

accessibility plan



Accessibility Plan Plan d'accessibilité



Ministry of Finance

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 Finance. 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 Minister of Finance



I am very pleased to present the Ministry of Finance's 2004-05 accessibility plan. It highlights our ministry's achievements, commitments and strategies as we strive to make government services and information more accessible to all Ontarians.

The 2004-2005 accessibility plan is only one example of our government's pledge to improve the lives of the estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario with self-disclosed disabilities. In the 2004 Ontario Budget, we introduced a three-percent increase in the disability support program, and raised the maximum benefits paid to families caring for children with severe disabilities.

We will take further steps towards greater accessibility this fall, when our government will introduce measures to make the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) stronger and more effective.

People with disabilities make significant contributions to Ontario's economy and social and cultural well-being. The government is committed to working with Ontarians with disabilities on measures that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province. Our goal is to build strong, livable communities that offer a high quality of life for Ontarians of all abilities.

We are proud of our achievements thus far, and look forward to working with all Ontarians to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy full access to all that the province has to offer.

The Honourable Greg Sorbara
Minister of Finance



Report on Achievements of 2003-2004 Planning Commitments

Commitment:

Undertake another review of existing Ministry of Finance facilities to meet the new guidelines for barrier-free access being developed by the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), and ensure that all facilities continue to meet or exceed the government's accessibility standards. Identify and make plans to remove and prevent any barriers identified.

Status:

In progress pending the release of ORC barrier-free standards. All Ministry of Finance buildings meet the current building guidelines in the building code. The ministry will undertake another review of facilities once the new ORC standards are released.

Rationale:

New standards are being codified by the Ontario Realty Corporation.

Commitment:

When entering into new lease agreements for space or significantly renovating existing premises for the Ministry of Finance, ensure that facilities under consideration meet or exceed the government's accessibility standards as established by the Ontario Realty Corporation.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

All new sites continue to be evaluated against and continue to meet or exceed current accessibility standards.

Commitment:

Redesign the reception areas of both Ministry of Finance human resources branch locations (Toronto and Oshawa) to achieve greater accessibility to people with disabilities, using information collected by the accessibility planning working group.

Status:

Complete. As recommended by the accessibility planning working group; by the spring of 2004, the reception areas of both human resources branch locations are compliant with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). The reception areas are wheelchair-accessible and staffed by a receptionist to assist visitors.



Commitment:

Review public enquiry practices and services in the Ministry of Finance to identify areas for improvement in quality of service and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Status:

Complete. The Ministry of Finance's public enquiry offices have conducted reviews and implemented improvements in their structures including lowering the height of public enquiry centre counters and making the Ontario Business Connects workstations accessible to wheelchair users.

Commitment:

Assess emergency evacuation protocols for members of the public with disabilities at Ministry of Finance locations.

Status:

Complete. A section on safe evacuation procedures, including the evacuation of people requiring assistance, has been added to the Emergency Procedures Handbook for Visitors to Ministry Offices. The procedures require the employee being visited, to be responsible for the safety and well-being of their visitor. It contains explicit directions for ensuring that people with disabilities are able to get out of the building safely. The handbook will be released to Ministry of Finance staff and posted on the ministry's intranet.

Commitment:

Ensure that Ministry of Finance staff are informed of and comply with the new Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services for Obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

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:

Ensure that materials posted to the Ministry of Finance's Internet sites continue to be accessible, by: verifying content through manual checks and software; using software that supports the posting of accessible content; investigating further options to broaden accessibility; and using the office of the corporate chief strategist's proposed "ODA lab" which will include workstations, tools and software for testing accessibility by various assistive tools.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

The Ministry of Finance's Internet sites were verified through manual checks and software. As of December 31, 2002, all the ministry's Internet sites were accessible consistent with section 6 of the ODA. Information is posted in pdf and html format where technologically possible and users can request alternate formats if required. In addition, where feasible, multi-media content is made as accessible as possible through the use of such aids as transcripts. The ministry also participates on the GO WEB accessibility committee to network with other ministries regarding options to further broaden accessibility.



Commitment:

Establish learning plans for webmasters regarding adaptive technologies and accessible website design.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

Learning plans for webmasters are being updated to include training in adaptive technologies and accessible website design.

Commitment:

Continue to provide Ministry of Finance publications in alternate format as requested. Appoint an individual to coordinate the provision of documents in alternate formats. Provide Ministry of Finance staff with procedures to respond to requests for publications in accessible formats.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

Through liaison with Publications Ontario, the Ministry of Finance continues to provide documents in alternate format as requested by members of the public. The budget secretariat has been designated to be the ministry's contact area for the provision of documents in alternate formats, and a contact person has been identified. Appropriate ministry staff have been informed of the procedure to contact budget secretariat, who then contacts Publications Ontario.

