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ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, 2009-2010 Accessibility Plan

Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 sets out the roadmap to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Under this act, accessibility standards are being developed and implemented to break down barriers in key areas of everyday life.

These standards will increase accessibility for people with disabilities in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment.

The Government of Ontario is preparing to lead the way towards an accessible province, beginning in January 2010 when the first standard — for customer service — comes into force.

Each year, the government sets the course to prevent, identify and remove barriers through annual accessibility plans required under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

Building on last year's plan, the 2009/10 accessibility plan will continue moving the Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure towards the goal of an accessible province for all Ontarians. This plan highlights the achievements of the 2008/09 plan and outlines the commitments for 2009/10 so that no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

We intend to build on our 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.

Links to the other ministry plans are available at:

http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/ministry/accessibilityPlans/ministries_accplans10.htm

Report on Status of Customer Service Requirements

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008. **All OPS ministries must comply with the Regulation by January 1, 2010.**

All providers that are covered by the customer service standard must comply with 11 requirements as set out in the guide.

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
3. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods and use your services and about any other measures your organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access your goods and use your services.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.
6. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while

- accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.
- 7. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.
 - 8. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
 - 9. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
 - 10. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
 - 11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about your feedback process readily available to the public.

Following is a report on the status of various customer service initiatives within the Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure (MEI) with a focus on key commitments applicable to the work at MEI.

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Complete (Oct 09)

MEI committed to developing an Accessible Customer Service Policy and Accessibility Guideline to be posted on the MEI intranet.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will encourage all managers and staff to read and understand the policy and abide by the guidelines set out for them when providing goods and services to customers which include internal customers and clients.

Results Achieved:

The MEI Accessible Customer Service Policy and Accessibility Guideline is complete and has been posted on the MEI intranet site. The policy speaks to each of the 11 requirements under the standard that providers of goods and services must comply with. As MEI is an internal facing ministry with few external customers, ongoing language will be used to stress the importance of ensuring customers whether internal or external are provided with goods and services in accordance with the Regulation.

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: New

MEI will ensure timely investigation of disruptions within MEI occupied buildings and ensure notices are posted to alert the public where the public may access that specific location.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will work through the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), as landlord of MEI occupied buildings, to ensure that disruption notices are posted in areas accessed by the public in a timely, accessible manner and format.

Implementation Timeframe: October 09 - March 10

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing

Enhance managers' awareness of ODA/AODA to improve ability to accommodate public/staff with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):

The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure (MEI) provides limited direct service to the public. Public access points, such as entrances to offices are AODA compliant. The Ministry's primary application of the AODA is focused on ensuring that employees have healthy, safe and accessible work places. This is achieved by

working with partners to appropriately accommodate staff and train managers to understand their roles and responsibilities.

The majority of MEI's customers/clients are internal. We accommodate clients by providing guidance and consultation services on aspects of work such as manager responsibilities and ensuring an accessible work environment. We will provide information on mandatory manager training sessions to all managers and roll out various forms of training to both managers and staff within the ministry.

Managers at MEI have been provided with information on the accommodation fund to ensure they are aware of how to access the fund for various accessibility and accommodation issues affecting staff. In addition, we will provide links to relevant websites and training.

The Service Management Branch will monitor, track and report on attendance at mandatory sessions that managers and staff will be enrolled in.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 - March 10

Results Achieved:

MEI supported and provided guidance to managers within the ministry throughout 2008/09. This included, but was not limited to, advice on accessing the accommodation fund and providing the necessary support to managers in accommodating staff within their divisions. Individual accommodations requests were met by divisions as required.

For example, arrangements were made to make the workplace and individual workspace more accessible due to accommodation needs. Details on these accommodations can be found in the latter parts of this report.

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing

Education and awareness will continue to be a priority to build employee awareness of the types of disabilities and how to respond to persons with disabilities. With the addition of a new public facing office, Renewable Energy Facilitation Office (REFO), there will be a renewed focus on training staff on how to respond to persons with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disability.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will encourage all managers to complete online ODA training, and offer accommodation to staff on an as needed basis.

