

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

*2007-2008
Accessibility Plan*



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Introduction

In June 2005, the Ontario government took a strong stand on accessibility when it passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) into law.

The AODA lays out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of new, mandatory accessibility standards for some of the most important aspects of people's lives.

Five key areas have been identified for the first accessibility standards: customer service, transportation, information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

The accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor and will come into force on January 1, 2008.

An initial proposed standard on accessible transportation has been developed by the Transportation Standards Development Committee. It was posted for public review on June 27, 2007 and will be available for public comment until September 28, 2007.

The Standards Development Committee that will draft the proposed information and communications standard was established and began meeting in April, 2007. The committees developing the accessible built environment and accessible employment standards have been selected and will begin meeting in the fall of 2007.

While the government is moving forward to implement the AODA, there will be a transition period where government and the broader public sector will continue to meet their obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.

Under the ODA, Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. These plans must be made available to the public. Accessibility planning efforts to date have

developed a strong foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will mean real and effective change.

This document is the fifth annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It highlights the achievements of the 2006-07 plan and outlines the commitments for 2007-08 so that no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

This ministry intends to build on its achievements by implementing initiatives that support the government's commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province where people of all abilities have a chance to fully achieve their potential.

Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present the 2007-2008 Accessibility Plan for the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

In the past year, the ministry has taken significant strides towards raising awareness about accessibility. The ministry developed a vision for accessibility, including setting specific outcomes, which will guide our work towards our common goal of a fully accessible Ontario.

We are continuing to build momentum under the landmark *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). This legislation requires the development and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

I am pleased to announce that the Standard for Accessible Customer Service has been passed into regulation. Three other accessibility standards are being developed in the areas of communications and information, the built environment, and employment. In addition, an accessibility standard in transportation was posted for public review in June 2007.

In May 2007, the ministry hosted an Accessibility Expo to celebrate National Access Awareness Week. This two-day event of information, ideas, innovation and inspiration was designed to raise awareness of the benefits of accessibility to all Ontarians. More than 500 people from across the Ontario Public Service registered and took part in the experiential modules, while many more took time to talk to exhibitors to learn more about accessibility.

As part of the Accessibility Expo, the ministry launched a public awareness campaign on accessibility called *AccessON*. The Internet based campaign is designed to raise awareness among the public, the business community and the broader public sector, about the barriers that exist for people with disabilities. It also provides tools to help businesses comply with accessibility standards.

These are just some examples of the work that was accomplished in the past year.

This year, we will place emphasis on addressing barriers to ministry programs and services and improve service delivery while researching ways to provide alternate formats and alternate media for employees and customers. We will also measure the results of our accessibility initiatives.

Our commitments for 2007-2008 will build on the work that this ministry has already completed to improve accessibility for our employees and for the people that we serve. A complete report of this work and our commitments for the coming year are provided on the pages that follow.

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur

Report on Achievements

2006 - 2007 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The ministry is pleased to present its accessibility achievements for the period of September 2006 to September 2007.

Much of the work of the ministry focuses on programs and services that benefit people with disabilities and their families. While the ministry is proud of the work that has been done to date, it is aware that this is a path of continuous improvement. The ministry is committed to being a model of best practice in our role as an employer, as a service provider and as a funder of services provided by the transfer payment sector.

The achievements listed are based on the planned commitments made in last year's plan. You will also find some additional achievements that resulted from opportunities to improve accessibility that occurred during the year.

Customer Service

Initiatives that address systemic barriers in accessing ministry programs and services.

Commitment

The Learning and Training working group will develop and disseminate a lexicon of acceptable terms relating to people with disabilities.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In Fall 2006, the working group reviewed the lexicon that was developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and compared it to other lexicons to determine its appropriateness. As a result of this review, the working group has recommended that the lexicon be promoted on the ministry's Intranet site. "Talk About Disabilities – Choose the Right Word" is available on the ministry's Internet site at http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/how/howto_choose.htm

The working group also established a purpose statement for the lexicon. The purpose statement is intended to highlight the importance of using acceptable and contemporary language related to disability.

Additional Achievement

The ministry developed a new Professional Advancement and Career Education (PACE) training program designed to enrich the skills of staff and managers working with Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients. The PACE curriculum focuses on enriching the skills and core competencies necessary to build and develop effective and positive relationships with ODSP clients, colleagues and communities. Management training was held across the province in April 2007. Staff sessions, which included management participation, began in May 2007.

Commitment

The Direct Service Delivery working group will undertake a review of options to upgrade telephone systems to appropriately address the needs of clients and employees with disabilities.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In 2006, a review of the telephone system was completed with a particular focus on access through teletypewriter (TTY). This review indicated that there is cost effective software available that will enhance accessibility for people who are deaf or hearing impaired.

The Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster will explore alternatives for enhancing TTY services in keeping with the Ontario Public Service Quality Service Standards. The Cluster will consider any issues brought forward by other working groups.

Commitment

The Direct Service Delivery working group will review the technology upgrades to the telephone system at the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) using an accessibility lens.

Status

In progress.

