



2007-2008 Accessibility Plan



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MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2007-2008 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.

Five key areas have been identified for the first accessibility standards: customer service, transportation, information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

The accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor and will come into force on January 1, 2008.

An initial proposed standard on accessible transportation has been developed by the Transportation Standards Development Committee. It was posted for public review on June 27, 2007 and will be available for public comment until September 28, 2007.

The Standards Development Committee that will draft the proposed information and communications standard was established and began meeting in April, 2007. The committees developing the accessible built environment and accessible employment standards have been selected and will begin meeting in the fall of 2007.

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 fifth annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of the Environment. It highlights the achievements of the 2006-07 plan and outlines the commitments for 2007-08 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



As Minister of the Environment, I am pleased to share our 2007-08 Accessibility Plan. Under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) all public sector and broader public sector organizations are required by law to have an annual accessibility plan and to make it available to the public. This is the fifth year in which plans have been written and are being implemented by organizations such as ours across the province.

This year marks the second anniversary of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA) – legislation that will require the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

The accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor and will come into force on January 1, 2008.

An initial proposed standard on accessible transportation has been developed by the Transportation Standards Development Committee. It was posted for public review on June 27, 2007 and will be available for public comment until September 28, 2007.

The Standards Development Committee that will draft the proposed information and communications standard was established and began meeting in April, 2007. The committees developing the accessible built environment and accessible employment standards have been selected and will begin meeting in the fall of 2007.

Here at the Ministry of the Environment, we are building on the success of our previous four plans and continuing to look for ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities who come into contact with this ministry, regardless of whether they are staff, members of the general public or ministry stakeholders.

My ministry is committed to improving accessibility through identifying, removing and preventing barriers, working together within our ministry, across government and in our relationships with our stakeholders.

This ministry continues to work to better educate staff on accessibility. Examples of this work in the past year include the update of the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website, quarterly meetings of the ministry's accessibility planning working group, and regular accessibility-related articles in the ministry's eMOE newsletter. More examples are provided in the pages that follow.

If you have any comments or concerns, I encourage you to send them using the contact information located at the end of this document.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Laurel C. Broten

Report on Achievements

2006 - 2007 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of the Environment was successful in achieving 26 of 27 planned commitments outlined in its 2006-2007 accessibility plan and plans are in place to complete the remaining commitment. These commitments were comprised of nineteen measures to prevent new barriers and eight barriers to be addressed. This section provides a status report.

Commitment: We will remind staff in an eMOE newsletter article to consider accessibility requirements when planning meetings and events. We will also continue to make the guides for planning accessible meetings and events available on our ODA-AODA intranet website.

Status: Completed.

Action: An article was published in the June 2007 eMOE newsletter to inform staff about how to plan meetings that are accessible to people with disabilities. The ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website was updated in September 2006 and includes guides for planning accessible meetings and events.

Timeframe: June 2007.

Commitment: We will inform new staff about the AODA by including information in ministry orientation materials. Information about the ODA, its requirements and the ministry's annual accessibility plan are included in orientation materials for new staff.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry has developed a new Orientation website as one of the projects under the MOE Employee Engagement Initiative. The First Month Orientation Checklist, one of the tools posted on the new site, refers staff to the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site, which includes information about both the ODA and the AODA.

Timeframe: June 2007.

Commitment: We will continue to provide employment accommodation for government employees and applicants, as it pertains to

accessibility needs. For example, during the interview and hiring process, the ministry accommodates candidates with disabilities through a variety of ways, including:

- providing visually impaired candidates with special software;
- allowing candidates extra time to complete tests and interviews;
- providing questions in large print;
- using a sign language interpreter;
- letting visually impaired candidates bring their own computers to an interview.

Status: Completed.

Action: Information about the new “Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy”, now available online to all Ontario Public Service employees, was communicated to all ministry staff in an email in March 2007. Information was also posted on the ministry’s Accessibility intranet site.

MOE’s Injury, Illness and Employee Accommodation Coordinator has integrated issues of ability and accessibility into presentations to the District Management Committee, Business Services Administrative Managers Committee, and Regional Officers in 2007.

