of the ministry. The feedback that ministry customers and stakeholders provide significantly helps us to plan and make continuous improvements in accessibility.

Accessibility feedback can be provided directly to the staff person a ministry client is dealing with, any other staff person or directly to the ministry by phone, [TTY](#), email or sent by mail in any format. Accessible formats can be provided or accepted for this process. For example, sign language interpreters can be provided to support an individual who is Deaf in providing feedback. For further information on the ministry Accessibility Feedback Process, please see the [Our Commitment to Accessibility page](#) and the [Contact Us page](#) on the ministry website. In addition you can also use any other ministry contact or feedback process as well such as a program feedback process or contact.

Feedback can help the ministry make effective improvements. In 2015, a client met with staff of the Court Services Division and the Accessibility Unit to provide feedback on her experience as a self-represented litigant who is blind going through the court process. As a result of this individual's situation and that of others, the division is developing a guide for individuals who are blind.

In another situation, the courthouse in Sudbury received feedback that one of the

courtrooms was difficult to get into and as a result the courthouse is working with the Facilities Management Branch to consider automatic door opener options. The ministry is looking to continuously improve and we will continue to encourage feedback from people with disabilities who use our services.

In addition to direct feedback processes, the ministry has also made efforts to include accessibility questions in other processes such as Client Satisfaction Surveys. For example:

- the annual Court Services Division (CSD) Client Satisfaction Survey took place between February and March 2015. Surveys are anonymous. The survey includes the question: “During your visit today, did you or your client have any disability-related needs when appearing in court or using court services?” If the client answers “yes”, they are then asked if they were satisfied with the response to their disability-related need. The survey is available in an accessible format upon request
- the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division also continues to have formal feedback processes in place which include the Victim/Witness Assistance Program (V/WAP) Client Satisfaction Survey, the Supervised Access Program Complaint Form and the online intranet feedback/notification form which captures any accessibility related comments for all program areas. The information collected is used to improve service delivery and remove any accessibility barriers that may exist and track accommodation requests for trends
- the [Office of the Children’s Lawyer’s internet pages](#) include contact and mailing information. In the Frequently Asked Question Section, the office provides information about accessibility when going to court and contact information for courthouse Accessibility Coordinators
- the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee continues to have a one point of contact through the Program Coordinator to respond to any accessibility-related issues. Managers are asked to provide any accessibility related feedback that they may have received four times a year. As well, office brochures include contact information for feedback on accessible services
- information about Accessibility Feedback is the first information posted on the main page of the [Special Investigations Unit main website](#)

Information and communications

MYAP key outcome

Information and communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

Measures taken by the Ministry of the Attorney General in 2015

Accessible format and communication supports

An important part of making ministry information and communications accessible to people with disabilities is to first make the public and ministry stakeholders aware they can ask for accessibility or disability accommodation such as alternate formats or communication supports.

In addition to examples of information and communication accommodations on the Our Commitment to Accessibility page on the ministry internet and permanent signage in all courthouses about making requests to accessibility coordinators, the ministry has taken other measures to ensure people with disabilities are aware they can ask for accommodations, particularly in the area of accessible formats and communication supports.

- The ministry's Communications Branch maintains a comprehensive list of accessibility features and accessibility coordinator contacts available at each courthouse on the ministry's Court Addresses webpage. The coordinators are available to respond to any accessibility requests in relation to services in courthouses, including requests for accessible formats and communications supports.
- The Ontario Court Forms website and other webpages about ministry services offer to provide alternate formats of forms and other documents upon request.
- Courthouses continue to post permanent signage on the availability of assistive listening devices, the most frequently requested accommodation for ministry services.

Some examples of measures in place at the division and branch level include:

- in 2015, the Criminal Law Division Accessible Forms Working Group established a process to efficiently respond to requests for alternate formats of division forms
- the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division makes any new brochures also available in an accessible version. As an example, Ontario Victim Services created a new brochure for the Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario (VCAO) program and ensured that an accessible version was created as well
- the Supervised Access Program of the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division produces accessible versions of their semi-annual newsletter
- the Office of the Children's Lawyer produced a year-end report and ensured that an accessible version was also available and ensures that with the update of any forms, an accessible version is created as well
- the Victim/Witness Assistance Program has a forms and template committee who review forms to ensure they meet the plain language criteria
- the Court Reporting Unit of the Court Services Division worked with the contractor for the Authorized Court Transcriptionists for Ontario website to make forms, documents and the website itself accessible
- the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office of the Corporate Services Management Division will send out decision letters and records in accessible formats. The Office has also stopped using italics in its documents to make them more accessible for people with low vision and learning disabilities
- in January 2015, the Sarnia Courthouse began promoting the use of Bell Relay TTY Services on the scrolling electronic information board in the lobby of the court house

As mentioned earlier, requests for assistive listening devices and sign language services are the most frequent individual accommodation requests the ministry receives. A small number of requests for alternate formats were also received. Some other examples of individual accommodation requests for communication-related supports reported in 2015 include:

- a court user with a learning disability requested and was provided with scanned copies of court documents which could be read by their assistive technology
- a client who is blind was provided with dictation services and another visually impaired client was provided with a typed version of a hand-written endorsement so they could read it
- a court user was provided with a large print transcript at no extra cost
- when courtrooms are renovated a voice uplift system along with permanent assistive listening systems are often installed to improve the listening environment

TTY lines

The Communications Branch of the ministry continues to offer the main ministry [TTY Line](#) which can help address any requests about ministry services for [TTY](#) users.

