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Ministry of Economic Development and Trade 2003-2004 Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

There are an estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario with self-disclosed disabilities. This number is expected to increase as the population ages.

In December 2001, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was passed into law.

In compliance with the obligation under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, all ministries developed accessibility plans

to meet an original, planned release date to the public of September 30, 2003. The plans were not released during the election period as part of standard election writ protocol.

In the Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 20, 2003, the Ontario Government confirmed its commitment to real positive change by working with Ontarians with disabilities and their families on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

This document is the first annual accessibility plan for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. The plan describes improvements to accessibility that the ministry has made to date and its commitments for the balance of the 2003-2004 fiscal year.



Report on Achievements

Since the establishment of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's (MEDT) [*Accessibility Planning Group \(APG\)*](#) in early 2003, members have met several times to discuss strategies and opportunities for the ministry's accessibility plan. APG members also visited Variety Village to consult with staff regarding possible activities and approaches for consideration in creating the Ministry's plan.

In a deliberate effort to prevent barriers to employment with the ministry, the ministry's Human Resources and Facilities Services Branch has maintained full reception services in the Branch's reception area. We have ensured that this first point of customer contact and service to the

public and our employees, is readily accessible to all.

The Ministry has made significant progress in improving access:



- An operational TTY telephone is maintained in the Human Resources and Facilities Services Branch. In addition, applicants can now e-mail or fax their applications directly to the Branch where they are placed in the appropriate competition file.
- Employees with disabilities can obtain direct assistance from the branch reception area to obtain benefits forms or counseling. The branch semi-annually reviews recruitment and employment practices to identify and eliminate barriers.
- All management employees were instructed to undertake training and MEDT has had 100% compliance.



- All MEDT staff attended "*Performance Management and Learning and Development (PMLD)*" training. While not a specific chapter in the training, all participants were made aware of the need to be sensitive to the PMLD process as it pertains to employees with disabilities.
- A number of workplace accessibility improvements have been installed, including: lever style door handles; telephones located at wheelchair height in the lobbies; and a new electronic barrier free access system on all

floors without receptionists.

- Eighty per cent of ministry telephones have been upgraded to have a hands-free feature and the remaining 20% will be replaced over the next 2 years. One hundred per cent of the ministry's field offices have been made wheelchair accessible.
- The ministry has made significant workplace accommodation for employees with brain injuries, vision impairment or medical conditions such as migraine headaches. For example, in the case of an employee with a brain injury impairing their mobility, the ministry, in consultation with the employee's rehabilitation team, arranged for special ergonomic equipment including a desk and chair as well as a large screen computer specially adapted for the individual's use.



- Our practice of issuing cell phones with 2-way radio capabilities to the Chief Fire Warden, OPP Staff Sergeant and any persons requiring emergency evacuation assistance, is now an OPS "Best Practice". Employees with disabilities have these with them at all times. Another OPS "Best Practice" is the issuance of a wallet sized "fan-out" card describing emergency procedures to all staff. This has proved to be of benefit to employees with disabilities because of its concise information on evacuation procedures. The card is currently being adapted to an accessible format.
- Policies and procedures are in place to ensure employees and

applicants receive accommodations as required. All employees have access to personal ergonomic assessments and all office furnishings are purchased or modified to comply with ergonomic assessment criteria and custom refined to employees' specific requirements. The ministry's orientation handbook details these and other key accessibility considerations for staff and client safety.

- The Innovation and Business Development Branch has standard operating procedures in place ensuring that event/meeting locations are chosen with accessibility in mind. In addition, the registration form for a key ministry annual event, the Wisdom Exchange, has a separate section on "Special Requests/Mobility" to allow the ministry to fully satisfy all special requests.
- MEDT publications are available in accessible formats from Publications Ontario. One of the ministry's most popular publications, "Starting a Small Business in Ontario", has been available on the ministry's web site in an accessible format for the past several years.



- The ministry's web sites were rebuilt or retrofitted to update these sites to ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities. The ministry's main web site with key information has an average of 50,000 visitors per month and is accessible to those who visit it. The ministry is in the process of rebuilding its intranet

“StaffNet”, to ensure that it is fully accessible.

- The ministry committed in its 2003/2004 Business Plan to “ensure that ministry programs and services are accessible to people with disabilities, including web sites and publications as required”.



Commitments and Strategies for 2003-2004

The ministry has chosen to focus on both internal activities as well as review specific programs that will impact on ministry clients. Ensuring that human resources policies, practices and services are scrutinized to identify, prevent and remove barriers will result in improved accessibility for employees with disabilities.

Through their consultation with Variety Village staff, MEDT's **Accessibility Planning Group** learned that a key component when dealing with people with disabilities is the importance of a positive and problem-solving attitude. Thus the ministry will ensure that awareness training for all staff including managers is provided and the performance management process is adapted to highlight ways to best use all ranges of abilities of all employees. This will likely be done in concert with Accessibility Directorate initiatives available on a government-wide basis.

Operating Divisions will be asked to review their policies and practices to ensure accessibility to clients for meetings and events and follow examples already operating in some areas of MEDT. The application process used by the Strategic Skills Investment

Program, which is designed to help industry and the education sector develop a highly skilled work force, will be reviewed to ensure that there are no barriers or disincentives for individuals with disabilities.