Action and Timeframe

The FRO technology reviews will be undertaken with an accessibility lens by the project team of the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster responsible for

the implementation of the proposed upgrade to the existing telephone system. The project team will also review the new reporting software tool to ensure that the reports are in fully accessible formats for all staff. Accessibility considerations will be incorporated into the development of these systems. Implementation is targeted for September/October 2007.

Commitment

The Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will continue to improve teletypewriter (TTY) services, including exploring long term management of TTY best practice guidelines within the Ontario Public Service.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In 2006, the telephone system was reviewed. The review determined that teletypewriter (TTY) services and accessibility for people who are deaf or hearing impaired can be improved with new software.

The Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster will consider the different cost effective software options for enhancing TTY services in keeping with the Ontario Public Service Quality Service Standards.

Commitment

The Developmental Services Branch will further expand and enhance access to specialized clinical resources through the use of video-conferencing technology in four Community Networks of Specialized Care.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

Based upon an initial two video conferencing pilots that were initiated in 2004 and reviewed in 2006, the ministry has continued to further its commitment to expand and enhance access to specialized resources through video-conferencing technology in the four Community Networks of Specialized Care.

The pilot projects demonstrated that video-conferencing is an effective tool in the developmental services sector's efforts to increase access to specialized supports for individuals, their families/caregivers and the local agency staff and professionals that support them.

In addition, the review of the pilots demonstrated that video-conferencing technology could be a useful way for the Community Networks of Specialized Care to enhance service delivery by improving the capacity of network members to develop broader range and increase the volume of services that service providers can offer.

In 2006, the Community Networks of Specialized Care partnered with the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) to access OTN's established provincial video-conferencing infrastructure; 74 sites will be installed and implemented in three phases with all sites in place by the end of 2007/08.

As of July 2007, 42 sites are up and running with training completed and 12 of the 32 remaining sites are in the process of being set up, with 20 sites outstanding.

Commitment

The Social Assistance and Municipal Operations (SAMO) Branch and the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster will revise existing Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) brochures and products to conform to the Accessibility Standards that are being developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The ministry will implement a pilot e-mail system to improve communication with ODSP clients in October 2006.

Status

In progress.

Action and Timeframe

In Spring 2007, an Information and Communication Accessibility Standards Committee was formed to develop an initial proposed standard for accessible information and communications. The committee began meeting in April 2007 and is targeting December 2007 for the development of the standard. Once information regarding the standard is received, SAMO will incorporate the standard into existing ODSP brochures and products.

SAMO has revised 12 ODSP Employment Supports brochures outlining the November 1, 2006, ODSP legislative changes. All of these brochures include ministry contact information transcribed into Braille. In addition, these brochures are available in audio format. These products are available in local ODSP offices.

The ministry is working with the Ministry of Government Services (MGS) on the protocols and approval process required for the implementation of a client e-mail solution. An interim strategy is in place that allows ODSP clients to request

access to documentation in an electronic format. Local ODSP offices are able to provide ministry-approved letters and documents to clients on a diskette. The diskette is then mailed to the client for their viewing. The ministry is also exploring a technical solution for the provision of a client e-mail system with MGS and the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster. The plan is to have a client e-mail system in place during the 2007/08 fiscal period.

Rationale

In an effort to provide leadership in the area of accommodation, the ministry is exploring a technical solution for the provision of a client e-mail system with MGS and the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster.

The plan is to have a client e-mail system in place during the 2007/08 fiscal period.

Commitment

In spring 2007, the Social Assistance and Municipal Operations (SAMO) Branch and the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster will pilot plain language system-generated letters for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients in Toronto.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The pilot of the mail merge application was successfully implemented in local ODSP offices in Toronto in Fall 2006. Twenty user-generated letters were included in the pilot application. Results from the pilot were positive.

A province-wide implementation of the application and the revised letters was launched in Spring 2007. This provincial roll-out of the mail merge application included an additional 28 plain language letters, for a total of 48 user-generated letters.

In addition to the user generated letters, six plain language system generated ODSP letters were implemented in March 2007.

Commitment

The Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster will implement the findings of its research methods to provide information in alternate formats and alternate media.

Status

In progress.

Action and Timeframe

The Centre of Excellence for Information and Information Technology Accessibility was established to support the Ontario Public Services leadership role in accessibility.

Rationale

This commitment will be addressed through the work of the Centre of Excellence for Information and Information Technology Accessibility.

Commitment

The Emergency Management Unit will consult with external organizations serving people with disabilities in planning for the ministry's legislated responsibilities under the Emergency Management Act, specifically the provision of food, clothing and shelter, in the event of a community emergency.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The Emergency Management Unit consulted with stakeholder groups in the development of the Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs which was launched on May 11, 2007 during Emergency Preparedness Week.

The guide was developed jointly by Emergency Management Ontario, a branch of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario with the participation of 20 stakeholder groups who provided subject matter expertise.

It is the most comprehensive emergency preparedness resource for people with disabilities and special needs in Canada. It provides vital information to the over 1.5 million Ontarians with visible and/or non-visible disabilities and builds on important lessons learned during disasters such as Hurricane Katrina.