The [OPS](#) now offers and provides support for computer-based [TTY](#) lines for designated staff in ministry offices and this has been communicated to ministry divisions. Some offices, such as the London and Belleville courthouses as well as courthouses in the Central East Region, offer direct [TTY](#) lines to the public, while other courthouses have found it more effective to continue with the Bell Canada [TTY Relay Service](#) because it allows the public to directly contact the individual they need to speak to. After an initial contact with an individual who needs to communicate by text, ministry staff can often offer an email address to continue communications if helpful.

The ministry's Accessibility Unit will continue to monitor the anticipated implementation of a new Canada-wide Video Relay Service (VRS). This service is now expected to begin operation in 2016. This service will allow users to use sign language with a relay operator rather than typing and the relay operator will then interpret the sign language in speech to the other party to the call.

Qualified sign language interpretation services

The Court Services Division continues to be committed to the goal of improving the availability of qualified sign language interpreters in court for people who are Deaf. In 2015, a visual language interpreter strategy was proposed and received approval. The strategy addresses the difficulties of securing sign language interpreters in the courts and the need for educational sessions for staff who work in the courts. It is expected that this strategy will be implemented in the 2016/17 fiscal year.

The Court Interpretation Unit will also work with the ministry's Accessibility Unit in 2016 on providing further guidance for courthouse Accessibility Coordinators about the effective use of sign language interpreters in courts. For information on training provided in 2015 on meeting the needs of clients who are Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing, please see the General achievements section of this plan.

Accessible websites and web-based applications

In 2015, the ministry had a strong focus on making its websites and web-based documents accessible. All ministry divisions that have public websites or new or significantly refreshed websites, worked on their websites to bring them into compliance with the [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#), the international standards for web accessibility. The ministry has 14 websites containing thousands of documents that are covered by the current accessible website requirements.

Ministry divisions assessed their websites to determine what needed to be fixed and then made changes to the website and web content to meet the standards. As a part of this process, the ministry's Accessibility Unit hired a third party vendor to conduct an independent assessment on some websites to identify any gaps in compliance. The assessment provided further guidance to staff as they addressed accessibility issues in their websites. The vendor was also hired to provide further training to ministry, agency and tribunal staff about accessible website design, accessible application design and accessible web content. The training will be available across the ministry in 2016.

The ministry's Communications Branch which is responsible for the main ministry public website took steps to:

- make [MAG's](#) website meet accessibility requirements
- convert a large number of older Portable Document Format (PDF) documents to

accessible [HTML](#), which is considered the most universally accessible online format

- re-write several of the ministry's web pages to meet plain language requirements
- design new online applications that are accessible to greatest number of online users, such as building a more accessible courthouse map and estate tax calculator

The Justice Technology Services (JTS) working group, which was established in October 2014, continued its work to identify gaps and propose solutions in the areas of accessible websites, accessible information and technology and related procurements that it supports for the ministry. The working group includes an advisor from the [OPS](#) Information and Information Technology Accessibility Centre of Excellence which supports ministries by offering accessibility testing services and advice on accessible websites and documents. The ministry Accessibility Unit also provides a representative to the working group to provide advice on accessibility compliance support needs for the ministry, web site remediation plans, and the new accessibility testing protocol.

In 2015, the Justice Technology Service, which develops or supports many of the ministry's websites and web applications, began applying the new accessibility testing protocol to the public ministry websites and the new or significantly refreshed websites that the ministry supports. The protocol includes a combination of automated testing, manual testing and testing with assistive devices. JTS also worked to ensure that the basic templates used for public websites were accessible.

As part of the ministry strategy on accessible websites in 2015, the Accessibility Unit also procured and offered training by accessibility experts on creating accessible [HTML](#) forms for ministry, agency and tribunal staff who often have to create such content for websites. More information on this training is available in the General Section of this plan.

Employment

[MYAP](#) key outcome

[OPS](#) employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures taken by the Ministry of the Attorney General in 2015

The ministry continues to follow [OPS](#) policies on providing disability accommodation to employees and applicants with disabilities. There are several internal [OPS](#) services to support managers in providing employment accommodations. The [OPS](#) Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness provides advice on disability accommodation and manages the [OPS](#) Employment Accommodation Fund which reimburses ministry's the cost of many accommodations. The Information and Information Technology Assistive Technology Support Service assists with procurement and support of computer-based and telephone-related assistive technology. In addition, the ministry online orientation system ensures new employees are informed of policies and processes on employment accommodation of employees with disabilities.

While the ministry also complies with the required process of informing job applicants called for an interview of the opportunity to request disability accommodation, several ministry offices reported that they had also adopted a practice of including a request to candidates to avoid wearing scented products to their interviews. As scent chemicals can linger in the air, this helps to ensure that other candidates and interviewers with fragrance sensitivity are not exposed to products that can impact negatively on them. The Accessibility Unit will share this information as an important practice for the ministry.

In 2015, the Diversity and Inclusion Unit of the ministry, Corporate Services Division provided three sessions on bias and barrier-free recruitment practices. 90 managers and senior executives participated in the sessions.

Employment accommodation

Following are a sample of some employment accommodations that were provided to job applicants or employees in late 2014 or 2015. Though the judiciary are not employees of the ministry, some accommodation of members of the judiciary are also provided.

