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MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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 the Environment. 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



As Minister of the Environment, I am pleased to share our 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan. It reflects the McGuinty government's commitment to delivering real, positive change to improve the lives of all Ontarians. We are working with people with disabilities to enable them to fully participate in the protection, conservation and restoration of the natural environment in Ontario.

Over the past few years, we have removed many architectural barriers in our offices and taken steps to meet the needs of our staff and citizens who are disabled. The 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan reviews these accomplishments and indicates further actions we will take to provide a workplace and customer service that are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Environmental protection is a shared responsibility and we at the ministry are committed to openness and accessibility for all. The Ministry of the Environment's 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan is part of our ongoing work to build strong and livable communities that offer a high quality of life for Ontarians of all abilities.

The Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of the Environment

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leona Dombrowsky".

Report on Achievements of 2003-2004 Planning Commitments

The ministry has realized a number of successes from its first ODA Plan.

In the area of facilities management, the ministry continues to work with landlords and the Ontario Realty Corporation to ensure that all new and existing offices are barrier-free, and have up-to-date emergency notification and evacuation procedures in place.

To improve the availability of information to the public, software has been upgraded, and a full accessibility review of ministry internet sites completed. As well, ministry publications available to the public have been checked for the appropriate use of acronyms, and can be provided in accessible formats.

Accessibility-related education has been carried out throughout the ministry. Managers and supervisors have completed mandatory ODA training, which is also available to all staff. Information on the ODA and ministry commitments has been shared through presentations, e-mails, orientation packages, and the ministry ODA intranet site.

The ministry ODA Working Group continues to maintain accessibility awareness within the ministry, and ensures that all of the goals in the 2003-2004 ODA Plan have been met. These specific commitments, and their status, are noted on the following pages.

Commitment: Work with the Ontario Realty Corporation to ensure that lease renewals and new acquisitions are accessible.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Work with landlords of ministry facilities to implement measures such as audible floor identification in elevators, and to remove barriers identified in the detailed survey of all ministry locations.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Educate design consultants to ensure that standards noted in the Ontario Realty Corporation Guide to Barrier Free Design for Ontario Government Buildings and the Ontario Building Code are met and/or exceeded where possible.

Status: In Progress.

Action and Timeframe: Preliminary work has begun. Awaiting the completion of the Guide to Barrier Free Design, expected in late 2004, at which time ministry design consultants will be advised.

Rationale: The guide will not be available until late 2004.

Commitment: Implement a barrier prevention approach when acquiring new facilities or renovating existing facilities.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Develop and begin to implement a program to extend ergonomic assessments to all ministry staff.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Develop and implement enhanced emergency notification and evacuation procedures to ensure the safety of people with disabilities.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Include provisions in contracts with service providers to ensure accessibility requirements are met.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Provide guidance to program managers and supervisors on considering accessibility in all procurement activities.

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.

Commitment: Continue to ensure the ministry's Internet sites are accessible by testing all new site content.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Make available to all staff the procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Review the ministry's use of acronyms to identify improvements to ensure public documents can be more easily understood.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Upgrade software on all staff workstations to enable creation of accessible documents.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Review the documents the ministry issues to members of the public, such as Provincial Officers Orders, to identify issues of accessibility.

Status: In Progress.

Action and Timeframe: A process is being determined for the conversion of documents, as required, to meet ODA standards, after which this will be communicated to the appropriate divisional staff. Completion targeted for December 2004.

Rationale: Need to ensure that all appropriate documents are included in the review, and that staff dealing with the public are aware of the requirements under the Act, and the processes in place to address requests.

Commitment: Post a notice on the ministry's website advising the public that all ministry publications can be provided in alternate formats upon request and provide instructions on how to obtain them.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Provide an opportunity for staff to contribute to the ODA webpage and the electronic staff newsletter, to provide their ongoing perspective of how accessibility planning can enhance participation and contribution in the workplace.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Educate staff on the ODA, its requirements and the ministry's accessibility plan.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Make the online ODA training for managers available to all staff.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Complete training for managers and supervisors on accommodating the accessibility need of employees and job applicants with disabilities.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Put measures in place to ensure that training programs provided by the ministry and service providers are accessible to people with disabilities.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Include information on the ODA, its requirements and the ministry's accessibility plan in the orientation package for new staff.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Assess the need for the ministry's front-line staff to be trained in customer service for people with disabilities.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Review the 2004-2005 Capital Plan to ensure that no new project creates barriers for employees or citizens with disabilities.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Incorporate the ministry's accessibility goals and objectives into all management performance agreements.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Communicate through the Working Group at least once a month to review progress and to develop strategies to move forward on removing barriers and integrating accessibility planning into the ministry's business planning cycle.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Review the ministry's 1-800 telephone services to identify priorities for providing TTY access.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Review the wording on facilities management request forms to ensure the needs of employees with disabilities are accommodated quickly so they can perform their duties easily and safely.

Status: Deferred until late 2004.

Action and Timeframe: Awaiting completion of the Ontario Realty Corporation Guide to Barrier Free Design for Ontario Government Buildings, expected in late 2004, at which time request forms will be reviewed.

Rationale: The guide will not be available until late 2004.

Commitment: Develop guidelines for staff planning meetings and presentations to ensure that locations are accessible and information is available in appropriate formats.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Develop guidelines for planning and hosting open houses, public meetings, etc. to ensure that all interested persons are able to fully participate.

Status: Complete.

Commitment: Consider accessibility issues in the development and review of ministry acts, regulations, policies, programs and services.

Status: Complete.

Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

In 2004-2005, the ministry will build on its successes from the first ODA Plan.