Another unique feature of this guide is the valuable information on animal emergency preparedness to help owners of service animals and/or pets prepare items in advance to keep their animals comfortable during an emergency situation.

The Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities / Special Needs is available in English, French and alternate formats including Braille, CD-ROM (mini and standard size) and large print. It is also available in the following languages: Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi and Spanish.

A PDF version of the guide is available at

http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/publications/emerg_guide07.htm

The Emergency Management Unit participated in and was a key contributor to a checklist document being produced by the Public Health Agency of Canada on Emergency Management Planning for people with disabilities and/or special needs. This working group involved 36 stakeholder groups, including Federal departments, provincial ministries, non-governmental organizations and external organizations serving people with disabilities/special needs.

The Emergency Management Program has identified the type of accessible emergency shelter that will be used to accommodate people with disabilities/special needs during emergencies.

Employment Accommodation

Initiatives that increase staff and managers' awareness of accessibility issues in the workplace.

Commitment

In fall of 2006, the Renewal Strategies Office will host a leadership day that will promote disability awareness and accessibility.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In the fall of 2006, the Renewal Strategies Office hosted an accessibility orientation session. More than 40 staff from across the ministry took part in the session held at Toronto's Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Highlights of the day included a number of accessibility-themed presenters including David Onley, then Chair, Accessibility Standards Advisory Council of Ontario, and anchor and host of Citytv and CP24. The session also featured a tour of the CNIB's fully accessible facility.

Additional Achievement

To celebrate National Access Awareness Week, May 27 to June 2, 2007, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, in partnership with the Renewal Strategies Office, hosted an Accessibility Expo on May 28 and 29, 2007.

The Accessibility Expo was a two-day exhibition of information, ideas, innovation and inspiration that will raise awareness of the benefits of accessibility by exploring the barriers to accessibility and the many ways to overcome these barriers.

The theme of the Expo was ***Accessibility benefits us all – Be a champion.*** This event was designed to challenge and inspire staff to make accessibility a part of our everyday lives and to promote inclusion for all.

The Expo helped the over 500 participants become champions through an offering of interactive displays, hands-on demonstrations, keynote speakers and simulation modules that allowed them to experience some of the many visible and invisible barriers that restrict people with disabilities from participating fully in society.

Commitment

The Learning and Training working group will implement an education program to enhance managers' and leaders' knowledge of employee accommodation obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In the fall 2007, the Human Resources Branch wrote to all ministry managers and reminded them about the requirement to complete the online Ontarians with Disabilities Act training.

The Learning and Training working group identified all existing learning resources that support awareness of accessibility and accommodation issues. Recognizing the value of providing clear steps that staff can take to build knowledge, the working group constructed detailed learning paths on accessibility/accommodation issues.

The working group developed a vision for a comprehensive and sustainable training strategy that leverages existing curriculum and opportunities for all ministry staff.

The “May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities” online training launched in June 2007 by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario meets a specific need for core information on accessibility issues. This one-hour workshop developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario with the Ministry of Government Services, is designed to deepen understanding of the experiences of customers with disabilities and points to ways to improve customer service in any setting.

Ministry employees are encouraged to register for a new fully-animated, e-learning course “May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities.”

Commitment

The Communications and Marketing Branch will launch an internal ministry education program based on the public campaign developed by the branch and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

AccessON, the ministry’s accessibility public awareness campaign, was launched in May 2007. In June 2007, the materials, including posters, were sent to all of the ministry’s regional offices. In July 2007, posters and brochures were distributed to the Family Responsibility Office and other corporate offices.

In the summer edition of The Comet, the ministry’s quarterly internal newsletter, an article promoting the AccessON campaign was published.

Over the course of the year, nine articles about accessibility have been featured in The Comet, the ministry’s internal newsletter, and there have been five updates on accessibility provided to staff through the ministry’s on-line bulletin Connections.

Commitment

The Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will improve the ministry’s recruitment processes and practices including postings, interviews, outreach and scoring.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

A handbook for OPS managers on inclusive recruitment practices was developed and finalized. The Ministry of Government Services has developed an outreach package based on the handbook.

A special training session was held with staff of Northern Recruitment Centre, leading to Enterprise Recruitment Centre's development and dissemination of an outreach recruitment package for MCSS ODSP service providers. In addition, a series of lunch hour workshops on the topic of inclusive recruitment were held.

Commitment

The Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will work to explore means by which employees with disabilities using assistive devices to operate their computers could obtain or share (at their discretion) information that would help them get the most out of those assistive devices.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster has identified an intranet collaboration tool from the government's Common Components and Applications Services offerings called Plone to meet this need and has initiated a research project to validate the integration of assistive technology with the Plone system.

Once validated, installed and promoted through ministry communications, Plone will allow staff with disabilities the opportunity to exchange information on how to get the most out of their assistive devices.

An implementation strategy is under development to deploy this collaborative workspace for employees using assistive devices to share documents, participate in discussions, exchange information (at their discretion) related to their experience using assistive technology.

Additional Achievement

To support the ministry's leadership role in accessibility, the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster has taken the lead for the enterprise-wide Centre of Excellence for Information and Information Technology (I&IT) Accessibility.