As the OPS moves closer to its legal requirement to be compliant with the AODA, these courses will continue to provide insight into the specific issues faced by Ontarians with Disabilities.

MEI began rolling out Part B in summer 2009 and will run it through to March 2010. These training initiatives will be linked to personal staff learning plans by advising managers that the courses can be used as part of the learning plan.

Further accessibility training will be developed and considered for inclusion in employees' learning plans for the period 2009/10 and beyond. This training will be available to previously trained staff as a refresher course, as well as new REFO staff to acquaint them with the requirements.

Implementation Timeframe: December 08 - March 10

Results Achieved:

On December 30, 2008, the ministry released the May I Help You course (Part A) to all managers. 62%, or 219 employees, have completed the course.

Part B of the May I Help You course was rolled out on July 21, 2009. Participation rates will be calculated as staff members continue to complete the course throughout the 2009/10 year.

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: New

Planned Action(s):

A button displaying an accessible symbol will be established and launched on the ministry's internal and external websites.

The public facing Internet site will showcase an accessible button leading to four options:

- A link to a form that will allow a requestor/member of the public to request a document in an alternative format;
- A link to the current MEI ODA Plan;
- The MEI TTY phone number (1-800-239-4224); and,
- A form that can be completed by a member of the public to provide feedback to MEI.

(This feedback form will be sent, via email, to the ODA lead for follow up. A routing schedule is to be established to ascertain that the appropriate persons are aware of the feedback received and that appropriate action/response is taken to provide a solution if needed).

Implementation Timeframe: October 09 - March 10

Report on Other Accessibility Commitments

The Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure will address the following additional commitments in the 2009/10 year:

1. Information & Communication
2. Employment
3. Built Environment
4. Other

Focus Area: Information & Communication

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

MEI will promote staff awareness of the ODA and accessibility issues, and encourage participation in special events relating to accessibility by posting the Accessibility Plan and updated ODA-related information and links on the ministry's intranet site.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will undertake an awareness campaign surrounding accessibility issues such as braille, accessible formats and allowing guide dogs on the premises. This will also include the promotion of the Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy to managers and staff, and promote awareness of the need to make meetings and events accessible through the provision of training and information. Additionally, the ministry will promote participation in accessibility related events such as the Accessibility Expo and other learning opportunities.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 –March 10

Results Achieved:

The Accessibility Expo 2009 was organized by the Diversity Office and held on May 28, 2009. Participants were provided with a folder of learning materials, including tip sheets on how to break through accessibility barriers, defining diversity, and information on support programs for people working with seniors or disabled persons. The Expo was informative and thorough in explaining diversity and the need to be accessible. Many materials collected by MEI's accessibility lead at the Expo were reviewed and circulated to staff to ensure full support and understanding of the Accessibility Plan.

Resources were provided to MEI staff regarding clear/large print accessibility guidelines, information about various visual impairments and what can be done to help them, Service Ontario and the steps they are taking to work towards being more accessible, as well as information about acquiring interpreting services for people with hearing impairments. Additionally, information was provided about the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, as well as a summary of requirements for the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

On Friday, August 7, 2009, MEI accessibility leads and staff attended a workshop at the Canadian Hearing Society that discussed audism and overcoming barriers both in the workplace and in entering into the workforce for people with disabilities. The session was thorough in explaining, with first hand accounts, the grave discrimination barriers that still need to be overcome by employers. The Canadian Hearing

Society's position paper on discrimination and autism was distributed to MEI staff. Additionally, a communication devices product catalogue was also obtained at the workshop and is being reviewed by the accommodations manager and will be referred to on an as needed basis should an employee require such accommodation.

MEI will continue to promote and undertake such awareness campaigns and make sure that all staff members are informed of when and where they are happening, as well as encourage participation.

