



Ministry of the
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MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The recent passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 marks a new era of accessibility in Ontario. This legislation will make Ontario one of the world leaders in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

While the government is moving forward to implement the new legislation, there will be a transition period during which government and parts of the broader public sector will continue to have planning and other 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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 ensure real and effective change.

This document is the third annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of the Environment. It highlights achievements of the 2004-05 plan and outlines commitments for 2005-06 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 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 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan. Passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, ushers in a new era in accessibility. This legislation will make Ontario a world leader in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

The government continues to lead the way in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to ensure our offices and services are fully accessible to staff and citizens with disabilities. We are building on past progress and accomplishments to lay the foundation for developing accessibility standards that will ensure real and effective change takes place.

In 2004-2005, this ministry demonstrated continued leadership in improving accessibility by completing a review of the Environmental Protection Act and its sixty-two regulations, and found that it does not impact on people with disabilities. The 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan highlights this and other successes, and outlines what we will do in the coming year to enable everyone to fully participate in protecting Ontario's natural environment.

The Ministry of the Environment's 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan is part of our ongoing efforts to make Ontario's communities strong, vital, and accessible to people of all abilities.

The Honourable Laurel C. Broten

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Laurel Broten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laurel" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Broten".

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments

The Ministry of the Environment has successfully implemented, and in most cases completed, all of the 21 commitments identified in its 2004-2005 ODA Plan.

By the time the ministry developed this plan in 2004, staff had established that all of the organization's facilities, publications, emergency procedures, and websites, were accessible.

Many of the commitments in the plan therefore built on these successes to ensure that accessibility was considered in any new initiatives carried out in these areas. As well, the scope of the plan was expanded to include new commitments such as a review of the Environmental Protection Act and its regulations.

To ensure that all staff remained partners in this endeavour, and to maintain accessibility awareness across the organization, ODA information was made available throughout the year via e-mails, orientation materials, and on several ministry intranet sites.

Details on the specific commitments from 2004-2005, and the work completed to date, are noted on the following pages.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Information provided to design consultants at a meeting and in hard copy in second quarter of 2005, following completion of the guide. Information was also posted on the website.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: All existing facilities remain barrier-free, including five new lease spaces into which ministry offices relocated or expanded in the past year. Specific accessibility improvements include the addition of automatic door openers within an office area to assist a staff member, and in another building, the commitment to convert elevators and lobby areas to be fully accessible was written into a lease renewal.

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

Status: Complete

Action and Timeframe: This information continues to be available to all staff through their business services managers, and facilities management. Improved ergonomic components, such as keyboards, chairs, and computer screens, were provided to many ministry staff. Specific assessments were completed in Toronto, Hamilton, Kingston and St. Catharines.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: All employees were provided with an Emergency Evacuation Handbook, and staff with disabilities were encouraged to self identify to their managers for the purpose of facilitating emergency evacuation. Emergency evacuation procedures continue to be posted on the ministry intranet site and fire drills are conducted yearly in all ministry occupied buildings.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This continues to be done as new sites, such as that of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre, are developed.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This information provided via a link on the procurement website, and will be updated as part of the procurement website review in the third quarter of 2005.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This information is available through the communications branch.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This continues to be done on a document-by-document basis.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The ministry uses either government forms, which are compliant, or internal documents that can be provided in accessible format through Publications Ontario.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Communication to all staff in October 2004, with updated materials available on the new staff orientation and ministry ODA websites.

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.

Status: In progress.

Action and Timeframe: Education requirement to be linked to performance plans. Method of education to be developed based on central communication around the roll-out of the AODA.

Rationale: Awaiting roll-out and details of AODA.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This continues to be done through Human Resources Branch. Arrangements were made in several courses to address the specific accessibility-related requirements of participants, and allow for their full participation.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This was completed as part of the Results-Based Plan.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This commitment has been included in the ministry 2005-2006 Senior Management Performance agreements.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Environmental Protection Act and all regulations reviewed. No impact on persons with disabilities.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Accessibility issues considered in all new ministry projects.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: This continues to be done as new 1-800 services are introduced.

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.

Status: In progress.

Action and Timeframe: Accessibility review to be linked to an overall review of facilities forms, which commenced in summer 2005.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Communication to staff on this process in October 2004, and staff input encouraged. Specific feedback mechanism on website updated in June 2005.

Commitment: Ensure that staff is 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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Communication to all staff in October 2004. This information continues to be made available through the ministry ODA website. One branch regularly provides transcriptions of meetings for its staff with a hearing loss.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: All ministry ODA commitments completed or in progress.

Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

In 2005-2006, the ministry will continue to build on its successes from the previous year.

The commitments outlined on the following pages will ensure that established processes are maintained, while efforts to remove barriers go beyond the work completed to date.

As well, the ministry will address in 2005-2006 any new directives identified in AODA-related legislation to be introduced in the coming year.

Customer Service

Commitment: 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 the resources to incorporate accessibility considerations in all procurement activities.

Action: The ministry procurement intranet website will be reviewed to improve the availability of accessibility-related resources.

Timeframe: December 2005.

Employment

Commitment: 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 will be promoted, and modified as required, based on staff identification.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Educate staff and managers on the ODA, and AODA.

Action: Education will take place through a variety of ways. All staff will be advised of the release of the ODA plan, and when the AODA legislation is introduced. Existing ODA information available on the new staff orientation and ODA websites will be updated, as required, upon the release of the AODA. An e-education process will be developed for managers.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Incorporate the ministry accessibility goals and objectives in senior management performance agreements.

Action: These goals will continue to be incorporated into performance agreements.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Ensure that meetings, training programs and similar activities provided by the ministry are accessible to people with disabilities.

Action: Training programs will be reviewed as they are developed. Staff will be made aware of, and have access to on the intranet, the Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings and Conferences.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Communications and Information

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

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

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Provide an opportunity for staff to contribute accessibility-related feedback through the ODA website and electronic staff newsletter.

Action: Feedback mechanisms and staff input through both the website and newsletter will be continued. Staff to be reminded of this by hub e-mail upon release of the 2005-2006 ODA Plan.

Timeframe: October 2005.

Built Environment

Commitment: Work with landlords of ministry facilities to remove barriers, including the implementation of the new Standards for Barrier-free Design.

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

Timeframe: Ongoing.

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

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

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Complete the review of 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.

Action: Forms will be reviewed, and modified, as required.

Timeframe: October 2005.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment: The Environmental Protection Act and its regulations will be assessed for accessibility as they come up for review, and modified, as required.

Action: As amendments are made to the Environmental Protection Act and its regulations, an accessibility review will be conducted to ensure that wherever possible, current technology is available to enhance accessibility for citizens and ministry employees with disabilities.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Review the Ontario Water Resources Act and its regulations for any impact on people with disabilities.

Action: The Act and its regulations will be reviewed.

Timeframe: June 2006.

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

Action: Accessibility issues will be considered as new initiatives are developed.

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

1-800 number: 1-800-565-4923

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

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

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web site at: <http://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.

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