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Ministry of Education 2016 Accessibility Report

How the Ministry of Education identified and removed barriers in the Ontario Public Service in 2016.

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Executive summary

Like all ministries, Ministry of Education (EDU) complies with the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#). This regulation established phased-in requirements in the following accessibility standards:

- customer service
- information and communications
- employment
- transportation
- design of public spaces

The general requirements are:

- procurement
- training

In 2012, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) released its first multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) entitled [Accessibility in the Ontario Public Service: Leading the Way Forward](#).

Beyond the legal obligations set out in the [Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (ODA), [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA), [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) (IASR) as well as the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and other laws, the MYAP directed all ministries to assume an obligation as an employer, policy maker and service provider, and to lead by example and show the way for other organizations in Ontario.

The [2015-2016 EDU Accessibility Plan](#) was developed to align with the key MYAP goals as well as the

requirements of the individual accessibility standards. Key priorities were also developed based on feedback from a wide range of employees across the ministry (e.g., senior leaders, Ministry Divisional and Branch Accessibility Leads, Ministry Disability Advisory Council members, etc.) and the results of the 2014 Employee Survey.

Throughout 2016, EDU focused on three priority goals:

1. Developing Staff Capacity – ensuring all staff and managers have the knowledge and tools to meet accessibility requirements, actions included:
 - refreshed the ministry's intranet to include an expanded user-friendly accessibility section. The focus was on providing simpler and clearer practical information, including:
 - plain language guides to all standards
 - staff and manager to-do lists under each standard
 - links to resources on accessibility issues including training materials, guides for creating accessible documents
 - key contact information, including ministry and key enterprise contacts with responsibility for accessibility issues in procurement, human resources, legal services, facilities, etc.
 - calendar of accessibility-related events, such as conferences and workshops
 - promoted the Learning Ministries' (EDU and Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development) accessibility community of practice which shared best practices and increased staff and management awareness of accessibility legislation requirements
 - explored online methods and options for delivering regional training
 - provided managers and staff with opportunities to expand their knowledge of accessibility issues and solutions by participating in accessibility-related events
2. Strengthening Accountability – ensuring that the ministry is meeting all accessibility requirements and that there is a comprehensive and consistent approach and plan in place, actions included:
 - developed and implemented a ministry-wide accessibility tracking report and process for all AODA requirements
3. Building relationships and partnerships with staff to promote joint responsibility for accessibility obligations, actions included:
 - held focus groups with staff and managers to get input and feedback on ministry accessibility issues and progress, and ideas for improvement.
 - consulted with the chair of the OPS Disability Advisory Council on how best to implement feedback

mechanisms for clients and staff with disabilities

- consulted with ministry Disability Advisory Council representatives to gather feedback on ministry accessibility issues and progress, and ideas for improvement.

EDU's 2016 Accessibility Report demonstrates how the measures taken in 2016 support the key outcomes and deliverables of the 2012-2016 OPS MYAP.

Section one: report on measures taken by the ministry in 2016

Customer service

MYAP key outcome

People with disabilities who are OPS customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

Measures taken by EDU in 2016

The ministry continued to demonstrate leadership in accessible customer service throughout 2016.

Specific measures included:

- monitoring public feedback on accessibility issues, including online and in-person, to collect information and data for use in accessibility planning and improvements to customer service
- ensuring ministry communications materials provided an “active offer” of accommodation as per the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy
- exploring new ways of supporting participation of staff and clients with disabilities in all ministry programs and events
- ensuring all events and meetings hosted by the ministry were accessible by:
 - using accessible venues
 - using American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
 - providing closed captioning for videos
 - ensuring transcripts were available upon request
 - providing active offer of accommodation in the meeting invitation
 - ensuring accessibility services were available upon request, including wheelchair access, ASL interpreters, and costs for personal support persons if required

Staff awareness of customer service obligations under accessibility legislation, and general awareness of accessibility issues continued to be a priority for the ministry. Specific measures included:

- sending regular notices to all staff from the Chief Administrative Officer to remind staff to complete

mandatory accessibility training

- tracking staff completion of mandatory training as part of the new ministry accessibility tracking process
- promoting opportunities for staff training on accessibility obligations, including an assistive devices and technology and how to create accessible communications materials
- promoting attendance at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Speakers Series on Accessibility to foster staff understanding of the lived reality of people with disabilities working or accessing services in government and how to support a culture of accessibility and inclusion both within the government ministry and our home communities, the event was attended by over 300 staff .
- promoting information about accessibility related conferences, events and news by regularly posting to the Ministry Intranet “Inside Scoop” page; including information about World Mental Health Day, Guelph Accessibility Conference, JOIN Conference, Accessibility Innovation Showcase
- promoting “meet-ups” for Accessible Web Applications Developers.