These include confirming that new websites are compliant, making publications available in accessible formats, considering disability issues in the development of new acts and regulations, educating ministry staff on the ODA and ensuring that all facilities are barrier-free.

These efforts will be strengthened through initiatives linked to the completion of the Ontario Realty Corporate Guide to Barrier Free Design for Ontario Government Buildings. This information will be shared with the ministry's design consultants, to ensure that all new facilities are barrier-free, and appropriate details will be included in facilities request forms to expedite the accommodation of employees with disabilities.

The ministry's education commitments will also be expanded in 2005 through the requirement that all senior and front-line staff be re-trained on the ODA every two years.

The ministry Working Group will monitor all of the following ministry ODA commitments for 2004-2005, to ensure that they are completed in a timely manner.

Legislative Requirements

Commitment: Educate design consultants to ensure the Ontario Realty Corporation Guide to Barrier Free Design for Ontario Government Buildings and the Ontario Building Code are met and/or exceeded where possible.

Action: Education will take place once the Guide to Barrier Free Design is developed.

Timeframe: Education to commence in late 2004, following the completion of the guide.

Commitment: Continue to work with landlords of ministry facilities to remove barriers.

Action: Measures will be identified and addressed as required, as space is renovated and/or obtained.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Continue to make resources available to provide ergonomic assessments for ministry staff, as required.

Action: Resource material and contact information will be available through the Business Services Managers, as well as through Facilities Management and Human Resources staff.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Promote emergency and evacuation procedures to encourage staff who may require assistance to identify themselves to their managers.

Action: Procedures to be promoted, and modified as required, based on staff identification.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Continue to ensure that ministry Internet sites are accessible by testing all new site content.

Action: Sites will be tested as they are developed or modified.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Provide staff with resources to incorporate accessibility considerations in all procurement activities.

Action: Information will continue to be available on the ministry intranet, and staff to be reminded of this requirement when they seek procurement guidance.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Continue to make available to staff the procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats.

Action: This information will continue to be available on the ministry intranet.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Review the ministry's use of acronyms to ensure public documents can be more easily understood.

Action: This will continue to be done on a case-by-case basis, as new documents are produced.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Establish a process to ensure that the documents the ministry issues to members of the public, such as Provincial Officers Orders, are available in an accessible format.

Action: This process is being established.

Timeframe: December 2004.

Commitment: Educate new staff and managers on the ODA, its requirements and the ministry's accessibility plan.

Action: Communication to all staff will be completed following with the release of the ODA Plan in September 2004. Information and online training will be made available on an ongoing basis on the website. Orientation material will include ODA information.

Timeframe: Communication to staff and revision of orientation materials to occur in Autumn 2004. Website information and online training will be ongoing.

Commitment: Establish a process to update/educate all managers and front-line staff every two years on the ODA, its requirements and the ministry's accessibility plan.

Action: Process, content, and other details will be established by Spring 2005, with roll-out to coincide with the release of the 2005-2006 ODA Plan.

Timeframe: Process to be established by April 2005.

Commitment: Ensure that new training programs provided by the ministry are accessible to people with disabilities.

Action: New programs will be reviewed as they are developed.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Review the 2005-2006 Capital Plan to ensure that no new project creates barriers for employees or citizens with disabilities.

Action: Plan will be reviewed as part of the Results-Based Planning Process.

Timeframe: Autumn 2004.

Commitment: Incorporate the ministry's accessibility goals and objectives in senior management 2004-2005 performance agreements.

Action: These goals will be incorporated into performance agreements.

Timeframe: Summer 2004.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment: Review the Environmental Protection Act and its 62 regulations for any impact on people with disabilities.

Action: The act and its regulations will be reviewed.

Timeframe: Review to commence in Autumn 2004.

Commitment: Consider accessibility issues in the development and review of ministry acts, regulations, policies, programs and services.

Action: This will be done as new initiatives are developed.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Policies

Commitment: Review new 1-800 services to determine the requirement for providing TTY access.

Action: New 1-800 services will be reviewed, and requirements determined, on a case-by-case basis.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Review wording on facilities management request forms to ensure the needs of employees with disabilities are accommodated quickly, so they can perform their duties easily and safely.

Action: Forms will be reviewed upon completion of the Ontario Realty Corporation Guide to Barrier Free Design for Ontario Government Buildings.

Timeframe: The guide is expected to be completed in late 2004. Review of forms to commence, once the guide is available.

Programs and Services

Commitment: Continue to provide an opportunity for staff to contribute accessibility-related feedback through the ODA webpage and the electronic staff newsletter.

Action: Feedback mechanisms and staff input through both the website and newsletter to be continued. Staff will be reminded of this by hub e-mail upon completion of the 2004-2005 ODA plan.

Timeframe: Hub e-mail to be sent to all staff in October 2004.

Practices

Commitment: Ensure that staff are aware of, and have access to, the Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings and Conferences, so that all interested parties are able to fully participate in meetings, open houses, and similar activities.

Action: Guide is currently available through the ministry ODA website. Staff will be reminded of this by hub e-mail, upon completion of the 2004-2005 ODA Plan.

Timeframe: Hub e-mail to be sent to all staff in October 2004.

Commitment: Continue to move forward through the Working Group to remove barriers, educate staff, and ensure the completion of the commitments in the ministry ODA Plan.

Action: The Working Group will discuss these issues at quarterly meetings, and follow-up, as required.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

For more information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: 416-325-4000

TTY number: 1-800-387-5559

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E-mail: picemail@ene.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.ene.gov.on.ca

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship'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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