The Centre of Excellence for I&IT Accessibility plans to:

- Be the authoritative source of accessibility information as it relates to I&IT across the OPS enterprise;

- Engage stakeholders throughout the OPS I&IT community to establish a Community of Practice that will collaborate, share ideas and identify solutions for improving accessibility of I&IT solutions;
- Develop expertise of emerging technologies that support people with disabilities (e.g., Assistive Technology Devices); and,
- Develop linkages to working groups and committees that are addressing accessibility and I&IT issues.

Commitment

The Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will consult with other ministries on best practices in dealing with barriers in career development programs and processes.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The working group has explored the best means to survey other ministries on their best practices in dealing with barriers in career development programs and processes.

In consultation with the Modernization Program Management Office of the Ministry of Government Services, it was jointly decided to include this interest of MCSS in a broader consultation MGS is planning to undertake with the HR Directors of all ministries in relation to the OPS Accessibility agenda.

A member of the Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will participate with MGS in planning and conducting this exercise.

Communications and Information

Initiatives to improve staff's access to information.

Commitment

The Taking Stock and Continuous Improvement working group will commission an accessibility audit of the ministry's Intranet site.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In the winter of 2006, the University of Toronto's Adaptive Technology Resource Centre was retained to conduct audits of seven ministry Intranet sites.

As a result of these audits, some barriers were identified. The ministry has developed an action plan to address the barriers and prevent the creation of new barriers.

Commitment

The Renewal Strategies Office will support the availability of a number of accessibility-themed "lunch and learn" sessions for ministry staff, including sign language training.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

Between February 2007 and April 2007, staff from across the ministry took part in American Sign Language training. The training was conducted by a certified deaf instructor from the Canadian Hearing Society.

Built Environment

Initiatives aimed at improving the accessibility of ministry locations for staff and clients with disabilities.

Commitment

The Taking Stock and Continuous Improvement working group will commission an accessibility audit of the ministry's head office location at 80 Grosvenor Street, Toronto.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In Fall 2006, the ministry retained the Ontario March of Dimes (OMOD) to conduct an accessibility audit of its head office location at 80 Grosvenor Street Toronto, including the Hepburn and MacDonald blocks.

In Winter 2006, OMOD's final report was presented to and approved by the ministry's senior executive committee.

The ministry has worked with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) to complete the audit of the remaining floors of Hepburn Block occupied by MOHLTC.

Additional Achievements

1. The standards developed by OMOD were provided to the Ministry of Government Services and then shared with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) who have overall responsibility for the buildings that ministry occupies.
2. A checklist for use by managers was developed as part of the process. This checklist offers tips for managers in how to improve accessibility in all ministry sites.
3. As a result of the findings of the audits, a number of improvements to the Hepburn and MacDonald blocks will be made. Specifically:
 - a. The male and female washrooms in the South East and North East quadrants of the MacDonald Block will be refurbished to fully accessible standards;
 - b. Two new unisex fully accessible washrooms will be built in the MacDonald Block;
 - c. Two elevators in each of the four office towers will be refurbished to be fully accessible. A priority call button will be installed that will summon one of the two elevators in each tower to the requested floor for an individual requiring it; and,
 - d. The parking garage elevator at the 900 Bay Street entrance will be retrofitted with some minor improvements in keeping with our OMOD recommendations.

Commitment

The Taking Stock and Continuous Improvement working group will commission an accessibility audit of one of the ministry's corporate locations and one of the ministry's regional office locations.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

In Fall 2006, the ministry retained the Ontario March of Dimes (OMOD) to conduct an accessibility audit of one of its regional office locations at 217 York Street in London and one of its corporate locations at 5255 Yonge Street, North York.

In Winter 2006, OMOD's final report was presented to and approved by the ministry's senior executive committee.

A number of improvements to 217 York Street, London and 5255 Yonge Street, North York will be made consistent with the findings of the audits conducted by OMOD.

Commitment

The Capital and Accommodations Services Branch will begin ministry office renewal based on findings of the accessibility audits.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

At the 5255 Yonge Street, North York site, the Capital and Accommodations Services Branch (CASB) has implemented some of the suggested improvements during a construction project that was initiated. CASB is working with the Ontario Realty Corporation to initiate discussions with the landlord to develop a plan to implement a variety of the improvements.

At the 217 York Street, London site, the South West regional office has begun discussions with the property manager to implement some of the suggested improvements and are working on a strategic plan to implement the internal improvement.

Rationale

Improvements identified as part of the accessibility audits are underway.

Additional Achievement

The Business Planning and Corporate Services Division has developed a set of requested changes to the existing Occupancy Agreements with the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC). These changes include:

1. ORC to be responsible for ensuring that all new third party leases meet current and future accessibility design guidelines and hold landlords responsible for completing any base building upgrades needed to achieve compliance.
2. ORC to be responsible for ensuring all government owned space meets current and future accessibility design guidelines.

3. ORC to ensure that all design consultants approve project design to confirm they have met the current accessibility design guidelines.