- The Office of the Children’s Lawyer provided interview materials in electronic format on a memory stick to accommodate an articling student with a visual impairment and allowed the student to use their laptop with assistive technology to review the interview questions.
- An employee of the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee of the ministry was provided with a specialised chair as an accommodation for the office’s 2015 Town Hall meeting event.
- The Victim’s and Vulnerable Persons Division provided Computer Assisted Real Time Translation Services and Sign Language Interpreter Services to meet the needs of several presenters as well as of some employees at their training sessions on understanding the needs of people who are Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing.
- The Civil Law Division (formerly known as the Legal Services Division) provided the installation of an ergonomic work station with adjustable height desk and in a separate situation a screen reader was provided for an articling student with visual disability to allow them to operate their computer.
- A Court Services Division court reporter was provided with an assistive listening device to connect to the Digital Recording Device in the courtroom to assist them in monitoring the court record
- A visiting Justice, who uses a wheelchair, was provided with assistance to and from the courthouse parking lot and assigned to an accessible courtroom.
- An individual with a mental health disability, who was applying to work in a courthouse, was interviewed by one interview panel member at a time to accommodate their specific situation.
- In another courthouse, staff communicate with a colleague who is Deaf using Microsoft Lync software.
- A courthouse staff member with a permanent back injury was provided a cart to assist with their duties.
- A staff work area in a courtroom was changed to accommodate a staff member with a chronic pain condition.
- The Corporate Services Management Division also provided materials in electronic format on a memory stick and allowed the use of a computer with speech output for several candidates in a competition.

Employee engagement

The ministry continues to look for ways to learn more about any issues or concerns employees and applicants with disabilities have in relation to any aspect of their work, workplace or career development as well as for ways to increase their engagement in the workplace. The Human Resources Strategic Business Unit has developed a plan to survey ministry employees through a confidential survey to try to get a better understanding of any specific issues that need to be addressed or of any specific interests of employees with disabilities. The survey will be implemented in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

The Directors of Court Operations in the Court Service Division continued to provide a yearly Courtside Chat to give employees, including employees with disabilities, an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have. Any staff not comfortable raising concerns in a public forum are also able to raise any concerns through the confidential event evaluations.

Mentoring program

In 2015, the pilot of the ministry mentoring program called the Mentoring for Career and Inclusion Program (MCIP) was approved as a permanent program of the ministry. Participants are invited to self-identify as being a member of one of five under-represented groups, including people with disabilities, to participate as mentees in the program and are matched with other staff or management to exchange information on inclusion and career development. The program benefits mentors in learning more about the experience of employees from under-represented groups and assists mentees through learning opportunities and personal advice and assistance in planning and developing their careers. In 2015, 156 employees participated.

Vicarious Trauma

Many ministry employees are frequently exposed to difficult, painful and sometimes violent events that are addressed through ministry courts and other services. Workers who are exposed to such information can experience negatives impacts on their own health and wellbeing and this is called Vicarious Trauma. Initiatives to support employees and third parties on this issue occurred at both the ministry and division levels in 2015.

A cross-ministry Vicarious Trauma Committee, led by the Human Resources Strategic Business Unit of the Corporate Services Management Division, worked to develop a ministry-wide, multi-year strategy to provide workplace supports to employees at risk of experiencing vicarious trauma. The overall strategy is expected to include a needs assessment as well as training for both employees and managers and will begin in 2016 – 2017.

Some divisions and program areas also took measures to address this important issue for staff in 2015 as outlined below:

- a vicarious trauma training session was provided to non-legal staff of the Criminal Law Division at the 2015 Provincial Support Staff Seminar. Vicarious Trauma Issues were also discussed during two of the division 2015 Crown summer schools courses
- in May 2015, the Supervised Access Program of the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division provided sessions on mental health self-care, self-awareness and burn-out as well as breathing and relaxation for 45 ministry staff and Transfer Payment Recipient Coordinators
- in 2015, the Accessibility Unit made information and access available to a webcast called Opening Minds to Mental Health Mental Health Commission of Canada through its internal webpages on training. The 3-hour conference included speakers, presentations and panel discussions from all areas of the justice sector and had a focus on serving people with mental health disabilities

The ministry also makes efforts to prevent disability or illness by supporting staff that experience emergency situations at work. For example, in September of 2015, the Pembroke Courthouse had to undergo a lock down. In these types of situations, the Business Continuity and Emergency Management Office of the Corporate Services Management Division immediately sends out a letter to each staff person to acknowledge the difficult situation they've been through, provide information on stress reactions and

strategies to help manage them, and identifies confidential professional services that employees can use through the employee assistance program. Tools and other resources are also made available to managers and supervisors to ensure employees have the practical information and services they need is important to the ministry.

Disability Advisory Council

The Ministry of the Attorney General provides a representative to the [OPS](#) Disability Advisory Council which is an employee council which works to provide a voice for employees with disabilities in identifying, preventing and removing barriers in the [OPS](#) workplace. The ministry representative also acts as chair of the advisory council.

Built environment

[MYAP](#) key outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around [OPS](#) facilities and public spaces.

Measures taken by the Ministry of the Attorney General in 2015

Accessible Built Environment Strategy

The ministry has continued the work to implement its long term Accessible Built Environment Strategy. Led by the ministry's Facilities Management Branch, Corporate Services Management Division, the strategy is designed to support the ministry in meeting, and where needed, exceeding, the legal requirements to improve accessibility in new and renovated building and offices. The ministry strategy also addresses improving accessibility in the ministry's existing buildings (where possible and practical) to support better and more independent access for ministry customers, stakeholders and staff with disabilities even where renovations are not planned.