Commitment:

Continue to accommodate employees with disabilities by: encouraging ongoing employee-supervisor discussions; conducting ergonomic assessments; providing support through the ministry's health and safety coordinator, the facilities management unit, and employment accommodation specialists in identifying, removing and preventing barriers; and accessing the corporate employment accommodation fund for reimbursement of costs incurred.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

The Ministry of Finance continues to accommodate employees with disabilities. In 2003-2004, this included conducting 251 ergonomic assessments, and implementing over 60 specific accommodations relating to medical referrals.



Commitment:

Conduct accessibility planning working group meetings on a regular basis to: identify, discuss and resolve accessibility issues in

partnership with the accessibility directorate; develop annual accessibility plans; monitor the implementation and effectiveness of accessibility plans; and provide regular reports to the chief administrative officer and updates to Ministry of Finance staff.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

The Ministry of Finance's accessibility planning working group, chaired by the human resources branch, meets and communicates regularly. Staff in the human resources branch maintain contact with the accessibility directorate and attend the inter-ministerial disability tax policy working group meetings. Updates are provided to the ministry's chief administrative officer as needed, and an accessibility intranet site has been established for staff information.

Commitment:

Continue to lead the inter-ministerial disability tax policy working group to facilitate information sharing on tax policy relating to people with disabilities.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

In 2003-2004, the working group met four times to discuss developments in tax policy relating to people with disabilities and related issues and concerns raised by other ministries.

Commitment:

Through ongoing communication and monitoring, continue to ensure that Ministry of Finance managers and supervisors take ODA training. Ensure that new managers and supervisors take ODA training within three months of their appointment.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

Ninety percent of current Ministry of Finance managers and supervisors have completed online ODA training. Newly-hired managers and supervisors receive notice of their obligation to complete online ODA training as well as detailed instructions on how to access the training module. Completion rates are tracked by the government's shared services bureau and provided to the ministry's human resources branch.

Commitment:

Implement accessibility evaluation protocols or processes in the ministry's business and fiscal planning or policy co-ordination units.

Status:

Complete. The ministry has implemented accessibility evaluation protocols and processes in the business and fiscal planning unit.

Commitment:

Revise internal operating proposal briefing notes to ensure that accessibility is considered in all operational planning for the year.

Status:

Complete. The ministry's corporate planning and finance branch reviews and revises operating proposal briefing notes as they are submitted. One of the areas of review is accessibility.



Commitment:

Communicate the Ministry of Finance's statement of commitment to accessibility to all staff.

Status:

Complete. The 2003-2004 Ministry of Finance/Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal joint accessibility plan, which talks about the ministries' commitment to accessibility, was publicly released on March 11, 2004. The plan has been posted on the ministries' Internet and intranet sites. An e-mail was sent to all Ministry of Finance staff announcing the release of the plan.

Commitment:

Work with the federal government to simplify and improve personal income tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

Ministry of Finance staff have met with federal staff, and continue to share information and discuss possible improvements in tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Commitment:

Review existing processes in place for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality of service, access and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Status:

Complete. The Ministry of Finance's human resources branch has reviewed existing practices and has recommended to our corporate partners that standard acknowledgement letters for recruitment candidates include some text that highlights the fact that applicants will have an opportunity to identify if they require disability-related accommodation when contacted about an upcoming job interview with the ministry. Job applicants continue to be accommodated as required.

Commitment:

Update the training for all ministry information centre agents to include a component on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA), so

that staff understand the full scope of the definition of disability as defined under ODA.

Status:

Complete. Staff on the phones in the ministry information centre are aware of protocols and use the "Bell Relay" system. The Bell Relay System allows staff without TTY to communicate with people through the use of an intermediary person at Bell Canada. They have also been briefed on the ODA and provided with a set of questions and answers for addressing the public. Further training will be provided as the need is identified.

Commitment:

Conduct an assessment of operating proposals put forward in the 2004-2005 business planning submissions to ensure accessibility has been given consideration.

Status:

Complete. All policy and resource implementation notes put forward in the initial results based plan 2004-05 to 2007-08 have been reviewed and nothing has been identified that would have an impact on accessibility.

Commitment:

Integrate accessibility improvements identified by the accessibility planning working group into the ministry's 2004-2005 business planning process.

Status:

Complete. Accessibility improvements identified by the accessibility planning working group for 2004-2005 have been incorporated into divisional plans.



Commitment:

Establish learning plans for webmasters regarding adaptive technologies and accessible website design.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe:

Learning plans for the central agencies information and information technology cluster webmasters are being updated to include training in adaptive technologies and accessible website design.