Timeframe: March 2007.

Commitment: We will remind new managers and supervisors to complete the mandatory online training course, entitled: “The Ontarians with Disabilities Act – Maximizing the Contribution of Employees with Disabilities”, if they have not done so already.

Status: Completed.

Action: New managers and supervisors were reminded to complete the mandatory online ODA training in an August 2006 eMOE article. Information about the course is also included in the online Toolkit for Managers and Supervisors.

Timeframe: August 2006.

Commitment: We will continue to consider the needs of people with disabilities in ministry emergency management planning.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry’s Emergency Evacuation Handbook has been revised and updated to reflect the recommendations in Emergency Management Ontario’s “Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities / Special Needs”.

Timeframe: Summer 2007.

Commitment: We will continue to promote emergency and evacuation procedures to encourage new staff who may require assistance to identify themselves to their managers.

Status: Completed.

Action: The “Persons with Disabilities Requiring Assistance Form” is referenced on the First Month Orientation Checklist for managers.

Timeframe: June 2007.

Commitment: We will continue to test ministry Internet sites for accessibility as they are developed or modified.

Status: Completed.

Action: In March 2007, the ministry launched three new websites, including a completely redesigned main site. The ministry's Internet sites are tested for accessibility on an ongoing basis.

Timeframe: March 2007.

Commitment: We will post "A Guide to Alternative Formats for Government Publications" on the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website to provide guidance to staff on the process for handling requests for publications in alternate formats to print.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website was updated in September 2006 and includes this guide.

Timeframe: September 2006.

Commitment: We will continue to provide staff with the resources to incorporate accessibility considerations into all procurement activities. Information about ODA procurement requirements is available on the ministry's procurement intranet website.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry updated its Procurement intranet site in April 2007. The site links to the Ministry of Government Services (MGS) Procurement Directives intranet website and notes ODA requirements. The MGS site contains the "Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the ODA" and related tools. These tools are also posted on the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site.

Timeframe: April 2007.

Commitment: The ministry's Legal Services Branch will continue to assist staff in determining their procurement requirements so that the procurement complies with the ODA.

Status: Completed.

Action: Legal Services Branch ensures the procurement process complies with the six steps outlined in the Ministry of Government Services' "Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001".

Timeframe: 2007.

Commitment: We will continue to ensure that the new standards for barrier-free design are implemented as existing space is renovated and/or new space is obtained.

Status: Completed.

Action: In 2006-07, the ministry completed two office relocation projects (i.e., Kingston Regional Office, Belleville Area Office). The

Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), which oversaw these projects, ensured compliance with the standards for barrier-free design of Ontario Government facilities.

Timeframe: Fall 2006.

Commitment: We will continue to make ergonomic assessment resource materials available through business service managers, as well as human resources and facilities management staff.

Status: Completed.

Action: Business Services Administrative Managers and Human Resources Branch (HRB) staff access ergonomic information from the HRB intranet site. An ergonomic tip sheet is available on the ministry's Health and Safety intranet site.

Timeframe: 2007.

Commitment: The ministry will continue to consider accessibility issues in the development and review of ministry acts and regulations.

Status: Completed.

Action: Accessibility issues are considered as new initiatives are developed. Proposed regulations under both the Clean Water Act, 2006 and the Environmental Assessment Act have been reviewed for accessibility. The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007 has also been reviewed. Neither the Act nor the proposed regulations contain barriers to accessibility.

Timeframe: 2007.

Commitment: The ministry will support the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to implement the AODA.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry participates on the inter-ministerial committees for the AODA Customer Service Standards Development Committee (SDC) and the Built Environment SDC.

Timeframe: 2007.

Commitment: We will update the ministry's intranet website to better inform staff about the ODA and the AODA.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website was updated in September 2006 to include information about both the ODA and the AODA.

Timeframe: September 2006.

Commitment: We will inform staff about the ODA and the AODA by writing quarterly eMOE newsletter articles about accessibility-related matters, and will invite staff to share feedback about existing barriers or submit ideas on how to prevent barriers.