Commitment

The Transfer Payment and Internal/External Business Processes working group will make the ministry's service contracting documents available in accessible formats.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The ministry's current service contracting documents are available in Microsoft Word and Excel software and are accessible.

The documents were reviewed by the University of Toronto Adaptive Technologies Resource Centre. Both advised that the documents appear to be accessible.

Accessibility considerations will be incorporated into new electronic business processes and communication tools as they are developed.

Commitment

The Transfer Payment and Internal/External Business Processes working group will develop tools to support the ministry's transfer payment agencies to prepare for the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The ministry will support transfer payment agencies' awareness of their responsibilities under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and their opportunity to participate in standards development. This will be accomplished through periodic communications to the agencies.

Commitment

The Transfer Payment and Internal/External Business Processes working group will make revisions to the ministry's Cabinet Submission Checklist to include accessibility considerations.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The Cabinet Submission checklist was revised to incorporate Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 considerations. The checklist is now mandatory for all submissions.

A recommendation has been made that similar accessibility checklists be developed for Results-based Plan notes and Treasury Board 20 submissions.

Commitment

The Learning and Training working group will make training sessions on preparing Cabinet submissions, including accessibility considerations, available to ministry staff.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The ministry offers training on Cabinet Submissions. Accessibility issues are included in the ministry's Checklist for Cabinet Submissions.

In September 2006, the ministry developed an Accessibility Impact Checklist for Results-based planning.

The Treasury Board 20 checklist and training have been modified to support an accessibility lens.

Other

The ministry is in a position to promote the use of organizations that employ people with disabilities, to improve its procurement practices to promote accessibility and to measure and track outcomes regarding accessibility in a meaningful manner.

Commitment

The Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will produce and disseminate a list of organizations that employ people with disabilities. This list will be considered when staff are retaining vendors, consistent with existing procurement directives.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The MCSS intranet provides links to lists of social enterprise organizations compiled by other organizations to provide a starting point for purchasers interested in pursuing this objective.

The working group also identified the VISA Accessibility Awards and Business Improvement Organizations as potential sources of data for products and services.

Additional Achievement

On October 11, 2006, the ministry held a forum to explore the role and contribution of social enterprises within the developmental and social services sector, and to discuss strategies to help these organizations flourish.

The Social Policy Development Division sponsored the forum to share information about social enterprise, identify success factors and barriers, and explore opportunities to support expansion. Attendees included Ontario Public Sector staff, representatives from social enterprises, community agencies, funding bodies, schools of business, and family groups.

On March 19, 2007, the Corporate Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Branch distributed a memo to MCSS corporate and regional directors on how to acquire goods and services from social enterprise organizations while complying with procurement directives.

The goal of the memo was to enhance awareness of social enterprise organizations in the ministry as a source of goods and services and to reinforce an article in the December 2006 issue of the MCSS staff newsletter *The Comet* that highlighted the value of making purchases of goods and services from social enterprise organizations.

To support ministry managers in accessing expertise on accommodating new and current staff, the working group, with the support of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, has begun discussions on preparing a list of services that could be included in an OPS Vendor of Record arrangement.

The Ministry of Government Services has given agreement-in-principle to develop a corporate Vendor of Record list for Accessibility services should the demand for services exist in sufficient strength.

Social enterprise procurement is also being emphasized in other MCSS activities as opportunities arise.

Commitment

The Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment working group will develop procurement policies to avoid the creation of barriers in technology and equipment purchases and leases.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

The working group began by developing a summary chart of known procurement policy and guideline documents and noted that key OPS procurement directives are being reviewed by the Ministry of Government Services (MGS). The working group contacted MGS to emphasize the importance of accessibility issues as part of that review.

The working group also reviewed MCSS-specific procurement policy to include accessibility lens and to provide more prominent reference to the OPS Accessibility Checklist and Guidelines developed since the last update to the ministry policy. When the OPS key procurement directives are eventually approved, MCSS-specific policy will be reviewed again in the context of the refreshed MGS directives and will be revised accordingly.

Once approved, the revised MCSS-specific procurement policy will be made available electronically to all staff and will promote best practices in consulting procurement.

As goods and services are mainly covered under mandatory Vendor of Record arrangements, the Ministry will need to continue to play a leadership role in emphasizing the importance of accessibility considerations as those arrangements are constructed.

Commitment

The Outcome Measurement working group will establish a baseline and tools to measure the ministry's progress in improving accessibility.

Status

In progress.

Action and Timeframe

Logic models were developed in consultation with the ministry's accessibility plan priority working groups. Three overarching ministry outcomes were identified from the logic models. A vision statement for the accessibility initiative based on these outcomes was also developed. Draft outcome indicators and preliminary related measurement strategies have been developed for each outcome.

Rationale

The ministry is developing a comprehensive strategy for measuring outcomes of this initiative.

Commitment

The Outcome Measurement working group will develop a reporting and tracking template and integrate ministry accessibility planning into VISTA.

Status

In progress.

Action and Timeframe

The final measurement plans will recommend tracking and reporting approaches that reflect the appropriate timing of measurement activities.

Rationale

This is pending the approval of the comprehensive strategy for measuring outcomes.