The strategy has three main components:

1. Accessible design standards for the ministry.

Accessible design best practices and requirements were developed and integrated into the standard used for designing or building new courthouses. This was done a number of years ago and the accessibility design standards continue to be used as new courthouses are designed and built. These accessibility design best practices and requirements (such as accessible witness and jury boxes) are also used in renovation and upgrade projects as appropriate.

The ministry accessibility design practices and requirements will now be compiled in an independent document of ministry accessibility design standards for easier use in the range of facilities-related projects that may impact on accessibility. Work on compiling this document will begin in 2016.

2. Accessibility audits.

The ministry continued accessibility audits of the ministry's existing buildings in order to provide the information needed to develop a long-term plan for improving accessibility in existing facilities. During 2015, 102 [MAG](#) facilities were audited. The audit will be finalized in March 2016. The audit results will be used to help develop a list of priority accessibility projects across the ministry.

3. Accessible built environment implementation policy and plan.

In cooperation with the ministry's internal Accessible Built Environment Advisory Committee, the Facilities Management Branch has developed a policy to identify priority features and implement accessibility in the ministry's existing buildings. The policy has been drafted and will be finalized in 2016. The policy sets out key features and spaces

that should be made accessible, recognizing that it may not be feasible to remove all barriers in all older buildings.

Together, the implementation policy and audit results will support the creation of a list of priority accessibility projects.

The Facility Management Branch has also consulted with the Ontario Courts Accessibility Committee on several occasions as well as with internal ministry management and staff (e.g., Accessibility Coordinators) on the work on the ministry Accessible Building Environment Strategy to gather helpful input.

Ongoing improvements

On an ongoing basis, the Facilities Management Branch of the ministry ensures that accessibility is integrated into the design of new and renovated courthouses and other ministry buildings. A total of 21 projects were initiated in 2015 that solely addressed accessibility concerns in ministry buildings. Along with these projects, compliance to accessibility standards was taken into consideration during all other projects as well.

Below are a few examples of the various accessibility projects initiated across the province in 2015:

Newmarket (50 Eagle Street West): Construction of a new accessible washroom and reconfiguration of the current Victim Witness Assistance Program office to accommodate an accessible washroom.

- St. Catharines (301 St. Paul Street): Installation of automatic door operators on the main public door.
- Brampton (7755 Hurontario Street): Installation of a height adjustable table.
- L'Orignal (1023-1025 King Street): Modification of two washrooms to make them larger and barrier-free. All fixtures and equipment were replaced with accessible ones.
- Ottawa (161 Elgin Street): Reconfiguration of two existing washrooms and the installation of accessible fixtures and equipment.
- Sault Ste. Marie (426 Queen Street East): Redesign of the side entrance to include an accessible path for people with disabilities.
- Toronto (311 Jarvis Street): Installation of an accessibility lift on the ground floor.
- Toronto (47 Sheppard Avenue East): Installation of automatic door operators on main public door.
- Toronto (393 University Avenue): Revision of the existing judicial dais in two courtrooms to provide power operated, height adjustable work surface.
- London: Permanent Assistive Listening Devices were added to two courtrooms.

Design of public spaces training

The ministry made training on the Design of Public Spaces Standard of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the [AODA](#), which came into effect in January 2015, mandatory for all Facility Management and Accessibility Unit staff. All staff completed the training in 2015. New staff in these areas will be required to take the training as they join the ministry.

General outcomes

[MYAP](#) key outcome

[OPS](#) staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility, in [OPS](#) policies, programs, services

and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures taken by the Ministry of the Attorney General in 2015

Including accessibility considerations in procurements

To prevent new barriers, the ministry requires all divisions to incorporate accessibility design criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods or services except where it is not practicable to do so as required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. Where it is not practicable for a procurement to meet this requirement, the responsible division, branch or unit will keep an explanation on file.

The Corporate Services Management Division of the ministry supports divisions in procurements. The Procurement and Strategic Advice Form developed for ministry procurements, includes information and links on accessibility procurement resources to ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities at the time of procurement.

In many cases, some accessibility requirements are now commonly known such as requiring contractors to offer accessible formats. In some cases however it can be more challenging to define the requirements that will ensure accessibility needs are met in a manner that respects the dignity of the individual. All areas of the ministry are able to consult with procurement staff and with staff of the Accessibility Unit for advice and assistance.

For example, in 2015 the Accessibility Unit worked with the Facilities Management Branch and a courthouse to replace an old style wheelchair lift that addressed access up a short series of stairs. Adding a ramp was not possible in the area. The principles identified for the lift design included:

- maximize independent operation of the lift
- maximize the size of the lift so that people who have larger or heavier wheeled mobility devices can use it
- allow for broad use by anyone who cannot use the stairs and would benefit from the lift including someone in a wheeled mobility device as well as someone walking who is unable to use the stairs and a person with a stroller

In another situation in 2015, the Civil Law Division's (formerly the Legal Services Division) Library needed to contract for online legal search tools. The ministry has been making vendors aware of the ministry goal to purchase products that are accessible for several years. When no accessible products could be identified, the ministry included requirements for the vendors to provide proof to the ministry that they are working towards ensuring their products are fully compliant with accessibility requirements. Such proof includes having their websites tested every 6 months by an approved third party testing facility, and a written report provided to the ministry showing results. The accessibility requirements were included in the overall contracts with vendors with the help and advice of the Accessibility Unit and assistance in evaluating the third party testing from the OPS Information and Information Technology Accessibility Centre of Excellence.