Methods to be taken to prevent new barriers

During the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, will undertake the following activities to ensure that proposals for new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services are assessed with respect to their effect on people with disabilities:

- Conduct an accessibility assessment of new operating proposals put forward in the 2004-2005 business planning submission;
- Review all business and policy initiatives to ensure there are no proposals that present barriers to accessibility;



- Provide guidance to policy and program development staff on how to ensure accessibility in proposals;
- Representatives of the ministry's **Accessibility Planning Group** (a permanent committee within the ministry) will make presentations to the MEDT Executive Committee, Divisional Management and all employees on the ministry's accessibility plan and will provide advice to planning bodies within the

ministry;



- In concert with the Accessibility Directorate, training materials will be used to raise awareness on an ongoing basis with all ministry employees, e.g. accessibility materials added on an ongoing basis to orientation kits for new employees and summer students; as well as information on the availability of employment accommodation as required by employees with disabilities;
- Presentation materials on the ministry's accessibility plan will be prepared and updated for the use of the Deputy Minister and senior management at staff sessions;
- The ministry's accessibility plan will be posted on the ministry's web and intranet site in an accessible format;
- A staff survey will be designed and conducted to elicit suggestions from all staff on ways to identify and prevent new barriers. This survey will ask staff for advice on the best ways to engage stakeholders in this endeavour; and,
- MEDT will direct clients to Publications Ontario if they require publications in an accessible format.



Business areas to be reviewed

Reviewing the acts and regulations the ministry is responsible for, and our

policies, programs, practices and services, will help identify potential barriers and stop them before they are created.

This year, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade will review the following business areas to determine their affect on people with disabilities:

Acts and Regulations

Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology Act, 1990, Chapter M.27

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade will continue to review the Act, to ensure the appropriate use of languages with respect to people with disabilities, as well as to identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities.



Policies and Programs

Human Resources

Staff from the human resources branch of the ministry will conduct an internal review and update the HR performance management policy to ensure that all performance agreements include a learning component to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. This will be accompanied by staff training.

Staff from the human resources and facilities services branch of the ministry will review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Grant Programs

As a pilot, we will review the application process for the Strategic Skills Investment Program to include reference to Ontarians with Disability Act (ODA) requirements.



Practices and Services

Communications Practices

We will investigate the business case for a ministry 1-800 TTY line.

We will review practices for meetings and events to ensure accessibility for ministry clients and staff.

We will review transfer payment processes to take the opportunity to further sensitize our transfer payment recipients and all of our stakeholders to the provisions of the Act.



Actions to be taken

This section of the accessibility plan describes the specific measures we will be taking over the next 12 months to identify, prevent and remove barriers. Our approach focuses on first looking at areas that may have the greatest impact on our employees and our stakeholders.

Barrier identification and prevention

This year we will:

- Monitor this plan and design future plans;

- Conduct a survey of all employees to identify existing barriers to people with disabilities (both employees and clients) and solicit suggestions to remove these and prevent future barriers. After the survey, we will review the need to develop a ministry accessibility awareness learning plan;
- Put in place a full-time customer service representative in the human resources and facilities reception area. This individual will be trained to deal with people with disabilities, job applicants and current employees with disabilities. In addition, this individual will have custody of an upgraded Ministry TTY telephone line; and have ready access to medical, security and benefits information and assistance;
- Ensure that the human resources testing area is wheelchair accessible;
- Put in place E-recruitment membership to facilitate application to competitions from home or remote locations;
- Ensure that job advertisements will be available in accessible formats, i.e. Braille and adapted for hearing impaired;



- Ensure that all new managers and supervisors complete training on accommodating the accessibility needs of employees and job applicants with disabilities;
- Adapt the performance management process to include consideration of the needs of

employees with disabilities;

- Provide field services staff with the training and resources to assist them in dealing with clients with disabilities and in encouraging employers to prevent any barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities; and
- Provide ministry program managers and supervisors (with responsibility for procurement) with the “Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act” once distributed by Management Board Secretariat.



Improved accessibility in communications

This year we will:

- Install a TTY line in the Communications and Public Affairs Branch. A dedicated staff person will be trained in its use and in dealing with clients with disabilities. Ministry communication vehicles will advertise TTY line availability.
- Provide all Ministry staff with guidance on the procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats

Improved accessibility of facilities

This year we will:

- Ensure that all future renovations undertaken will meet or exceed the Ontario Building Code, and will target the removal or

prevention of barriers to people with disabilities.

- Improve the signage in Communications and Public Affairs Branch.
- Counter heights in Communications and Public Affairs Branch reception areas will be reviewed for future improvements.



Improved accessibility in technology

This year we will:

- Establish learning plans for web masters regarding adaptive technology and accessible web site design;
- See communications section regarding upgrade and addition of TTY line.



For more information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: 416-325-6666

TTY number: TBD

1-800 number: TBD

E-mail: info@edt.gov.on.ca

Ministry Web site address:

www.ontariocanada.com



Visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Accessibility Ontario web portal at:

www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility.

The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

Alternate formats of this document are available free upon request from:

Publications Ontario
880 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M7A 1N8.
Tel: (416) 326-5300
Out of town customers, except Ottawa
call: 1-800-668-9938
In Ottawa, call (613) 238-3630 or toll-free: 1-800-268-8758
TTY Service: 1-800-268-7095

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Appendix A

Ministry of Economic Development and
Trade

Executive Lead:

- Lee Allison Howe, Assistant
Deputy Minister of Corporate and
Field Services.

Working Group Leads:

- Dan Gordon, Director of Human Resources and Facilities Services Branch
- Margaret Gilbey-Hart, Manager of Facilities Services
- Lawrence Fagan, Legal Services Branch
- Dale Lubitz, Communications and Public Affairs Branch
- Lynn Goldmaker, Business Planning and Finance Branch.

In order to ensure the entire ministry was involved in the planning process, the group was assisted in its work by the network of divisional executive assistants to assistant deputy ministers and the Deputy Minister's Executive Assistant.



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