Focus Area: Information & Communication

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

MEI will ensure that materials and content posted to the ministry's internet site (public facing site) are accessible and that the website continues to comply with standards for usability by people with disabilities, reflecting the broad definition of 'disability' under the ODA.

In addition, MEI will ensure that, upon request, alternate or accessible formats of documents posted to the internal site/intranet are available to requesting staff as needed.

Planned Action(s):

The Service Management Branch will continue to meet and work with the Communications Branch and Webmaster (visual identity coordinator) to ensure that MEI's public facing site continues to be accessible and to discuss options and possible improvements to accessibility on both sites.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 –March 10

Results Achieved:

MEI's public facing website is fully accessible and continues to adhere to guidelines. In addition, the site adopted the use of accessibility technologies (i.e. - voice activated compatibility for access). In addition to the May I Help You training, MEI's internal website contains information, tips and tools for planning accessible meetings, events, providing accessible materials, etc. All products are available online and can be viewed at: <http://intra.mei.gov.on.ca/corporate-services/Diversity/diversity.html>

Focus Area: Information & Communication

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

MEI will ensure continuous communication and liaison with Publications Ontario to maintain a list of products and documents that have been sent for accessible formatting, available in both French and English.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will continue to work with Publications Ontario by sending them all MEI related public documents and publications. Through Publications Ontario, MEI files will be made available by request to the public and employees in various accessible formats, such as braille, large font and audio. Examples of obtainable MEI documents through Publications Ontario are the Green Energy Act and other such pieces of legislation, the Multi-year Accessibility Plan, and other ministry policies and guidelines.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 –March 11

Results Achieved:

The 2008/09 ODA plan met the required accessible format and Publications Ontario confirmed that a range of documents and products have been submitted by MEI and are available in accessible formats. Documents include various publications from divisions across MEI. All documents are available in both French and English.

Focus Area: Employment

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

In consultation with the Regional Recruitment Centre, MEI managers review job descriptions and job advertisements to ensure that the content and language are consistent with the requirements of the ODA and respectful to people with disabilities. MEI will ensure availability of barrier-free interview facilities. Job descriptions and job ads will also be prepared in accessible formats and be readily available upon request.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will continue to work with the Regional Recruitment Centre throughout the 2009/10 year to ensure that all new job descriptions and job advertisements are consistent with the requirements of the ODA. Additionally, the ministry will commit to the implementation of fully accessible and barrier-free interview facilities.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 –March 10

Results Achieved:

MEI worked with the Regional Recruitment Centre throughout the 2008/09 year and all new job descriptions and job advertisements were consistent with the requirements of the ODA. Also, all interview facilities were fully accessible and barrier-free. The option to have documents provided in accessible formats was also made available.

In 2008/09, 25 trackable job competitions were held in the ministry. The job competition process in all cases was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the ODA and considered the needs of people with disabilities.

Focus Area: Built Environment

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

All new service level agreements that are negotiated with service providers will consider and address accessibility requirements.

Planned Action(s):

MEI is negotiating a new service level agreement with respect to facilities management and accommodation services and is expected to complete the negotiation by the start of the 2010 year. The new agreement will address accessibility requirements.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 – March 11

Results Achieved:

MEI is currently developing a service level agreement with MTO. The ministry will propose a clause to give accessibility issues priority.

Focus Area: Built Environment

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

MEI will work with building management and accommodation service providers to ensure that accessibility design standards are applied to all building projects and ongoing maintenance, common areas are kept free of obstacles, ergonomic furniture is procured, and special tools/equipment are obtained to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):

These matters will be addressed as requests for accommodations are made.

We plan to work with building management to ensure entranceway and emergency phones are accessible to people with disabilities.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 – March 10

Results Achieved:

Upon request, ergonomic assessments have been conducted through the Employee, Health, Safety and Wellness group (EHSW). From January 2009/August 2009, four ergonomic assessments have been conducted for MEI: 2 in the Deputy Minister's Office, 1 in the Infrastructure Policy and Planning Division and 1 in the Corporate Development Division.