In purchasing wheelchairs and additional assistive listening devices (ALDs) for courthouses and tribunals, the Accessibility Unit, ministry's procurement office and the Courts Accessibility Subcommittee worked together to identify the specific requirements and features to be included as procurement requirements.

The following are some additional examples of how the ministry addressed accessibility in other procurements and contracts:

- the Court Services Division detailed the responsibility of service providers to comply with accessibility legislation in a procurement for leadership training in February 2015
- the Criminal Law Division included accessibility requirements in the transfer payment agreements with the Direct Accountability Program and Youth Justice Committees. Annual program reviews include mandatory reporting on compliance with the accessibility requirements
- a pre-requisite to being included on the Court Services Division Registry of Accredited Freelance Court Interpreters is completion of mandatory online accessibility training

Training and awareness

In addition to the mandatory online accessibility training modules required of staff to meet the training requirements under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, the ministry and its program areas continue to work to develop or identify job relevant training on disability, accessibility and human rights that is practical for ministry staff.

Understanding the needs of people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

To fulfill an important commitment from the 2014 ministry [ODA Accessibility Plan](#), the Victim's and Vulnerable Persons Division, with advice from the Accessibility Unit, offered two training events on Understanding the Needs of People who are Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing in the fall of 2015. Over 110 staff participated in person while over 300 participated in the training through an online webcast.

Presenters included individuals who are Deaf, including a Deaf Interpreter and the Executive Director of the Ontario Association for the Deaf, as well as presenters who are hard of hearing, such as a counsellor from the Canadian Hearing Society and a ministry employee who has experienced increased hearing loss on the job. In addition, a Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division Accessibility Lead, a courthouse Accessibility Coordinator and two crown prosecutors spoke about their experiences in providing accessibility. The training is posted on the ministry intranet site so that additional staff can take the training. The session was very well received and participants commented that they gained practical insights and tips and learned more about providing accessible and responsive services to this community.

Breaking down barriers: disability law and the role of Crown counsel in accessibility

In 2015, a Ministry-wide team collaborated to develop an interactive half-day training program titled Breaking Down Barriers: Disability Law and The Role of Crown Counsel in Accessibility which was delivered on October 21, 2015. This initiative was a result of a 2014 [ODA plan](#) commitment and was led by the Civil Law Division (formerly known as the Legal Services Division) in collaboration with Policy and Innovation Division, the Accessibility Unit, and counsel from other ministry divisions. The training program was attended by over 70 counsel from across the ministry and evaluations showed that counsel were extremely pleased with the interactivity, relevance and practicality of the training provided. The curriculum included the opportunity to hear from individuals with lived experience of disability as well as presentations from the ARCH Disability Law Centre and the Ontario Human Rights Commission. These presentations were followed by small group discussions of scenarios based on common Crown Counsel legal practice areas: legislative drafting, litigation and prosecution, internal legal services to ministry clients (such as advising a ministry client on procurement) and front-line services/customer service that may be provided by counsel in some divisions and the ministry's Civil Law Branches. The goal of the discussions was to build skills in identifying

and addressing accessibility situations. The scenarios and related resource lists were designed to serve as ongoing training resources for daily reference, client education and future training or case study discussion sessions. These materials have been circulated to participants in the training and are available to legal staff across the Ontario Public Service. The program will be adapted for use in onboarding and other training for crown counsel in 2016/2017.

Creating accessible HTML forms

Over the past few years, a number of different guides and on-line tutorials have been made available to staff as learning resources for creating accessible documents. The ministry's Accessibility Executive Steering Committee identified however that further hands-on training was needed. To build on these learning tools, the Accessibility Unit hired external training consultants to deliver in-person training sessions on creating accessible HTML forms in the spring of 2015. About 40 staff from the ministry, its agencies and tribunals participated and over 90% of the participants felt the training met or exceeded their expectations. All participants reported that the training improved their understanding. A manual about creating accessible HTML forms was developed and provided as a training resource and will be made available to all ministry staff. Additional training on accessible documents will be offered in 2016.

Other training offered during the year included:

- the topic of accessible customer service was included in the Customer Service in Courts training session that was delivered to all court staff across the division between November 2014 and April 2015. A total of 58 in-person half-day sessions and 12 webinars were delivered
- Accessibility Coordinators in the Brampton area attended the Opening Minds to Mental Health training session which focused on dealing with mental health issues in the workplace and dealing with conflict situations
- Court Reporters, clerks or registrars in several courthouses were provided with training on the portable assistive listening devices that are made available to the public to assist people who are hard of hearing. Staff in Hamilton, the Central East Region, Toronto, 361 University Courthouse were all provided with training
- in the Ottawa courthouse, the accessibility committee provides yearly training to all employees of the Court Services Division including accessibility processes and procedures, services and equipment
- the Northern Regional Office for Ontario Victims Services provided a one-day sensitivity training regarding wheelchair access. Participants spend the day using a wheelchair to gain perspective on the needs and challenges of people with mobility disabilities.
- the Civil Law Division (formerly the Legal Services Division) provided training for ministry legal counsel on the role of counsel in consultations in January 2015. The training included a presentation and discussion on the features of accessible consultations
- in the fall of 2015, a presentation was provided, by the Civil Law Division (formerly the Legal Services Division) and the ministry Inclusion Unit, to inform all new articling students of their rights and responsibilities regarding human rights and accessibility. This presentation also discussed the ministry and divisional approaches to support compliance, including diversity, inclusion and accessibility committees at the ministry and division level

Ministry long term accessibility strategy

The ministry's long term accessibility strategic plan is modelled on the Accessible Built Environment Strategy that the ministry previously developed. The strategy will set out

priorities, activities and outcomes across a number of priority areas. As part of the work on the strategy in 2015, the Accessibility Unit consulted with senior executives, the Accessibility Executive Steering Committee and the Ontario Courts Accessibility Committee to confirm a long-term vision, long-term outcomes and key strategic areas to be addressed. In 2016 the Accessibility Unit will continue to work with divisions to identify specific activities or deliverables and finalize the strategic plan for implementation in the coming years.

