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Ministry of Economic Development and Trade 2006-2007 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.

The first two standards that are currently being developed cover the areas of transportation and customer service. On June 13, the first anniversary of the passage of the AODA, the government announced the development of three new standards that will address information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 fourth annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. It highlights the achievements of the 2005-06 plan and outlines the commitments for 2006-07 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



Ontario is the economic centre of Canada. Our economy is expected to outpace most G7 countries. This kind of economic growth helps to ensure Ontario's future prosperity.

Since our government took office in October of 2003, over 283,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. We are working to ensure Ontarians are healthy, highly skilled, and well equipped to compete and succeed in the global economy. My ministry

provides leadership in supporting and promoting innovation, investment and the expansion of exports to world markets

This year we are joining other ministries and organizations across the province in celebrating the first anniversary of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA). This legislation will foster new accessibility standards in key areas of our daily living.

Our government is committed to improving accessibility by removing and preventing barriers. We are working together within the ministry, across government and with the community in areas of customer service, employment, and communications and information.

Building on the success of our previous three plans, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade continues to find ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

We will keep working to make sure our province is fully accessible to all Ontarians.

**The Honourable Sandra
Pupatello
Minister of Economic
Development and Trade**

**Report on Achievements
2005 - 2006 Accessibility
Improvement Initiatives**

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, planned commitments outlined in its 2005-2006 accessibility plan. This section provides a status report.

Commitment: MEDT will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October, 2004, when assessing and renovating all of its premises.

Status: Complete.

Action: MEDT installed new lower drinking fountains in the 900 Bay Street location.

Commitment: MEDT will review its Ministry Accessibility Planning Team membership to ensure the appropriate representatives from line and corporate resources are fully sensitive to the act and its requirements for clients, public and employers.

Status: Complete.

Action: Two new Human Resources Branch representatives were added to the 2006-2007 Accessibility Planning Team and discussions were held with the line/program areas.

Commitment: Promote barrier free design and construction with Ministry stakeholders.

Status: Complete.

Action: In the past year, the Ministry has participated in activities/discussions that promote barrier free design and construction along with our construction and design stakeholders. Accessibility issues, once associated with costs are increasingly becoming a hallmark of corporate innovation and differentiation, particularly in the services sectors.

Commitment: MEDT will continue its best practice of providing workplace ergonomic assessments to all staff upon request. Our service provider is sensitive to the ergonomic needs of disabled employees.

Status: Complete.

Action: In 2005-2006, 52 employees (includes MRI, MSBE) received a full ergonomic assessment of their workplace and appropriate remedial action was taken.

Commitment: Upgrade Ministry telephones to have a hands-free feature.

Status: Complete.

Action: Over 90% of Ministry telephones (includes MRI, MSBE) have been upgraded to have a hands-free feature.

Timeframe: The remaining 10%

will be replaced, as required.

Commitment: An operational TTY telephone (telephone for persons with hearing disabilities) is maintained in the HR and Facilities Services Branch on the 3rd floor, and in the Communications Branch on the 8th floor.

Status: Complete.

Action: Operational TTY telephones were maintained and used when necessary.

Commitment: MEDT will continue to make workplace accessibility improvements where necessary.

Status: Complete.

Action: Constructed an open-concept wheelchair accessible meeting area.

Commitment: Accessibility Planning Team to meet during 2005-2006 to discuss accessibility strategies and opportunities for the ministry's accessibility plan.

Status: Complete.

Action: MEDT's Accessibility Planning Team had regular contact to discuss accessibility issues, ideas and strategies.

*Note: Corporate Services Division and Accessibility Planning Team serve the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry

of Small Business and Entrepreneurship and Ministry of Research and Innovation.

Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, its commitments described in the accessibility plans it issued before 2005 - 2006. This section provides a status report.

Commitment: MEDT Human Resources Branch and Communications Branch reception includes permanent staff who are trained to serve clients, staff and members of the public with disabilities.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: MEDT is committed to provision of this full service through its Human Resources and Facilities Branch and Communications Branch reception.

Commitment: The Ministry's Human Resources Branch will maintain full reception services in the branch's reception area.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Ensure that the first point of customer contact and service to the public and employees is accessible.

Commitment: Employees with disabilities can obtain direct assistance from the Human Resources and Facilities Branch reception area to obtain benefits forms or counselling.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: MEDT Human Resources Branch to provide direct support to employees with disability requiring assistance.

Commitment: Provide managers with MBS procurement guidelines, containing accessibility considerations.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Our Business Planning and Finance website has a procurement section with Ministry policy. Within the Ministry policy there is a link to the website where the procurement directives are located. References to the ODA section of the Procurement policy is specifically referenced in our Ministry financial delegation policy.

Commitment: MEDT will continue to provide e-mail access to requests for information concerning Ministry programs and services.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Provision of Ministry information via e-mail.

Commitment: MEDT will continue

to ensure all of its websites are fully accessible.

Status: Ongoing.

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

Commitment: MEDT will continue its practice of analyzing all new websites/pages to ensure accessibility in compliance with the ODA, 2001.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Review with Webmaster.

Commitment: MEDT will maintain and expand, as appropriate, its TTY (telephone for people with hearing disabilities) communications including awareness for clients and training of operators.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Regular review and promotion of TTY communications, and training component.