Adjustments have been made as requested by client areas for things such as keyboard tray changes, on an average of approximately once per month.

A larger employee accommodation project is underway at the Hearst Block to accommodate an employee using a scooter type device.

Additionally, repairs to door operators have been made as requested by employees who use them, as well as the replacement of several office chairs.

Focus Area: Built Environment

Impact: Regulation

Commitment: Ongoing

Planned Action(s):

All new construction projects (through ORC and Infrastructure Ontario) will include accessibility requirements.

The ORC has developed interim Accessibility Design Standards for Ontario Government Facilities (ADS) and will be using them for current and future ministry projects, until such time that the new built

environment standards are completed. This standard will update the existing barrier free design standards currently used by ministries in the design of new space. A universal signage and wayfinding standard is currently under development and will complement the proposed interim standard. The ADS, as well as the universal signage and wayfinding standard, will provide a framework which allows all new construction and retrofits to be considered best practices within the OPS's accessibility agenda.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 – March 11

Results Achieved:

In 2008/09, the ORC completed various accessibility requirements to Osgoode Hall including the installation of an accessible gate, the creation of symmetrical sloping sidewalks and an enlarged entrance podium that can accommodate wheelchairs and scooters. Such improvements were possible while respecting its heritage character.

Retrofits were also completed on washrooms and elevators within the Macdonald Block complex to allow individuals with a broad range of disabilities to travel and utilize various facilities throughout the complex independently.

An audit has been completed of the 50 priority Ontario government buildings for retrofit based on the development of the interim standards. Each building audit will have an accessibility compliance assessment report. Such reports will provide costing and strategy for retrofit which will be submitted in MEI's 2010/2011 RbP submission.

MEI is working with its partners (ORC and the Diversity Office) in providing comprehensive language in the RbP instructions on planning for increased accessibility in capital projects, including tools and supporting links for more information for ministries.

Focus Area: Other

Impact: Service

Commitment: Ongoing

MEI will perform checks of offices and common areas, as part of Occupational Health and Safety Act requirements, to identify and address any impediments to the health and safety of employees, with consideration to the needs of people with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):

MEI committed to and established an active Joint Health and Safety Committee that meets on a monthly basis to discuss the safety needs and concerns of the ministry. Accessibility guidelines will be a priority of the committee, paying special attention to ensuring that the workplace is kept free of physical barriers and always fully accessible. For example, by making sure that doorways are not blocked and that computer and network cables are tucked away neatly to prevent tripping. Additionally, the ministry will continue to work with collective bargaining agents to assess volunteer interest in participating on the committee.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 – March 11

Results Achieved:

A Joint Health and Safety Committee was formed in spring 2009 and has since then been responsible for conducting workplace inspections. Inspections reports were completed, with detailed accounts of any issues or hazards that were found. Work stations were inspected and assessed on a rating scale comprised of categories: major concern, safety issues, improve, and monitor. Any hazard that was deemed an area of major concern or a safety issue was considered an immediate concern and follow up inspections were conducted to ensure hazard resolution.

The majority of issues classified as areas of major concern were in regard to air quality in the ministry's offices, ventilation and air circulation. This was resolved by contacting building maintenance and ensuring that the appropriate action was taken.

The only hazard that was classified as a safety issue was found within the individual work stations and caused by loose or hanging wires that could cause trips and other such accidents. This issue was resolved by recommending that each employee take the appropriate action to make sure all wires are tucked away in a neat and orderly fashion.

Additionally, stains on the ceiling of the 6th and 3rd floors of 880 Bay Street are being monitored.