Deputy Attorney General Accessibility Forum

In an effort to more clearly identify and address barriers on specific issues, the Deputy Attorney General of the Ministry of the Attorney General held the first Accessibility Forum in March 2015. The forum included invited speakers from various disability communities to speak to their experience of barriers for those with print-related disabilities. Organizations represented included the [AODA Alliance](#), Balance, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, Reach Canada and Springtide Resources. The audience for the full day event included senior staff of the ministry and tribunals as well as representatives from across the justice sector including the Law Society of Upper Canada, Pro Bono Law Ontario, the Ontario Bar Association and Legal Aid Ontario. A follow-up survey indicated audience participants greatly increased their understanding of print-related barriers and were committed to returning to their organizations to make changes.

Municipal Provincial Offences Act courthouses

The *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) sets the procedures for the prosecution of offences created by provincial laws, such as traffic and speeding tickets, and municipal by-laws, such as parking infractions. Almost all of the 1.6 million POA charges laid each year are dealt with in courthouses that are administered by municipalities, not by the Ministry of the Attorney General. In 2015, the Court Services Division of the ministry worked with its municipal partners to ensure that each municipal POA courthouse identified a Municipal Courthouse Accessibility Coordinator and made this contact information available to the public. The Municipal Courthouse Accessibility Coordinator will address accessibility questions and requests for disability-related accommodation in a manner similar to the service in ministry courthouses.

Section two: report on measures proposed by the ministry for 2016

Customer service

[MYAP](#) key outcome

People with disabilities who are [OPS](#) customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

Measures proposed by the Ministry of the Attorney General for 2016

The long term accessibility plan will provide a key focus for the ministry's accessibility work in 2016 however it will also be important to continue the improvement of the existing structures and processes that support the ministry's accessible services to Ontarians with disabilities. Some of the proposals outlined below will continue into 2017 and beyond.

The ministry will continue to provide a central ministry Accessibility Unit to provide expertise, advice and coordination to support the ministry's efforts on accessibility. The ministry will also continue to support the Accessibility Coordinator Service in all courthouses.

To enhance Accessibility Coordinator and Accessibility Lead’s knowledge about providing disability-related accommodations and accessible services:

- the ministry will review and update guidance materials and procedures for Accessibility Coordinators. This work will be completed jointly by Court Service Division, Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division, Criminal Law Division and the Accessibility Unit in 2016 and continue into 2017
- the Courts Accessibility Subcommittee will review the need for any additional training for Accessibility Coordinators and Accessibility Leads

Staff of the Accessibility Unit have been invited to participate in a Law Society of Upper Canada accessibility education session for members in April of 2016. The staff will provide information on the Accessibility Coordinator service and on complex disability-related accommodations. Staff have participated in previous sessions in this series of education sessions which offers an important opportunity to make the legal sector aware of the accessibility services in ministry courthouses.

In 2016, a ministry-wide approach to promote awareness of fragrance sensitivities will be implemented. This will include posting information that asks people to refrain from wearing personal scented products in all ministry locations and on the ministry's website. The Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division will implement a client satisfaction survey in 2016 to assist with evaluating the pilot projects using Support Dogs while delivering services to vulnerable victims of crime.

In 2016-17, the Criminal Law Division Strategic Operations and Management Centre will develop an information sheet for staff who contact victims and witnesses to ensure that disability accommodation is offered at the time of contact.

The Court Services Division will complete work on a guide for court users with vision disabilities. The purpose of the guide is to provide helpful information about common accommodations for court users who are blind or visually impaired and how to make requests for accommodation throughout various steps in the court process.

The Court Services Division will also provide guidance for staff in responding to disability-related requests for help in completing court forms. The Courts Accessibility Subcommittee and the ministry's Accessibility Unit will work on the development of information to support court staff and courthouse Accessibility Coordinators in responding to disability-related requests for help in completing court forms.

Information and communications

MYAP key outcome

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

Measures proposed by the Ministry of the Attorney General for 2016

The ministry will continue to make the public aware of their ability to request accommodations, including accessible formats and communications supports, and will continue to provide such accommodations upon request to people with disabilities.

The Accessibility Unit will monitor the implementation of the Canada-wide Video Relay Service and evaluate whether or how the service can benefit the provision of services to ministry clients.

The Court Interpretation Unit of the Court Services Division of the ministry is expecting to

implement a visual sign language strategy in 2016 and 2017 to improve access to qualified sign language interpreters for the courts. The division will also work with Accessibility Unit on providing further guidance for courthouse Accessibility Coordinators and other staff about the effective use of sign language interpreters in courts.

