

accessibility plan



Accessibility Plan Plan d'accessibilité



Ministry of Finance

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 Finance. 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 Minister of Finance



I am very pleased to present the Ministry of Finance's 2005-2006 Accessibility Plan, which highlights our ministry's achievements, commitments and strategies as we strive to make government services and information more accessible to all Ontarians.

This past year, the Ministry of Finance met all of its 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan commitments. One of our most noteworthy accomplishments was in the area of emergency planning. Two-thirds of our employees received training on the safe evacuation of staff and visitors requiring assistance during emergency situations.

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

This government continues to take a leadership role in identifying, removing and preventing barriers through a participatory, proactive and integrated approach in the priority areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment.

Our achievements, as well as plans to make future improvements, are true testaments to our government's commitment to make Ontario communities strong, vital and accessible to the 1.5 million people with disabilities who call this province home.



The Honourable Greg Sorbara
Minister of Finance



Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments

The Ministry of Finance has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to accessibility for people with disabilities by meeting all of its 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan commitments. One of last year's commitments is in progress as it requires more than 4400 staff members to attend training sessions that include information and procedures on the safe evacuation of staff and visitors requiring assistance, including people with disabilities. The sessions, along with the other ministry initiatives included in this plan, were ways in which the ministry ensured that existing barriers were removed and new ones were not created.

Commitment:

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

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

All ministry sites including newly leased buildings have been evaluated to ensure that they meet or exceed the new barrier free standards released on November 18, 2004 by the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC).

As part of a capital repair project undertaken by ORC and Profac, the Michael Starr building located at 33 King Street West, Oshawa, underwent extensive renovations to its podium deck and perimeter sidewalks. As part of the renovations, the sidewalks were repaved with ramps, and accessible seating and tables were installed. These renovations ensured that everyone has access to the building and outdoor common areas.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) will communicate formal processes to staff to ensure consistency and compliance with new procurement guidelines

Status:

Complete



Action and Timeframe:

In response to the Management Board Secretariat (MBS) directive *Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, MOF developed an interim tool in the form of a checklist to assist staff in quickly assessing the impact of procurement decisions on people with disabilities. This checklist has prompts and questions which staff can use to help them through the process of "having regard" to accessibility for persons with disabilities when purchasing goods and services. After completing the checklist staff would know immediately if further action is required in incorporating accessibility needs to the remainder of the procurement process. A memo was sent to the appropriate staff informing them that the tool and instructions had been posted on the ministry's intranet site.

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.

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry's Internet site continues to be accessible consistent with Section 6 of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA). Information is posted in a PDF and accessible HTML format where technologically possible, and users can request alternate formats if required. In addition, multimedia content is made accessible through the use of aids such as transcripts. The ministry continues to participate on the GO WEB committee to network with other ministries regarding options to further broaden accessibility.

Web information coordinators have been provided with manuals to assist them in learning the requirements and proper procedures for creating ODA-compliant publications.



Commitment:

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

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

Through liaison with Publications Ontario, the ministry continues to provide documents in alternate formats as requested by members of the public.

Commitment:

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

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to accommodate employees with disabilities by identifying, removing and preventing accessibility barriers. This is accomplished by the coordinated efforts of employees, management, the health and safety coordinator, the Facilities Management Unit, and accommodation specialists. In 2004-2005, 160 ergonomic assessments were conducted and the required accommodations relating to medical and return to work referrals were implemented.

The ministry's Accessibility intranet site is updated, as required, to ensure that the information posted is current.

In addition, the ministry has ensured that 83.4 per cent of the ministry's current managers and supervisors have undertaken ODA training.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will develop and implement an annual Accessibility Plan for 2004-2005.

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry's accessibility working group, through on-going contact between the members, monitors the implementation and effectiveness of accessibility initiatives. The ministry's 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan, released in the fall of 2004, was posted on the ministry's Internet and intranet sites. An e-mail was sent to ministry staff announcing the release of the plan.



Commitment:

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

Status:

Complete

A representative of the accessibility-working group is also a member of the inter-ministerial disability tax policy-working group. The disability tax policy-working group meets to identify issues and best practices.

Action and Timeframe:

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

Commitment:

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

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

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

Commitment:

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

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to lead the inter-ministerial disability tax policy-working group to facilitate information sharing on tax policy relating to people with disabilities, and to ensure that new tax policies and changes to existing tax policies are reviewed with respect to their impact on people with disabilities.

Commitment:

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

Status:

In Progress

Action and Timeframe:

As of June 30, 2005, almost two thirds of the more than 4400 ministry staff attended emergency management and response training sessions. The revised *Emergency Procedures Handbook* was distributed at these sessions and is available on the ministry's intranet site. The handbook includes information on the safe evacuation of staff and visitors requiring assistance, including people with disabilities.

Rationale:

The balance of the staff will be scheduled to attend sessions in the second half of this year (2005).

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.

Status:

Complete

Action and Timeframe :

The appropriate ministry staff were sent an e-mail informing them that the ministry's Accessibility intranet site had been updated to include information on the use of TTY and the Bell Relay System. The information will assist staff in providing better customer service to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, or individuals who have a hearing loss.



Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

In the following year, the ministry intends to build on its prior accomplishments to ensure that there is a strong foundation for the development of accessibility standards in the areas of customer service, employment, communications and built environment.

Customer Service

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will inform the appropriate staff of the availability of ODA procurement tools developed by the Ministry of Government Services.

Action:

- Communicate to appropriate staff the availability of new procurement tools consisting of an on-line presentation and checklist. These tools will assist staff in their procurement planning and to help them go through the process for “having regard” to the accessibility for persons with disabilities when purchasing goods or services.

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will ensure that materials posted to the ministry's Internet sites are accessible to users with the most common 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 multimedia content through the use of such aids as transcripts.
- Participate on the GO WEB committee to network with other ministries regarding options to further broaden accessibility.

Timeframe:

2005-2006.



Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will develop and implement an annual Accessibility Plan for 2005-2006.

Action:

- Conduct accessibility planning work through ongoing contact between the Accessibility Planning Working Group Members 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.
- 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.

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Employment

Commitment:

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

Action:

- Encourage ongoing employee-supervisor discussions, and 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 information is current.
- Ensure that current and newly-hired Ministry of Finance managers and supervisors undertake ODA training.

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will ensure that new employees are informed of the proper evacuation procedures for staff and visitors who require assistance, including people with disabilities.

Action:

- Orientation programs conducted for new staff will include information on the safe evacuation of staff and visitors requiring assistance, including people with disabilities.

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Communications and Information

Commitment:

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

Action:

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

Timeframe:

2005-2006



Built Environment

Commitment:

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

Action:

- When entering into new lease agreements for program space, ensure that facilities under consideration meet or exceed the government's accessibility standards.
- When undertaking any renovations to existing or newly acquired buildings, ensure that the program space meets or exceeds the government's accessibility standards.

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will review and enhance tax legislation as it relates to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Action:

- 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 are reviewed with respect to their impact on people with disabilities.

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will work with the federal government to simplify and improve personal income tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Action:

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

Timeframe:

2005-2006

Commitment:

The Ministry of Finance will review and enhance tax policies as they relate to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Action:

- 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.

Timeframe:

2005-2006



For More Information

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

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Ministry of Finance website address: www.fin.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.

Alternate formats of this document are available free upon request from:

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