JHSC inspections were held as follows:

December 8, 2008
Inspection of the 3rd, 5th and 6th floor of 880 Bay Street

December 15, 2008
Inspection of the 4th floor of 900 Bay Street
Inspection of the 4th floor of 777 Bay Street

December 18, 2008
Inspection of the 2nd floor of 880 Bay Street
Inspection of the 6th floor of 7 Queen's Park Crescent
Inspection of the 6th floor of 95 Grosvenor, North Building

Meetings with the Joint Health & Safety Committee were held to be certain work was being done to comply with all regulations. JHSC meetings were held as follows:

March 26, 2009
First JHSC meeting
Terms of reference were established
Results of the first round of inspections were discussed

May 25, 2009
JHSC met with a regional representative to discuss conducting ergonomic assessments

June 25, 2009 -
Dates were set for inspections in the 2009/10 year

The first of the scheduled inspections for 2009/10 took place on September 18th, 2009. At that time no serious hazards or issues were identified. A few minor issues in common areas were noted and included: trip breakers to be added to outlets near kitchen sinks and ceiling tiles to be replaced or put in place. In employees' individual work areas some minor issues were noted such as: wires under desk to be tied back in order to prevent tangling as well as a general tidying and shredding of excess paper which could pose a fire hazard. This final report will be available December 2009.

Further inspections are scheduled to be held as follows:

- December 18, 2009 - Inspection of 900 Bay Street, Hearst, Mowat & Ferguson
- March 19, 2010 - Inspection of 777 Bay Street
- June 18, 2010 - Frost Building, North & South

Final reports for the inspection dates listed above will be available at a later date.

Focus Area: Other

Impact: Regulation

Commitment: Ongoing

MEI will review new and existing acts and regulations to ensure the appropriate use of language and to identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will conduct a review of new acts and regulations as they arise.

Implementation Timeframe: September 07 – March 10

Results Achieved:

Section 10(1) of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 ("ODA") requires each ministry to prepare an accessibility plan as part of its annual planning process. Section 10(3) of the ODA requires the accessibility plan to include:

- a) A report on the measures the ministry has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
- b) The measures in place to ensure that the ministry assesses its proposals for Acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with

disabilities;

c) A list of the Acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services that the ministry will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities.

Following a review of the Green Energy Act, 2009 ("GEA") for negative language with respect to the requirements in the ODA, the legal services branch of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure has reviewed the Green Energy Act, 2009 ("GEA") (Bill 150, schedule A) from various perspectives relating to the ODA. In terms of language, the words, phrases and terms contained within the GEA appear to be quite neutral and do not, in legal's assessment, represent language which is inappropriate given the ODA's current language requirements. Examples of some of the words and phrases used to express the main concepts contained in this bill include "consumer", "renewable energy source", "renewable energy project", "designated goods, services, and knowledge" and "energy conservation".

Focus Area: Other

Impact: Service

Commitment: Completed September 08 – November 09

MEI will consider and address the needs of people with disabilities when reviewing, testing and updating the ministry's Continuity of Operations Plan, including the emergency evacuation procedures, by incorporating recommendations and advice from the Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs.

Planned Action(s):

MEI will review the emergency plan and communication system to ensure accessibility requirements have been taken into account for staff with disabilities. A strategy will also be developed for managers to identify appropriate infection prevention and control measures for their workplaces, ensuring accessibility requirements are addressed for employees with disabilities

MEI will confirm that alternative work arrangements have been made, in the event of an emergency, for staff with disabilities, as well as ensure that accessibility requirements have been built into emergency exits; this will also take into account those government facilities that are planned to be converted into vaccination areas.

Furthermore, MEI will review and update the recovery plans for all non-time critical services to include measures for employees with disabilities. An Accessibility Impact Statement will also be developed that defines barriers to accessibility, impacts on persons with disabilities and develops strategies for implementing solutions.

Results Achieved:

MEI's 2008/09 Continuity of Operations Plan addressed the needs of people with disabilities, including evacuation procedures.

For More Information

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

Please phone: Michelle Bjork

General inquiry number: 416-325-9943

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Ministry Website address: <http://www.mei.gov.on.ca>

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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