Status: Completed.

Action: Accessibility-related articles were published in eMOE in August 2006, December 2006, March 2007 and June 2007. An announcement about the Accessibility Expo was included in April 2007 and May 2007. The ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website includes a link for staff to share feedback.

Timeframe: June 2007.

Commitment: We will establish a log to track and follow up on all accessibility-related inquiries.

Status: Completed.

Action: A log was developed and is maintained to track and follow up on all accessibility-related inquiries.

Timeframe: 2007

Commitment: We will convene quarterly meetings of the ministry's Accessibility Planning Working Group to monitor commitments in our annual accessibility plan and to improve accessibility for employees and the public by identifying barriers and measures to prevent or remove them.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry's Accessibility Planning Working Group met on a quarterly basis in 2006-07 (i.e., December 2006, March 2007, and May 2007). Additional updates are provided to working group members by email on an ongoing basis.

Timeframe: 2007

Commitment: We will review the results of the 2006 OPS Employee Survey to identify any ministry accessibility-related issues.

Status: Completed.

Action: Survey respondents were asked to identify whether or not they had a disability as defined by the Canadian Human Rights Code. Three per cent of MOE respondents answered "Yes", marginally below the four per cent OPS average. No specific issues were identified.

In the ministry's Employee Engagement Consultation sessions, one issue was brought forward to the Deputy Minister, regarding an inaccessible emergency exit at the ministry's 125 Resources Road facility. The issue has since been resolved.

Timeframe: Fall 2006.

Commitment: The ministry will post information about how to provide service to people with disabilities on the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site and make staff aware of these educational materials through an eMOE newsletter article. The ministry will encourage all front-line staff to complete the online "May I Help You – Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" training program, once it is available through the MyOPS website at the Centre for Leadership and Learning.

Status: In Progress.

Action: Information about how to serve people with disabilities was posted on the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site in December 2006. A demonstration of the "May I Help You" eLearning course was provided to members of the ministry's accessibility planning working group in May 2007. The ministry plans to communicate information about the new course to all staff when it is available in the Fall.

Timeframe: Fall 2007.

Rationale: The "May I Help You" eLearning course is not expected to be launched to OPS staff until Fall 2007.

Commitment: The ministry will develop an online Toolkit for Managers and Supervisors (including Business Services Administrative Managers) to assist them in meeting ODA requirements.

Status: Completed.

Action: An online toolkit is available on the ministry's intranet site to provide information and resources to assist managers and supervisors in implementing the ministry's obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Timeframe: Summer 2007.

Commitment: We will update the Publications page of the ministry's Internet website to highlight that requests for ministry publications in alternate formats may be made through the ministry's Public Information Centre. We will also post "A Guide to Multiple Formats for Communications" on the same page to assist people requesting publications in alternate formats.

Status: Completed.

Action: This update was completed in February 2007.

Timeframe: February 2007.

Commitment: Ministry staff will consider accessibility when replacing signage in buildings.

Status: Completed.

Action: In 2006-07, the ministry completed two office relocation projects (i.e., Kingston Regional Office, Belleville Area Office). The ORC, which oversaw these projects, considered accessibility in the signage (e.g., signs for accessible washrooms, exterior building signs).

Timeframe: Fall 2006.

Commitment: We will invite staff to share feedback about existing barriers and ways to remove or prevent them through a web-based survey. We will complete the Accessibility Directorate's Accessibility Quotient Questionnaire to determine the current level of accessibility in various areas of service delivery, physical access, design and maintenance.

Status: Completed.

Action: Staff have been invited to share feedback through a web-based survey, which is posted on the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site.

Ministry Accessibility Planning Working Group members completed the Accessibility Quotient Questionnaire at their meeting in March 2007 as a tool to identify barriers and ways to improve accessibility at MOE.

Timeframe: Summer 2007.

Commitment: Ministry facilities management staff will work with the ORC and PROFAC to develop options to improve accessibility to the auditorium stage at the ministry's Resources Road facility.