Additional Achievement

The following commitment and related achievements are not contained in the ministry's 2006-2007 plan but were pursued as a way of moving the ministry's disability agenda forward.

Commitment

Develop ministry-wide guidelines for all accommodation based upon Ontario Disability Support Program model office guidelines.

Status

Complete.

Action and Timeframe

Ontario March of Dimes (OMOD) was retained to conduct accessibility audits of three ministry locations.

The standards developed by OMOD were provided to the Ministry of Government Services (MGS) and then shared with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC).

Linkages with the MGS have been established as it plans to audit 15 sites around the province.

Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

There are a number of activities that the ministry undertakes on a regular and ongoing basis to consider accessibility for people with disabilities.

The ministry is aware of the need to continually review its work relating to accessibility in a number of areas including access to information, awareness and training relating to accessibility, and enhancing services and how we deliver these services to clients.

While activities related to each of the commitments have been completed in 2006-2007 accessibility planning cycle, the ministry continues to place ongoing attention on the following areas:

Customer Service

Initiatives that address systemic barriers in accessing ministry programs and services.

Commitment

The Ontario Disability Support Program Branch will continue to help to remove barriers to employment for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients and their family members.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

In 2006, the ministry introduced an innovative and multi-faceted employment strategy to assist ODSP recipients and their families to find and keep real, sustainable jobs, to keep more of what they earn, and to transition successfully into the labour market.

The strategy included the following components:

- Transformation of ODSP Employment Supports into an effective, results-oriented job placement and retention service by introducing a new funding framework for service providers based on their success in placing and retaining clients in jobs and increasing their level of earnings, including providing supports for employers to hire and retain clients;
- Introduction of new earnings and employment incentives to ODSP recipients, allowing them to keep more of what they earn; and,
- Creation of the Employer Outreach Secretariat to engage employers in expanding sustainable job opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Employer Outreach Secretariat draws on the expertise of employers to identify solutions to real and perceived barriers to employment for people with disabilities and employer champions to promote the hiring of people with disabilities.

In 2006/07, the Employer Outreach Secretariat:

- Conducted more than 80 one-on-one employer interviews to discuss challenges to employing people with disabilities;
- Held four employer roundtables to solicit advice, potential solutions and success stories from employers who had already demonstrated an interest in becoming leaders in the area of employing people with disabilities; and,
- Launched the government's \$4 million Employment Innovations Fund, which encourages Ontario employers to implement innovative projects that create sustainable jobs for social assistance recipients, including people with disabilities.

In 2006, the ministry also reduced the average length of time it takes to apply for ODSP from more than eight months to a period of not more than 90 business days.

Rationale

The ministry will continue to work to remove barriers to employment for people with disabilities and their family members.

Commitment

The Social Policy Development Division will continue to review and revise as appropriate all forms relating to the delivery of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program using an accessibility lens.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

The ministry provides many documents on the ministry's accessible Internet site, including several forms that are available in large print, specifically:

- Social assistance income support application forms are available on the ministry Internet in HTML format.
- The ODSP Employment Supports Application Package forms are available on the ministry Internet in HTML, PDF standard and large print.
- The ministry has revised all ODSP Employment Supports directives and forms to improve accessibility and readability for staff and clients with disabilities. Other directives continue to be revised on an ongoing basis, with improved accessibility and readability included in the revision process.

The ministry continues to make available, upon request, forms in Braille, on audio cassette and on compact disk formats.

Rationale

The ministry continues to review forms on an ongoing and as-needed basis. Opportunities to incorporate accessibility considerations arise as each form is updated.

Ministry staff will work to identify best practices to assist in developing accessible documents including choices of fonts and colour schemes.

Commitment

The Communications and Marketing Branch will provide official ministry publications in alternate formats upon requests.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

The ministry has included Braille contact information on its Ontario Disability Support Program brochure that was published in 2006-2007. In addition, large print brochures are available for downloading on the ministry's Internet site.

Rationale

The ministry continues to make available, upon request, forms in Braille, on audio cassette and on compact disk formats.

Communications and Information

Initiatives to improve staff's access to information.

Commitment

The Communications and Marketing Branch will review how documents are provided to ministry staff to help to ensure accessibility.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

The Communications and Marketing Branch reviews and edits materials to meet the government's clear writing standards and criteria.

Rationale

The ministry will continue to work to maximize staff's access to information by providing documents in accessible formats.

Commitment

The Renewal Strategies Office will actively engage ministry employees with disabilities and profile them as appropriate.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

In 2006/07, the ministry established six priority working groups to support the implementation of the published commitments and to recommend priorities for future years. All staff were invited to take part in the priority working groups.

In 2006, the ministry launched *The Comet*, its new quarterly newsletter for staff. *The Comet* is available both in hard copy and electronically and everyone in the ministry can submit articles to the newsletter. In 2006/07, a number of articles featuring staff with disabilities were published.

Rationale

The ministry will continue to actively engage and promote ministry employees with disabilities.

