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Ministry of Economic Development and Trade 2004- 2005 Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

In December 2001, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) was passed into law. Its purpose is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

One of the requirements under the ODA is that Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. The plans must be made available to the public.



This document is the second annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. It highlights achievements of the 2003-04 plan and outlines commitments for 2004-05 so that no new barriers are created and existing ones are removed over time.

Ministries across government are increasing awareness of accessibility and integrating accessibility into daily business practices in a number of areas, including staff training, public information, facilities and program and service delivery processes.

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



Message from the Minister



I am pleased to support the ongoing efforts to improve accessibility to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

MEDT is committed to making our workplace more responsive to the needs of people with disabilities.

The achievements highlighted in this year's plan, partnered with our commitments to make further improvements in the coming year, support our government's pledge to ensure Ontario communities are accessible to all.



We recognize that the strength of this province is our people.

It is our people who help build and maintain our international reputation as an innovative, talented and skilled economic force.

We will continue to invest in our people.

And our government knows we must lead by example, building on our successes and achievements as an inclusive employer and service provider.

This fall, our government will introduce measures to make the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) both stronger and more effective.



MEDT is serious about developing new methods to help Ontarians with disabilities overcome barriers that may prevent them from contributing to the growth and development of this province.

By working together we will make Ontario a truly enviable place to work, live and do business.

**The Honourable Joseph Cordiano
Minister of Economic Development
and Trade**



Report on Achievements of 2003-2004 Planning Commitments

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. As a best practice, members 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 have undertaken 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 per cent will be replaced over the next two 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.

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 website in an accessible format for the past several years.



The ministry's websites were rebuilt or retrofitted to update these sites to ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities. The ministry's main website 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 "Staff Net", to ensure that it is fully accessible.

The ministry has committed in its 2004-05 Business Plan to "ensure that ministry programs and services are accessible to people with disabilities, including web sites and publications as required".

The following is a list of our achievements leading into the 2004-05 plan:



Commitment: To assess new operating proposals for accessibility considerations.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing throughout the year.

Rationale: To assess the possible affects on people with disabilities.

Commitment: To review policy proposals for accessibility considerations.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing throughout the year.

Rationale: To assess the possible affects on people with disabilities.

Commitment: Accessibility Planning Group presents Accessibility Plan to (MEC) Ministry

Executive Council; Divisional Management and eventually all staff.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Plan was presented to MEC in June of 2003; MEC was updated in January of 2004; and, the plan was made available to all staff on the MEDT website.

Rationale: To provide information and advice to planning bodies within the ministry.



Commitment: To provide training materials to raise staff awareness as part of new staff orientation and employment accommodation.

Status: Completed. ODA plan awareness is part of the MEDT new employee orientation program.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing throughout the year whenever an orientation session is planned for new staff.

Rationale: To create awareness of the MEDT accessibility plan among all new staff.

Commitment: To prepare presentation materials on the ministry's plan for senior staff.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Presentation materials prepared and presented July 2003.

Rationale: To keep senior staff up to date on MEDT Accessibility Plan.

Commitment: To post Accessibility Plan on MEDT website.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Accessibility Plan posted March 2004.

Rationale: Provide all staff with access to the MEDT plan.

Commitment: To conduct a staff survey to solicit ideas on barrier prevention.

Status: In progress, included as a commitment as part of the 2004-05 plan.

Action and Timeframe: Survey to be conducted in 2005-06.

Rationale: To solicit new ideas on barrier prevention.



Commitment: To ensure MEDT clients can access publications in accessible format.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Publications available on an ongoing basis on request.

Rationale: To provide information in accessible formats, e.g. Braille.

Commitment: To review the MITT-Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology Act, 1990, Chapter M.27, to ensure the appropriate use of languages with respect to people with disabilities, as well as identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Completed. To be reviewed in 2004-05.

Rationale: To ensure the appropriate

use of languages with respect to people with disabilities, as well as identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities.

Commitment: Human Resources will conduct an internal review, and update the Human Resources Performance Management Policy to ensure all agreements include a learning component to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. To be accompanied by staff training.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.

Rationale: To ensure all agreements include a learning component to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility.



Commitment: Human Resources and Facilities Services Branch to review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: To be reviewed in 2004-05.

Rationale: To identify areas for improvement in quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Commitment: To review the application process for the Strategic Skills Investment Program, to include reference to Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) requirements.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: To be reviewed in 2004-05.

Rationale: To include reference to Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001(ODA) requirements.

Commitment: To establish an MEDT 1-800 TTY line.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Line established in 2003-04.

Rationale: To make MEDT more accessible to people with hearing disabilities.



Commitment: To review the transfer payment processes to take the opportunity to further sensitize our transfer payment recipients and all our stakeholders to the provisions of the Act.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.