To enhance staff knowledge about accessible website and content design, the ministry's Accessibility Unit will host accessibility job-related training sessions for:

- website designers and applications developers
- non-technical staff who have a role in overseeing website or web-application projects
- staff who develop content for websites

In 2016, the Justice Technology Service has planned a number of activities to address ongoing and future accessible website requirements as follows:

- the [AODA IT Website Compliance Working Group](#) will continue to identify gaps, website remediation opportunities and accessibility solutions in the area of accessible information and technology
- the service will train staff further on accessible web template creation and support
- in addition, in 2016 and 2017, in cooperation with ministry program areas, the service will begin to develop compliance plans to meet the January 1, 2020 accessible website requirements under the [IASR](#)
- in February of 2016, the Justice Technology Service will host a ministry-wide learning event to raise awareness about the needs of people with disabilities in accessing and using technology

To strengthen processes for ensuring ministry's websites are accessible on an ongoing basis, the Accessibility Unit will continue to work together with the Justice Technology Service [AODA IT Website Compliance Working Group](#) and ministry divisions to develop and recommend strategies to support ongoing accessible website compliance.

The ministry will transition its internal intranet website to a new [OPS](#)-wide platform for intranet sites called InSite. The ministry Communications Branch is the lead on this process although all impacted divisions will have a role to play during the transition. Through this process, the ministry will ensure its intranet sites, web pages and web content comply with World Wide Web Consortium, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 levels A and AA ([W3C WCAG 2.0 AA](#)) as required in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

In 2016, the Human Resources Strategic Business Unit is committed to developing a process to monitor and ensure ongoing accessibility compliance of its internal intranet webpages.

Employment

[MYAP](#) key outcome

[OPS](#) employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures proposed by the Ministry of the Attorney General for 2016

Ministry managers will continue to follow [OPS](#) policies and procedures on employment accommodation and return to work and to make use of [OPS](#) services for assistance.

In 2016, the Human Resources Strategic Business Unit of the Corporate Services Management Division will develop and conduct a voluntary, anonymous survey of

employees to help identify the specific concerns and challenges ministry employees with disabilities face. The survey will also ask for suggestions on how to improve engagement of employees with disabilities. Results are expected by March of 2017.

The Human Resources Strategic Business Unit will also continue to lead work on the ministry-wide Vicarious Trauma program in cooperation with the cross-ministry Vicarious Trauma Committee.

The Accessibility Unit, with the cooperation of other areas of the ministry, will develop and implement guidance for managers to support understanding of the impact of scented products on clients, partners and staff who have multiple chemical sensitivities, environmental sensitivities and other health conditions that are aggravated by scents and fragrances. The guidance will also include tips for accommodating individuals with these types of disabilities.

The Business Continuity and Emergency Management Unit (BCEM) of the Corporate Services Management Division will undertake a two year project to ensure ministry emergency plans and procedures effectively address the needs of stakeholders, employees and the public with a range of disabilities (e.g. people with mobility disabilities, hearing disabilities, etc.) across the spectrum of emergency management occurrences common to ministry facilities. Existing emergency plans, procedures and training will be evaluated and enhanced where required through the completion of research and implementation of best practices. During the first year of the project, the BCEM will conduct research and liaise with stakeholders on emergency planning for people with disabilities using public buildings. This will be the first phase of a two year project.

The Inclusion Unit will continue to offer training on bias and barrier-free hiring to ministry managers.

Built environment

MYAP key outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

Measures proposed by the Ministry of the Attorney General for 2016

On an ongoing basis, the Facilities Management Branch will continue to integrate accessibility into the design and renovation of courthouses and other ministry buildings. The Facility Management Branch will also continue to welcome feedback from staff, stakeholders and the public on the accessibility of all ministry locations.

The Accessibility Audits of existing ministry facilities, a key component of the ministry Accessible Built Environment Strategy, are expected to be completed by March of 2016. The Accessible Built Environment committee will review all findings from the audits and develop a ranking system to move forward with a plan to address the results over the coming years.

The ministry's Accessible Built Environment Committee will review all findings from the audits. Together with the draft policy the audit results will support the creation of a multi-year capital plan for improving accessibility in existing ministry buildings.

In 2016, the Facilities Management Branch will compile an independent document of the accessibility design standards specific to ministry courthouses and other operations. While accessible design and best practices are already integrated into key facilities design documents used when building new courthouses, a separate set of accessible design standard will be a helpful for the range of facilities-related projects that may impact

on accessibility.

General outcomes

MYAP key outcome

OPS staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility in OPS policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures proposed by the Ministry of the Attorney General for 2016

Procurement

The Fiscal Planning Unit of the Corporate Services Management Division will be adding accessibility as a consideration to the generic submission checklist used to evaluate ministry submissions as part of the ministry annual Program, Review, Renewal and Transformation process. This process guides budget planning for ministry operations.

Training and awareness

The ministry will continue efforts to provide practical, job-specific, training on accessibility. In addition to training and awareness sessions mentioned in other areas of this report, the ministry is planning to offer the following training sessions in 2016 or 2017:

- the Civil Law Division (formerly the Legal Services Division) will offer the training program titled, Breaking Down Barriers: The Role of Crown Counsel in Accessibility, annually in 2016 and 2017. The division will also adapt parts of the training for use in orientation of new staff
- in April of 2016, the Supervised Access Program of the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division plans to train 45 service providers and staff on Safe Talk (a suicide prevention program) and on working with families where a member has a mental health disability
- the Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division has committed to organizing an accessibility training session for staff on the impact of trauma and how it applies to children, people with mental health issues and vulnerable clients. The session will focus on a broad understanding of traumatic stress and will provide coping mechanisms for staff. The session will be in person and available via webinar.
- the Office of the Children’s Lawyer is in the process of bringing on a new panel of fee-for-service lawyers and clinicians and all panel members will be required to take mandatory accessibility training

Accessibility forum

The Deputy Attorney General will hold a second Accessibility Forum in 2016 to learn more about accessibility issues and concerns of people with disabilities and to share the learning with other justice sector partners.