Commitment

The Communications and Marketing Branch will promote the Deputy Minister's online suggestion box as a way to solicit suggestions from staff on accessibility issues.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

The ministry has promoted the Deputy Minister's online suggestion box as a way to provide confidential advice on a number of topics, including accessibility issues.

In the series of Deputy Minister town hall sessions held between September 2006 and April 2007 with over 800 ministry staff from across the province, the Deputy Minister highlighted this confidential online suggestion box.

Rationale

The ministry will continue to promote the Deputy Minister's online suggestion box as a way to provide confidential advice on a number of topics, including accessibility issues.

Built Environment

Initiatives to enhance the accessibility of the ministry's locations to staff and clients with disabilities.

Commitment

The Capital and Accommodations Services Branch will continue to refresh the ministry offices that provide services to Ontario Disability Support Program clients as funding is available.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

A number of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) sites have had upgrades completed in the past year.

For example, the Newmarket office had its front counter redesigned and constructed to improve access for persons with disabilities.

The existing Hamilton ODSP office was relocated to new space within the same building. Through the project, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act barrier free design guidelines were applied.

Rationale

The Capital and Accommodations Services Branch will continue to refresh ODSP offices as funding allows.

Acts and Regulations

Initiatives that consider acts or regulations for a review for barriers to people with disabilities as work is planned.

Commitment

The Corporate Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Branch will continue to champion ways to improve outcomes for people with disabilities at the Federal/Provincial/Territorial level.

Status

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe

As the co-chair of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities Working Group, the ministry pursued initiatives for persons with disabilities.

The Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities was extended to March 31, 2008. This Agreement helps to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Discussions on the proposed federal *National Disability Act* are ongoing and could help establish federal accessibility standards.

Rationale

The ministry will continue to pursue initiatives for persons with disabilities through the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities Working Group in 2007/2008.

Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers

The ministry has adopted a strategic approach to accessibility planning in order to meet our commitments under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and to position it to fully implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. Under the theme of Valuing and Celebrating Accessibility, the ministry's multi-year accessibility framework will address our role as an employer, as a provider of services to clients and as a funder in the transfer payment sector.

The ministry has established working groups to support both planning and implementation of activities based on the following six priorities:

- Taking Stock and Continuous Improvement;
- Transfer Payment and Internal/External Business Processes;
- Direct Service Delivery;
- Outcome measurement;
- Human Resources Practices, Procurement and the Built Environment; and,
- Learning and Training.

The ministry also recognizes that communication and engagement strategies are keys to its success in improving awareness of disability and accessibility issues.

For the 2007-2008 accessibility planning cycle, the ministry will continue to focus on its role as an employer to further value, promote and celebrate accessibility as a part of its diverse workforce. The ministry will also focus on its role as a provider of services to clients and look to improve service delivery to clients with disabilities.

Customer service

- The ministry will continue to provide Access, Awareness and Accountability training to all new Ontario Disability Support Program staff and to other staff and managers as appropriate.
- The ministry will continue to assess and make plans to improve the accessibility of its offices and facilities for staff and clients with disabilities.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will develop a facilitator's guide to support staff training and development.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will develop interpretive guidelines and a workbook to assist with compliance with the regulation on accessible customer service.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will establish an outreach strategy for the ministry's transfer payment agencies to promote readiness for compliance with the regulation on customer service.

- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will launch “May I Help You” to the entire Ontario Public Services.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will develop a new public awareness campaign based on AccessON.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will launch new tools to support the Ontario Public Services and obligated organizations in the area of the customer service regulation including a multi-media tool box and a series of video modules.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will hold training session for 1700 Service Ontario staff on good customer service for people with disabilities.

Employment

- The ministry will promote the Deputy Minister’s confidential online suggestion box as a medium for staff to identify barriers and submit suggestions on accessibility.
- The ministry’s new Foundations for Managers Program will include accessibility awareness training.
- The Human Resources Branch will request that all new managers, supervisors and human resources staff verify they have completed the on-line Ontarians with Disabilities Act online training.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will continue to identify and publish on its Internet site best practices and success stories to promote a blueprint for all organizations that are interested in improving opportunities for people with disabilities.

Communications and information

The ministry will undertake a number of initiatives designed to improve communications and information exchange including:

- Regularly publishing articles that feature accessibility issues in its internal quarterly newsletter The Comet;
- Promoting its process to solicit and address ideas and suggestions from staff relating to accessibility; and,
- The ministry will host an Accessibility Expo to raise awareness of the benefits of accessibility by exploring barriers to accessibility and the many ways to overcome these barriers.

Built environment

- New leases and lease renewals will be negotiated in keeping with the Ontario Building Code and the barrier-free guidelines to address prevent the creation of barriers to staff, clients or members of the public with disabilities.

Acts and regulations

- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will develop an accessibility lens, including a framework with overarching principles and accompanying tools that can be applied specifically to policy, legislation and program design across the Ontario Public Service. This will serve to embed accessibility principles in the development and implementation of government initiatives, to help to allow people with a wide range of disabilities to fully participate in daily life in Ontario.

Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed

A review of the ministry's program and services was conducted to identify barriers to accessibility. The ministry is committed to addressing these barriers over the coming year. This section summarizes these commitments.