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry has installed an automatic lift system, making the stage and the floor area at the front of the auditorium accessible.

Timeframe: Spring 2007.

Commitment: Ministry facilities management staff will work with the ORC to implement a Way Finding System at the Resources Road facility. The Way Finding System uses colour-coded signage and a numbering system to help staff and visitors navigate the building.

Status: Completed.

Action: A Way Finding System, which consists of a room numbering system, as well as the colour-coding and labelling of wings within the facility and direction signage, has been implemented at the ministry's Resources Road facility.

Timeframe: Summer 2007.

Commitment: The Nutrient Management Act, 2002 and its regulations will be reviewed to identify any barriers to accessibility.

Status: Completed.

Action: The Nutrient Management Act, 2002 and its regulations have been reviewed and contain no barriers to accessibility.

Timeframe: October 2006.

Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of the Environment was successful in achieving a number of ongoing commitments described in the accessibility plans it issued before 2006 - 2007. While the majority of the ministry's ongoing commitments are noted under either "2006-2007 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives" or "Measures to Prevent New Barriers", this section provides a status report on two additional ongoing initiatives.

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

Status: Completed.

Action: The ministry's fourth annual Accessibility Plan was shared with all staff in an email on September 29, 2006 and posted on the ministry's intranet website.

The ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website was also updated with information about both the ODA and the AODA, including information about how to serve people with disabilities.

In addition, the ministry published a series of accessibility-related articles in its eMOE newsletter, including a reminder to new managers and supervisors to complete the mandatory online ODA training.

Timeframe: September 2006.

Commitment: Provisions of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and its regulations requiring accessibility enhancement are expected to be brought forward in a consolidated approach by the summer of 2007.

Status: Ongoing.

Action: The EPA and its regulations were reviewed in 2005-06 and contain no barriers to accessibility. In 2005-06, the ministry also reviewed the Act and its regulations for possible accessibility-related enhancements. Enhancements were identified with a view to consolidating same for a proposed regulation.

Timeframe: 2007-08 and ongoing.

Rationale: Instead of bringing these enhancements forward in a consolidated approach, the ministry will bring these forward as amendments to individual regulations are made.

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

- We will continue to test ministry Internet sites for accessibility as they are developed or modified.
- We will continue to ensure that the ministry's Environmental Registry is accessible.
- We will maintain and update the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet website to inform staff about the ODA, the AODA and accessibility.
- We will consider accessibility when planning ministry events and conferences (e.g. MOE Emerald Awards Ceremony)

Employment

- We will inform managers and supervisors about a new guide called: "From Disabilities to Possibilities: A Guide to Hiring, Training and Retaining People with Disabilities" through an eMOE article. We will also include information about it in our online Toolkit for Managers and Supervisors.
- We will update the ministry's First Month Orientation Checklist for new staff with new information about the ODA-AODA as it becomes available.

Communications and Information

- We will continue to promote accessibility-related events, such as the MCSS Accessibility Expo, through a variety of means (e.g.,

- eMOE newsletter, ODA-AODA intranet site, MOE Accessibility Planning Working Group, management team updates, etc.).
- We will continue to make the guide to accessible formats for government publications available to the public and staff. We will inform staff about the process for responding to requests for publications in alternate formats in an eMOE newsletter article.
- We will continue to invite staff to submit accessibility-related questions or feedback through the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site.

Built Environment

- We will continue to ensure that the standards for the barrier-free design of Ontario Government facilities are implemented as existing space is renovated and/or new space is obtained.

Acts and Regulations

- The ministry will continue to consider accessibility issues in the development and review of ministry acts and regulations.