Rationale: To further sensitize our transfer payment recipients and all our stakeholders to the provisions of the Act.

Commitment: To present job ads in accessible formats, e.g. Braille.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: To be provided on request, and on an ongoing basis.

Rationale: To make job ads accessible to people with disabilities.

Commitment: To ensure the Human Resources testing area is wheelchair accessible.

Status: Completed.

Action and Timeframe: Completed as of March 20, 2004.

Rationale: To ensure the Human

Resources testing area is accessible to people in wheelchairs.



Commitment: To 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.

Status: In Progress

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing

Rationale: As a general practice, ministry staff consider accessibility issues when obtaining goods and services for the ministry. With the Government’s recent release of formal procurement guidelines, ministry processes will be formalized in 2004-05 and communicated to staff to ensure compliance and consistency.



Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

Legislative Requirements

Commitment: MEDT will continue to apply OBC (Ontario Building Code) and ORC (Ontario Realty Corporation) Barrier-Free Guidelines (Upon Release)

Action: Implement OBC and ORC Barrier-Free Guidelines.

Timeframe: March 2005.

Commitment: MEDT will continue to improve signage throughout the ministry.

Action: Signage to be improved/upgraded where necessary.

Timeframe: March 2005.

Commitment: MEDT will review counter heights in all reception areas commencing with

Minister's Office/Deputy Minister's Office, Human Resource Facilities, Communications and Public Affairs.

Action: Change counter heights where necessary.

Timeframe: March 2005.



Commitment: MEDT will continue its best practice of providing workplace ergonomic

assessments to all staff.

Action: Assessments are ongoing.

Timeframe: Ongoing to 2005.

Commitment: Provide line managers with MBS procurement guidelines, which contain accessibility considerations.

Action: In progress

Timeframe: 2004-05.

Commitment: Continue to ensure MEDT websites are fully accessible.

Action: Work with webmaster to ensure websites are fully accessible.

Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.

Commitment: Review all new websites/pages to ensure accessibility in compliance with ODA-Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Action: Review with Webmaster.

Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.



Commitment: MEDT to continue to work with Publications Ontario to provide ministry publications in alternate formats when requested.

Action: To provide Ministry publications in alternate formats when requested.

Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05

Commitment: Complete main Human Resources and Front Lobby entrance to ensure full accessibility.

Action: Testing room continues to be wheelchair accessible, counter heights are adjusted, lowering of information brochure racks.

Timeframe: March 2005.

Commitment: Complete the training and hiring of a permanent receptionist In Human Resources and Facilities Services (specially trained) to serve MEDT clients with disabilities.

Action: Specially trained receptionist is hired.

Timeframe: December 2004.



Acts and Regulations

Commitment: Continue to review the MITT-Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology Act, 1990, Chapter M.27, to ensure the appropriate use of languages with respect to people with disabilities; as well as identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities.

Action: Continue to review the act and make adjustments where necessary.

Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.

Policies

Commitment: Continue to review all business and operating policies to ensure they are barrier-free and consider people with disabilities.

Action: Ongoing review.

Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.



Programs and Services

Commitment: In the context of the new Human Resource organization at CFLHRM (Centre for Leadership and Human Resource Management) plus a major MEDT realignment, we will undertake to review core Human Resource functions and programs: recruitment, training, performance management, orientation, succession planning, and recognition to ensure they are barrier-free and fully consider both employees and other people with disabilities.

Action: A review is undertaken.

Timeframe: March 2005.

Commitment: In implementing a major MEDT realignment, which will relocate significant numbers of staff, we will ensure compliance with barrier-free workplaces in the design and construction of all premises

Action: Compliance is ensured as part of the realignment process.

Timeframe: March 2005.



Practices

Commitment: In conducting multiple business meetings with private sector clients offsite, MEDT will ensure meeting venues are fully accessible and offer barrier-free features. (e.g. American Sign Language provided; wheelchair accessibility)
Action: Venues are deemed accessible and offer barrier-free features.
Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.

Commitment: MEDT will endeavour to expand its review of line programs; services and policies to include consideration of persons with mental and emotional disabilities, which may require the assistance of outside mental health expertise.
Action: Review of line programs; services and policies to be expanded.
Timeframe: March 2005.

Commitment: Expand MEDT's promotion and communication of its comprehensive Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for employees with potential/existing emotional/mental disabilities.
Action: Promote and further communicate the availability of the EAP program.
Timeframe: Ongoing in 2004-05.

Commitment: To conduct a staff survey to solicit ideas on barrier prevention.
Action: Survey to be conducted in 2005-06.
Timeframe: 2005-06



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: (416) 325-4402

1-800 number: 1-866-668-4249

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

Ministry Website 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.



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