Customer service

Barrier

There are some systemic barriers in accessing some of the ministry's programs and services.

Commitment and Responsibility

- In 2007/2008, the Employer Outreach Secretariat will focus on:
 - o An Employer Awareness Campaign to provide information to employers about the business case for hiring people with disabilities and to dispel myths/facts about people with disabilities;
 - o An Employer Champions Program to recognize employers that are progressive in hiring people with disabilities; and,
 - o An employers' symposium in November 2007 that will feature best employer practices in hiring people with disabilities, and recognize leaders in this area.
- The ministry will provide Professional Advancement and Career Education (PACE) training program for all ODSP staff and managers. The PACE curriculum focuses on enriching the skills and core competencies necessary to build and develop effective and positive relationships with ODSP clients, colleagues and communities. All ODSP staff and managers are expected to have completed the training by March 2009.
- The ministry will implement a client e-mail system to improve communication with ODSP clients.
- The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will promote the availability of "Talk About Disabilities – Choose the Right Word" lexicon and include the purpose statement highlighting the importance of using acceptable and contemporary language related to disability through its presence at key conferences, workshops and other public events.
- The Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster will explore alternatives for enhancing TTY services in keeping with the Ontario Public Service Quality Service Standards.
- The ministry will continue to provide Access, Awareness and Accountability training to all staff working in the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Timeline

By September 2007.

Employment accommodation

Barrier

Awareness about accessibility issues in the workplace should be enhanced.

Commitment and Responsibility

- The ministry will take a leadership role in supporting commitments emerging from the Ministry of Government Services-led consultation with OPS Human Resource directors.
- The ministry will conduct a review of the administration processes associated with the Employee Accommodation Fund to identify opportunities for improvement and to promote awareness about the fund.
- The Employer Outreach Secretariat will continue to promote the Human Resources Handbook within the ministry and will develop a Manager's Toolkit for scouting and hiring people with disabilities.
- The Centre of Excellence for Information and Information Technology Accessibility will be modeled as the authoritative source of accessibility information as it relates to I&IT across the OPS enterprise and will develop expertise of existing and emerging technologies to support people with disabilities (e.g., Assistive Technology Devices).
- The Centre of Excellence for Information and Information Technology Accessibility will support the ministry to implement, promote and support the use of the Plone collaboration tool for users of computer-related assistive devices and applications.
- The ministry will promote the availability of training related to accessibility awareness and managers and supervisors will use the learning streams to support staff development.
- The Human Resources Branch will include information about disability and accessibility in orientation sessions for new staff.
- The ministry will include information about disability and accessibility in its Foundations for Managers Program.
- The ministry will provide Professional Advancement and Career Education (PACE) training program for all ODSP staff. The PACE curriculum focuses on enriching the skills and core competencies necessary to build and develop effective and positive relationships with ODSP clients, colleagues and communities.
- The ministry will encourage all administrative staff to complete the online "May I Help you" training course.

Timeline

By September 2008.

Barrier

Employees with disabilities using assistive devices may benefit from an opportunity to network and exchange information.

Commitment and Responsibility

In partnership with the Children, Youth and Social Services I&IT Cluster, the ministry will implement, promote and support the use of the “Plone” collaboration tool for users of computer-related assistive devices and applications.

Timeline

By September 2008.

Communications and information

Barrier

The ministry has a role to play in raising awareness of accessibility.

Commitment and Responsibility

The ministry will host an Accessibility Expo to raise awareness of the benefits of accessibility by exploring the barriers to accessibility and the many ways to overcome these barriers.

Timeline

Spring 2008.

Built environment

Barrier

Some of the ministry’s locations may not be completely accessible to staff and clients with disabilities.

Commitment and Responsibility

- The ministry, in partnership with the Ontario Realty Corporation, the Ministry of Government Services and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal will continue to upgrade to the elevators and washrooms in the Hepburn and

Macdonald blocks in keeping with the findings of the Ontario March of Dimes accessibility audits conducted in 2006-2007.

- The Capital and Accommodations Services Branch will work with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to develop barrier-free guidelines for ministry use.
- The Capital and Accommodations Services Branch will develop a strategic approach for the accessibility assessment of ministry sites pending the development of the ministry's barrier-free guidelines.

Timeline

By September 2007.

Acts and regulations

Barrier

The ministry will consider acts or regulations for a review for barriers to people with disabilities as work is planned.

Commitment and Responsibility

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario will develop a process, methodology and tools for the review of legislation and programs.

Timeline

By September 2008.

Other

Barrier

The ministry may be in a position to promote the use of organizations that employ people with disabilities and to improve its procurement practices to promote accessibility.

Commitment and Responsibility

- The Corporate Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Branch will revise the ministry's procurement policy to address accessibility needs and implement the new policy once it is approved.
- The Corporate Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Branch will explore the feasibility of implementing a new checklist for procurement with weighted value for accessibility by September 2008.

- The Corporate Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Branch will modify the ministry's procurement curriculum to increase awareness of accessibility considerations in procurement by September 2008.

Timeline

By September 2008.

For More Information

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

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Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web portal at: 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.

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