Commitment: MEDT will continue its practice of working with Publications Ontario to provide all Ministry publications in a wide variety of alternate formats when requested by Ministry clients and the general public.

Status: Ongoing.

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

Commitment: MEDT will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October, 2004, when assessing and renovating all of its premises.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: OBC standards are applied as they are released and become available.

Commitment: MEDT will continue its OPS best practice of providing workplace ergonomic assessments to all staff upon request. Our service provider is sensitive to the ergonomic need of employees with disabilities.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Assessments are ongoing.

Commitment: Issue cell phones with 2-way radio capabilities to the Chief Fire Warden, OPP Staff Sergeant and any persons requiring emergency evacuation assistance.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Employees with disabilities have these with them at all times and in addition have a wallet sized “fan-out” card describing emergency procedures.

Commitment: MEDT will continue to ensure all signage in ministry premises complies with the letter and intent of the ODA, 2001.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Signage to be improved/ upgraded where necessary.

Commitment: Using Human Resources and Facilities Branch reception as a best practice “barrier-free benchmark,” MEDT will continue to review and renovate any Ministry reception counters to ensure barrier-free services to disabled clients and members of the public.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: Revised counter heights where necessary.

Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers

In the coming year, the Ministry commits to assess its acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities. This section summarizes these commitments.

Customer service

- MEDT will continue to ensure that front line staff are knowledgeable and trained in assisting clients

with disabilities.

- As a part of communication of controllership updates to all staff, the Ministry will provide information about accessibility and procurement practices.
- We will continue to review and provide alternate formats (e.g. Braille).
- The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to consult with all program areas in developing new ideas and initiatives regarding accessibility.
- In the coming year the Accessibility Planning Team will raise awareness regarding accessibility issues by attending Branch meetings.
- MEDT and MSBE are active members of the Customer Service - Standards Development Committee (CS-SDC). This broad stakeholder committee's role is to define accessible service delivery, as well as the requisite measures, policies, classes and timetables, and to ensure an equitable and realistic staged implementation. The Ministry brings broad economic development and business perspectives to the Committee discussions and provides advice on issues and queries.

Employment

- The Ministry will continue to assess its employment policies and practices to ensure compliance and accommodation procedures are applied.
- We will continue to review our accommodation and ergonomic practices with new and existing employees.
- We will continue to ensure that applicants can e-mail or fax their applications directly to the Human Resources Branch where they are placed in the appropriate competition file.
- The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to have input from Human Resources Practitioners for identification and prevention of employment barriers.
- Future Manager Procurement Training/ learning programs will include information about barrier-free accessibility in procurement activities.

Communications and information

- Continue to ensure all MEDT websites are fully accessible.
- Review all new websites to ensure accessibility in compliance with ODA, 2001.

- MEDT will work with Publications Ontario in providing ministry publications in alternate formats when requested by ministry clients and the general public.

Built environment

- MEDT will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October, 2004, when assessing and renovating all of its premises.

Acts and regulations

- MEDT will continue to review the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology Act, 1990. Chapter M.27 to ensure appropriate use of language with respect to people with disabilities as well as identify any ministry programs established in law that may impact on persons with disabilities.
- The Ministry will ensure that acts or regulations currently under review or going forward have issues of accessibility and barrier removal in the review process.

Other barriers

- MEDT will continue to review its Ministry Accessibility Planning Team membership to ensure the appropriate representatives from line and corporate resources are fully sensitive to the Act and its requirements for clients, public and employers.

Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade commits to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities in the coming year. This section summarizes these commitments.

Customer service

Barrier: Limited staff knowledge of accessibility and understanding of the meaning of disability.

Commitment: Provide MEDT staff with a forum in which to increase their knowledge of accessibility and disability as well as provide an opportunity to answer questions and gain feedback.

Responsibility: Organize MEDT staff “Lunch and Learn” sessions to increase accessibility awareness and share information about accessibility planning.

Timeline: End of fiscal 2006/2007.

Employment accommodation

Barrier: New and/or existing employees with disabilities in need of accommodation.

Commitment: The Ministry commits to removing barriers to enable individual employees to function to their potential in the workplace environment.

Responsibility: The Ministry will continue to respond to individual requests for workplace accommodation for employees with disabilities, especially with regard to ergonomic assistance.

Timeline: Ongoing into 2006-2007.

Communications and information

Barrier: No common resource exists where MEDT staff can identify and/or inquire about accessibility barriers and information.

Commitment: Provide a forum for staff to provide suggestions, comments or request further information about the meaning of disability and accessibility.

Responsibility: Create a link on MEDT's Intranet site where staff members can ask questions and provide feedback to a common e-mail account accessible by the Accessibility Planning Team and reviewed on a regular basis.

Timeline: End of fiscal 2006/2007.

Built environment

Barrier: HR reception area does not meet ODA accessibility requirements.

Commitment: Complete HR reception area to ensure that it is fully accessible under ODA accessibility requirements.

Responsibility: To complete HR entrance.

Timeline: Fiscal 2007/2008

Acts and regulations

Barrier: Changing and/or new MEDT Acts and regulations.

Commitment: Continue to review any new/revised Acts and regulations to ensure ODA, ODAO compliant.

Responsibility: While changing or creating new acts and regulations to ensure accessibility is taken into consideration.

Timeline: Ongoing.

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 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.

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

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