Long term accessibility strategy

The ministry’s Accessibility Unit will work with all divisions to finalize the ministry’s long term Accessibility Strategic Plan. It will set out priorities and activities to achieve the ministry’s goals for accessibility. In 2016 work will include identifying specific activities and deliverables.

Section three: addressing the identification of barriers in legislation

Introduction

In support of the commitment to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, the ministry will continue to review government initiatives, including Acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services for the purposes of identifying and removing barriers.

Measures currently in place

The ministry uses the Accessibility Legislative Review Tool and the Accessible Legislation and Implementation Frameworks Training Guide to support the identification, removal and prevention of barriers. In addition, Universal Design in Drafting Legislation by David Lepofsky and Randal Graham is offered as a reference on the ministry intranet.

Actions taken in the past year

In addition to the actions outlined earlier in this plan, the Ministry of the Attorney General took the following actions to address barriers in its Acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services in response to identified barriers.

Accessibility legislative review

Recognizing the importance of addressing accessibility barriers in laws that have a high impact on members of the public and persons with disabilities, the government is following a three-pronged strategy that prioritizes the review of high impact legislation including:

1. Development of a standardized process and tools for identifying and addressing accessibility barriers;
2. Review of 51 targeted high-impact statutes that meet the following criteria:
 - Statutes that affect persons with disabilities directly
 - Statutes that provide for the delivery of widely applicable services or programs
 - Statutes that provide benefits or protections or
 - Statutes that affect a democratic or civic right or duty
3. Review procedural rules, policies and guidelines for select high-impact legislation, where necessary.
4. As part of this process, the Ministry of the Attorney General reviewed the following 15 Acts:
 - *Blind Persons’ Rights Act*
 - *Compensation for Victims of Crime Act*
 - *Election Act*
 - *Employers and Employees Act*
 - *Family Law Act*
 - *Human Rights Code*
 - *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, 2002*
 - *Juries Act*
 - *Legal Aid Services Act, 1998*
 - *Limitations Act, 2002*
 - *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*
 - *Real Property Limitations Act*

- *Substitute Decisions Act, 1992*
- *Trustee Act*
- *Victims’ Bill of Rights, 1995*

The ministry has proposed amendments to two statutes:

1. *Compensation for Victims of Crime Act*
2. *Substitute Decisions Act, 1992.*

Compensation for Victims of Crime Act (CVCA)

The ministry is proposing amendments to better promote accessibility for persons with disabilities who are engaging with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (“Board”).

- In particular, the ministry is proposing amendments to give the Board discretion to extend the 15-day time period for requesting a review of a Board decision.
- Currently, the CVCA does not provide for any flexibility around the 15-day timeline for those who cannot meet the deadline for reasons of disability, e.g., an individual requiring an accessible format of an application or assistance in filing may need additional time.
- In addition, the ministry is proposing amendments to provide for multiple methods of service delivery, including email, fax, and any other method that the Board may order, and to extend the deemed date of service from three days to five days.
- Currently, the CVCA only permits service of documents to be delivered personally or sent by registered mail. This may be a potential barrier for a person with a disability who is better able to communicate with the Board and other parties through alternative methods, such as e-mail or fax.

Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 (SDA)

The ministry is proposing amendments to improve accessibility by requiring that certain notices be provided in accessible formats and accompanied by an explanation. In particular, the ministry is proposing that a guardian or person with a power of attorney who is resigning must provide notice in an accessible format on request. The guardian or attorney would also be required to explain why they are resigning on request.

In May 2015, as part of “The Path to 2025: Ontario’s Accessibility Action Plan,” Cabinet directed the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and the Ministry of the Attorney General to work with affected ministries to return to the Legislation and Regulations Committee (LRC) with legislative amendments resulting from the review.

In June 2015, as part of the public release of “The Path to 2025: Ontario’s Accessibility Action Plan,” the government committed to introduce legislation addressing barriers to accessibility identified through a government-wide review of high-impact legislation.

Amendments to 11 statutes across seven ministries were introduced as part of the 2016 budget bill. The bill is scheduled for clause-by-clause on April 6, 2016.

The ministry will continue to report on the progress of the review in our annual accessibility plan.

Other achievements and commitments

To better promote accessibility in laws, in 2015, the ministry took steps to address inaccessible content in ministry regulations. The ministry amended six regulations in order to address 47 inaccessible form graphics (scanned images of forms embedded in the

regulation). Re-designed accessible forms are now available on the Ontario Central Forms Repository or Ontario Court Forms websites.

- The Office of the Legislative Council is committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers in its policies, procedures, services and practices. Staff have been trained to identify inaccessible structures in legislation, and where possible to avoid replicating it. A procedure manual was created to document these issues and to provide solutions.
- Editors in the Office of the Legislative Council (OLC) of the ministry received training to identify inaccessible formats such as technical diagrams in legislative documents. A staff person in the office has been identified to head initiatives to address such documents. A process is in place for Legal Counsel to bring such accessibility issues to the editorial group for consultation.
- In 2016, the Crown Law Office – Criminal of the Criminal Law Division will revise the Crown Policy Manual to enhance awareness of accessibility requirements.

The Ministry of the Attorney General will continue to report on the progress on identifying and removing barriers in legislation, regulations, policies, services and other initiatives in our annual accessibility plan.

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