Information and communications

MYAP key outcome

Information and communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

Measures taken by EDU in 2016

The ministry continued to ensure all communications materials, documents, websites, and technology solutions employed accessibility best practices. Specific measures included:

- redeveloping the ministry’s intranet content to make the Accessibility section more user-friendly and simpler to navigate
- linking to the OPS Information and Information Technology (I&IT) Accessibility Centre of Excellence training videos and guides
- providing plain language versions of the accessibility legislation and staff obligations under each standard
- developing accessibility-related “To Do” lists for staff and managers under each accessibility standard
- posting training information, resources and tools for staff on creating accessible documents
- promoting staff training on how to create accessible communications materials through a variety of networks, including the Applied Research Community of Practice, OPS I&IT Accessibility Centre of

Excellence and Treasury Board Secretariat, over 400 staff took this training in 2016

- promoting corporately-developed tip sheets and guides, as well as in-person training delivered by Treasury Board Secretariat on how to create accessible documents
- promoting a “Creating Accessible Documents” guide developed in partnership with other ministries and the ministry’s communications branch as the new ministry-wide standard
- developing and promoting a placemat listing all OPS Training and Resource Options for Learning How to Create Accessible Documents
- developing a series of articles to raise staff awareness about the importance of accessible communications and tips on how to create accessible documents
- ensuring all communications materials posted on the ministry website are accessible and met the Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA Standard
- ensuring ministry communications materials provided an “active offer” of the availability of accessible formats upon request
- ensuring all new video productions and digital resources were closed captioned, and contained descriptive captioning for pictures in videos and presentations
- including American Sign Language (ASL) video translations of web content for people who are hearing impaired
- launching a langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ) version of the Provincial Schools Branch external website to provide accessible information to staff, students and parents, and posted intranet content to provide accessible information on employee policies
- French Language Education Policy and Programs Branch initiated a working group with Centre Jules-Leger to re-write and adapt existing langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ) curriculum
- publishing educational guides and curricula in accessible formats, including:
 - classical studies and international languages, Grades 9-12
 - First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies, Grades 9-12
 - Kindergarten Program
- continuing to ensure materials posted on EduGAINS are accessible; EduGAINS is an EDU website which provides ministry-developed resources for teachers to support improved learning and teaching for Grades K–12

Provincial Schools Branch undertook a number of measures in 2016, including:

- continuing to work with the Education Quality and Accountability Office to produce accessible versions of assessments that are used in the Provincial Schools and school boards across the province

- making available on the provincial schools' network, CANVRS – a video relay service which enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to connect with voice telephone users via video over the internet; working with OPS colleagues to carry out testing and verification with the use of this product over the OPS province-wide network; positive results were reported
- continuing to offer a pilot SKYPE project to provide SKYPE video communications on OPS computers to allow for abbr title="American Sign Language">ASL communications by staff who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Community Services I&IT Cluster undertook the following measures:

- AODA Task Force Committee held eight meetings in 2016 to discuss accessibility-related issues
- collaborated with I&IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence, Corporate Accessibility Team, OPS Web Coordinators Committee to identify best practices for accessibility

Employment

MYAP key outcome

OPS employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures taken by EDU in 2016

The ministry continued to commit to providing barrier-free access to all ministry employees. Specific measures included:

- promoting enterprise-wide communications about the Ontario Public Service requirements under the Employment Standard, including the mandatory e-course on the Employment Standard “IASR - Employment Standards”, sharing with managers and staff through memos from senior management, and by posting information on the ministry intranet
- expanding training to include specific training for managers and staff in Human Resources (HR) on accessibility issues and employer obligations, such as training on accommodations procedures in the new HROntario's comprehensive Disability Support Strategy
- sharing all HROntario developed tools, resources and guidelines related to employment obligations under the accessibility legislation through memos from the Chief Administrative Officer
- ensuring all employee accommodations addressed the accessibility needs of staff
- advising all candidates of their right to accommodation during the job recruitment process
- advising managers of their accessibility obligations
- supporting ministry staff enrolled in the Diversity Mentoring Partnership Program

The ministry continued to promote mental health issues, including providing mental health information and

training, and promoting awareness of the new corporate resources available on the OPS Human Resources intranet.

During the 6th year of the Diversity Career Champions Program (formally the Diversity Mentorship Partnership Program), there were 84 participants in total, which includes 50 from EDU. This program is designed to provide an inclusive environment for reciprocal learning in which mentors and employee partners engage in honest, open and meaningful dialogue about diversity, accessibility, and inclusion.

Design of public spaces

MYAP key outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

Measures taken by EDU in 2016

The ministry continued to be committed to making the built environment accessible and barrier-free.