Commitment:

Develop an accessibility page on the ministry's intranet to keep staff informed of: ODA requirements; new developments and achievements; and accomplishments of the accessibility planning working group. Provide staff the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions to the accessibility planning working group.

Status:

Complete. An accessibility site was developed and implemented on the ministry's intranet. The site keeps staff informed of ODA requirements, developments and achievements, as well as the accomplishments of the accessibility planning working group. Through the intranet site, staff are provided the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions to the accessibility planning working group.



Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

Legislative Requirements

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will continue to ensure that its buildings meet or exceed the government's accessibility standards.

Action:

- Undertake another review of existing facilities to meet the new standards for barrier-free access being developed by the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), and ensure that all facilities continue to meet or exceed the government's accessibility standards.
- When entering into new lease agreements for space, ensure that facilities under consideration meet or exceed the government's accessibility standards.

Timeframe:

Review - when new ORC accessibility guidelines are released.

New lease agreements for space - ongoing.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will communicate formal processes to staff to ensure consistency and compliance with the new procurement guidelines.

Action:

- Communicate the new guidelines to staff, that explain how to ensure that goods and services are accessible.

Timeframe:

2004-05.



Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will continue to ensure that materials posted to the ministry's Internet sites are accessible to users with the most

current technology, and investigate further options to broaden accessibility.

Action:

- Post Internet information in pdf and html format where technologically possible, and provide users the opportunity to request alternate formats if required.
- Where feasible, increase the accessibility of multi-media content through the use of such aids as transcripts.
- Implement learning plans for webmasters relating to adaptive technologies and accessible web design.
- Continue to participate on the GO WEB accessibility committee to network with other ministries regarding options to further broaden accessibility.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will continue to ensure that its publications are available in alternate formats.

Action:

- Continue to liaise with Publications Ontario to provide documents in alternate format as requested by members of the public.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will continue to accommodate employees and job applicants with disabilities.

Action:

- Continue to encourage ongoing employee-supervisor discussions; provide support through the ministry's health and safety coordinator, the facilities management unit, and employment accommodation specialists in identifying, removing and preventing barriers.
- Where appropriate, access the corporate employment accommodation fund for reimbursement of costs incurred.
- Update the ministry's accessibility intranet site to ensure currency of information as required.
- Continue to ensure that current and newly-hired Ministry of Finance managers and supervisors undertake ODA training.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will develop and implement an annual accessibility plan for 2004-2005.

Action:

- Conduct accessibility planning working group meetings on a regular basis to: identify, discuss and resolve accessibility issues in partnership with the accessibility directorate.
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of accessibility initiatives; and provide regular reports to the chief administrative officer and updates to ministry staff.
- Continue to attend the inter-ministerial disability tax policy working group meetings to identify issues and best practices.
- Prepare an annual accessibility plan for the Ministry of Finance for 2004-2005.

Timeframe:

Accessibility planning and implementation - ongoing.
Release of 2004-2005 plan - fall 2004.



Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

Continue to review and enhance tax legislation as it relates to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Action:

- Continue to lead the inter-ministerial disability tax policy working group to facilitate information sharing on tax policy relating to people with disabilities.
- Ensure that all changes to and new tax legislation is reviewed with respect to its impact on people with disabilities.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

Continue to work with the federal government to simplify and improve personal income tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Action:

- Continue to meet with federal government staff to share information and discuss possible improvements in income tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Policies

Commitment:

Continue to review and enhance tax policies as they relate to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Action:

- Continue to lead the inter-ministerial disability tax policy working group to facilitate information sharing on tax policy relating to people with disabilities.
- Ensure that all changes to and new tax policies are reviewed with respect to their impact on people with disabilities.

Status:

Ongoing.



Programs and Services

Commitment:

Release the revised Emergency Procedures Handbook for Visitors to Ministry of Finance Staff and post on the ministry's intranet.

Action:

- Communicate the revised handbook, which includes a section on safe evacuation procedures, including the evacuation of people requiring assistance.
- Post on the ministry's intranet.

Timeframe:

Fall 2004.

Practices

Commitment:

Ensure that all Ministry of Finance staff are aware of how to provide better service to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, or individuals who have a hearing loss.

Action:

- Post information on the use of TTY and the Bell Relay System on the ministry's accessibility intranet site.

Timeframe:

Fall 2004.



For More Information

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

General inquiry number (905) 433-6000
TTY number: 1-800-263-7776
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Ministry of Finance website address: www.fin.gov.on.ca

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) 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.

To order a free copy of this plan in an alternate format, please contact: Alena Ingram, Budget Secretariat, at 416-325-1588.

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Queen's Printer for Ontario

ISSN 1708-3710 (Online)

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Last Modified: September 30, 2004

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