Other barriers

- We will inform staff about the Ministry of Community and Social Services' new public accessibility awareness campaign, called "AccessOn", and include a link on the ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site.
- We will continue to raise staff awareness about the barriers to access and the universal benefits of accessibility by writing regular eMOE newsletter articles.
- We will continue to provide staff with the resources to incorporate accessibility considerations into all procurement activities. Information about ODA procurement requirements is maintained on the ministry's procurement intranet website.
- The ministry will explore the purchase of videoconferencing equipment at additional locations and provide staff with appropriate training, thereby make meetings more accessible to a broad range of staff. To date, the ministry has installed videoconferencing equipment in over fifteen locations across the province.
- We will continue to convene quarterly meetings of the ministry's Accessibility Planning Working Group to monitor commitments in our annual accessibility plan and to improve accessibility for employees and the public by identifying barriers and measures to prevent or remove them.
- We will maintain a log to track and follow up on all accessibility-related inquiries.
- We will follow up on any accessibility-related issues identified through our online survey posted on our ODA-AODA intranet.
- The ministry will continue to support the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario in the implementation of the AODA.

Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed

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

Customer service

Barrier: The ministry's intranet website may contain barriers to accessibility.

Commitment: MOE is reviewing the use and design of its intranet site as a priority project stemming from the ministry's 2006 Employee Engagement Initiative. In 2007/08, MOE's intranet website will be redesigned. We will consider accessibility in the redesign of the website.

Responsibility: Communications Branch.

Timeline: Summer 2008.

Barrier: The public and staff may not be aware that the ministry's Public Information Centre and Human Resource Branch have TTY numbers.

Commitment: We will update the Government of Ontario's PACE database to ensure that the ministry's TTY numbers are published in Info-Go and the Government of Ontario Telephone Directory.

The ministry's Communications Branch and Human Resources Branch will update their letterhead and staff business cards to include TTY numbers as supplies are ordered.

The ministry will also ensure that the TTY numbers are posted on our Internet and intranet sites.

Responsibility: Communications Branch / Human Resources Branch.

Timeline: Fall 2007.

Employment accommodation

Barrier: Managers may require additional training on how to accommodate job applicants and employees with disabilities.

Commitment: We will remind new managers and supervisors through the ministry's online toolkit to complete the mandatory eLearning course available on the Centre for Leadership and Learning intranet site. We will investigate options for additional training for managers and supervisors to assist them in meeting the government's obligations under the ODA.

Responsibility: Business and Fiscal Planning Branch / Human Resources Branch.

Timeline: Summer 2008.

Communications and information

Barrier: Ministry staff may require additional training and support to make electronic documents accessible for Internet posting and email distribution.

Commitment: We will investigate options for providing training to ministry staff in key program areas on how to make electronic documents accessible.

Responsibility: Business and Fiscal Planning Branch / Communications Branch.

Timeline: Summer 2008.

Barrier: Managers and staff require ongoing information and education about the ODA-AODA and accessibility.

Commitment: We will educate managers and staff on the ODA-AODA and accessibility through a number of vehicles, such as:

- ministry's ODA-AODA intranet site;
- eMOE newsletter articles;
- accessibility planning working group meetings;
- staff updates through monthly managers meetings; and,
- presentations to management teams and staff on accessibility-related topics.

Responsibility: Business and Fiscal Planning Branch.

Timeline: Summer 2008.

Built environment

Barrier: The west wing doors at the ministry's Resources Road facility are difficult to open at times.

Commitment: Ministry facilities management staff will work with the ORC to complete an air balancing project, which will improve the operation of the doors at the Resources Road facility.

Responsibility: Business and Fiscal Planning Branch.

Timeline: Winter 2007.

Barrier: Emergency Management Ontario's "Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs" will be incorporated into the ministry's continuity of operation plan (COOP).

Commitment: COOP leads will be made aware of the guide and incorporate it as appropriate.

Further, the guide will be posted on the ministry's Emergency Management Program website and ODA-AODA intranet site.

Responsibility: Human Resources Branch / Business and Fiscal Planning Branch.

Timeline: Summer 2008.

Acts and regulations

Barrier: Existing ministry legislation should be reviewed for possible barriers to accessibility.

Commitment: The Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and its regulations will be reviewed to identify any barriers to accessibility.

Responsibility: Legal Services Branch

Timeline: Summer 2008.

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: 1-800-515-2759

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 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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