Specific measures included:

- ministry staff worked with Infrastructure Ontario and facilities staff to improve accessibility and ensure barrier-free design standards on an ongoing basis
- the Leadership and Learning Environment Division's Employee Engagement Team reviewed alternative workstations for staff where needed
- continued with upgrades and refurbishment of Provincial Demonstration Schools to improve accessibility
- French Language Education and Policy and Programs Branch established an internal advisory team to discuss the needs of employees with disabilities
- Provincial Schools Branch:
 - conducted an accessibility study, in partnership with Infrastructure Ontario, across their campuses and buildings to assess their accessibility; the results of the study will allow them to ensure that the unique needs of their staff and students are addressed, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind or have low vision
 - completed design for barrier-free access of the auditorium stage in Sir James Whitney School for the deaf – this will allow easy access to the stage for individuals who use wheelchairs
 - completed design of an IP telephone system which will include video calling capability for deaf users at the Sir James Whitney School
 - initiated design of an accessible running track at the W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind, which will incorporate barrier-free access to an existing location that is currently

inaccessible to people in wheelchairs, or who are blind and without an escort; design features include high contrast running lanes to assist low vision participants

- upgraded several school and residential buildings to install automatic door openers and widen door openings
- constructed a student teaching kitchen at W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind, which included barrier-free design, and an innovative CCTV system to allow the teacher to magnify the in-class work being demonstrated through the use of video and large screens, for students who are blind or have low vision
- purchased and deployed evacuation chairs across all sites to aid in the emergency evacuation of persons who use a wheelchair or other mobility assisting device
- upgraded London and Brantford public address systems for enhanced functionality and coverage
- installed notification strobe lights in the Larch Street OPS building in Sudbury for employees who are deaf

General outcomes

MYAP key outcome

OPS staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility, in OPS policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures taken by EDU in 2016

As part of the ministry's initiatives to promote compliance with ODA and AODA requirements, the ministry undertook the following measures:

Leadership

- ensuring that the ministry's Deputy Minister had accessibility commitments in his Performance Plan

The ministry continues to work in partnership with OPS partners to advance the accessibility agenda including:

- working in partnership with OPS Diversity Office and Ministry Accessibility Leads to promote awareness of the accessibility requirements, and to share best practices
- providing feedback to the OPS IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence on the review of its intranet resources
- providing feedback to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario regarding web compliance information
- becoming a member of the International Association of Accessibility Professionals and sharing

relevant information with ministry staff

- undertaking research to support the work of the Information and Communications Standard Development Committee
- working in partnership with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development to develop a new Education Standard under the AODA

Funding

- the ministry continues to fund diverse education, parent and equity stakeholders to support implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and Parent Engagement Policy
- Transfer Payment Agreements continues to stipulate that products are to be accessible

Students with special needs/special education

The ministry undertook the following specific measures to support students:

- developed a dedicated provincial alternative curriculum for students who did not have access to the provincial curriculum to provide consistency and uniformity of programming and assessment for all students, and to remove barriers to access to education for students with special needs
- developed continuous improvement of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and transition plans to help students with special needs access education and transition to higher levels of education and learning
- published a comprehensive guide to Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12, to set out the policies and requirements that govern special education programs and services in publically-funded elementary and secondary schools to ensure consistency across Ontario, and removed barriers to access to special education programs and services

Section two: addressing the identification of barriers in legislation and implementation frameworks

Introduction

In 2005, the government introduced the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, with the goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. In support of this goal, the government subsequently committed to review Ontario legislation to identify and address accessibility barriers, and undertook a coordinated review of 51 statutes considered to have a high impact on persons with disabilities.

As a result of this review, the government made changes to 11 statutes spread across seven ministries to ensure that Ontario laws better reflect accessibility considerations. The changes to the 11 statutes were included in the government's 2016 Budget bill, which received Royal Assent on April 19, 2016.

Each ministry continues to be responsible for identifying and addressing barriers in their legislation and the policies and programs through which that legislation is implemented, and for reporting on results through its accessibility report.

Our ministry remains committed to the goal of ensuring that Ontario legislation and implementation frameworks do not create barriers to persons with disabilities.

Measures in place in 2016

The following measures are in place to assess our ministry’s proposals for new Acts, regulations, policies, programs and services to determine their effect on persons with disabilities:

- the Legal Services Branch continues to provide advice for the purpose of identifying and avoiding potential barriers to persons with disabilities in proposed statutes and regulations, and whenever amendments are proposed to existing legislation

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Related

[Ministry 2016 Accessibility Plans](#)

[2012-2016 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#)

[A guide to accessibility directives and policies in the Ontario Public Service](#)

[Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2015 Annual Status Report](#)

[Ontario Regulation 191/11 , Integrated Accessibility Standards](#)

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