

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

*2003-2004
Accessibility Plan*



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Introduction

In 2001, there were an estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario with self-disclosed disabilities. This number is expected to increase as the population ages.

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 programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. The plans must be made available to the public.

In the Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 20, 2003, the Ontario government confirmed its commitment to working with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

This document is the first annual accessibility plan for the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. The plan describes improvements to accessibility that the ministry has made to date and its commitments for the balance of the 2003-2004 fiscal year.

Report on Achievements

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities already undertakes a number of activities that support its commitment to the accessibility provisions of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA.)

Policies and procedures have long been in place to ensure ministry staff, job applicants, and others with a range of disabilities receive the accommodation required. Ergonomic assessments are provided to staff, upon request, as are electronic and alternative format versions of human resources and learning materials. Members of the public have multiple ways to access ministry information, products and services through the ministry website, TTY and web phone. Ministry publications are also provided in accessible formats, such as Braille, upon request.

In providing services to the public, the ministry has established guidelines for agencies providing Job Connect to ensure that services are delivered in an accessible facility or, where services are not accessible, that the agency has a plan to accommodate people with disabilities in an accessible location. In addition, all agencies must have community links with the Ontario Disability Support program.

The ministry's Literacy and Basic Skills unit has developed an online learning tool designed to meet the needs of learners who are deaf.

Over the past year, the ministry has continued to build on measures already taken to improve accessibility and opportunities for people with a range of disabilities. It has also undertaken several new initiatives to improve accessibility for its employees and the public.

To meet commitments under the Act, the ministry has established an accessibility planning team and ensured that managers have completed training on the requirements of the ODA.

Ministry Internet sites have been made accessible to people with disabilities, as required under Section 6 of the ODA, with the sites now meeting the Web Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium.

Commitments and Strategies for 2003-2004

Over the next year, the ministry will build on efforts already taken to improve opportunities for, and accessibility to, people with disabilities. In addition, the ministry will put mechanisms in place to ensure that the impact on accessibility is considered in key ministry processes, including policy and program development, communications and event planning.

A central part of the ministry's work will be to continue to ensure the ministry's website is fully accessible to people with a range of disabilities. As well, the ministry will continue to broaden the many ways its information, products and services can be accessed through such tools as web phone, TTY, Braille and other alternative formats, upon request.

The ministry will also continue to take measures to ensure that staff are increasingly aware of disability issues and have the knowledge and skills required to provide good customer service to people with disabilities.

Methods to be taken to prevent new barriers

During the 2003-04 fiscal year, the ministry will undertake a number of activities to ensure that its proposals for new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services are assessed for their potential effect on people with disabilities. These activities include:

- establishing a process to assess progress made on its Annual Accessibility Plan;
- developing mechanisms to review new policies, programs and communications initiatives to ensure accessibility;
- monitoring the ministry's website to ensure it continues to be fully accessible; and
- building on measures already taken to increase the accessibility of the ministry's Intranet site for employees.

Business area to be reviewed

Acts and Regulations

The ministry will review 19 acts that establish Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology and all universities and their foundations to ensure the appropriate use of language with respect to people with disabilities and to identify any barriers to people with disabilities. The acts are:

Act Establishing Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology

Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c.8, Sched. F

Ontario Public Acts Establishing Public Universities

Brock University Act, S.O. 1964, C. 127 as amended

The Carleton University Act, 1952, S.O. 1952, c.117 as amended

The University of Guelph Act, S.O. 1964, c.120

The Lakehead University Act, S.O. 1965, c.54

The Laurentian University of Sudbury Act, 1960, S.O. 1960, c.151

The McMaster University Act, 1976, S.O. 1976, c.98

Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002, S.O. c.8, Sched. E

University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c.8, Sched. O as amended

The University of Ottawa Act, 1965, S.O. 1965, c.137

Ryerson University Act, 1977, S.O. 1977, c.47 as amended

The University of Toronto Act, 1971, S.O. 1971, c.56 as amended

The Trent University Act, 1962-63, S.O. 1962-63, c.192

The University of Waterloo Act, 1972, S.O. 1972, c. 200

University of Western Ontario Act, 1982, S.O. 1982, c.92 as amended

The Wilfrid Laurier University Act, 1973, S.O. 1973, c.87 as amended

The University of Windsor Act, S.O. 1962-63, c.194 as amended

The York University Act, 1965, S.O. 1965, c.143

Act Establishing University Foundations

University Foundations Act, 1992, c.22 as amended

Policies and Programs

The ministry will build on its current practices to ensure that the impact on accessibility is considered in all new and ongoing policy and program development.

Human Resources

The ministry will review its Orientation Program for employees to ensure information on staff rights to accommodation, the managers' responsibility for accommodation and any associated mandatory training, is developed and included in all new packages. This will also involve a review of the ministry's Intranet site to ensure that information on employee accommodation is clear and current.

As well, the ministry will review its youth marketing initiative for the recruitment of young people into the Ontario Public Service to identify any barriers to access of materials, presentation, and locations.

Internal Information Technology (IT) Services

The ministry will review its IT advisory services to ensure that accessibility is considered in the procurement of software and applications for ministry branches. As well, it will review its IT Help Desk for services to staff with disabilities.

Internal Communications

The ministry will ensure accessibility is considered in the development of a new ministry E-Mail Guide.

Practices and Services

The ministry will build on its current services to the public by ensuring that all front-line and telecommunications staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide good customer service to people with a broad range of disabilities.

Services to the Public

The ministry will build on the current accessibility practices of ministry field offices and identify priority areas for improved accessibility in facilities and communications over the long term.

The ministry will conduct focus groups with reception, frontline, public inquiry and JobGrow and Training Hotline staff to assess their level of knowledge about accessibility issues, the use of various alternative communication tools and the skills needed to provide good customer service to persons with disabilities. A plan will be developed by the ministry to respond to any identified training needs.

Actions to be taken

Improve staff awareness of disability issues

Over the next two years, a Staff Awareness and Education Campaign will be developed to raise overall knowledge of disability issues and how to remove barriers for the public and for staff.

This will include the development of a Ministry Accessibility Awareness Intranet site where staff can access information such as fact sheets, quick tips, resource lists, and other information links on how to serve people with disabilities, as well as new guidelines on procurement and accessibility, and how to respond to requests for publications in accessible formats.

As well, “Lunch N Learn” sessions will be provided to staff on disability issues, disability awareness will be incorporated into all staff meetings, and articles about serving people with disabilities will be developed for the ministry’s internal electronic newsletter the *Gazette*.

Improve accessibility in facilities

The ministry will build on existing procedures already in place to continue to improve emergency evacuation processes for people with disabilities.

Improved accessibility in communications

The ministry will develop communication protocols to ensure that all public invitations and promotions of ministry meetings and events include a statement offering accommodation upon request.

Improved accessibility in technology

The ministry will purchase new software to support the creation of accessible public web pages. It will also develop a new, accessible template for the ministry’s Intranet site. The following actions will be taken:

- support and advice will be provided to branches in their implementation of the new accessible Intranet template;
- updates and information on accessibility issues will be provided to staff involved in Intranet development;
- the ministry *Guide to Web Publishing* will be updated to include information on accessibility to Intranet developers;
- all new web pages will continue to be reviewed for accessibility by the ministry’s website coordinator before posting; and
- an accessibility checklist will be developed for general software and applications to ensure that all new information technology purchases support the widest accessibility.

For more information

Questions or comments about the ministry's accessibility plan are always welcome.
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Visit the Ministry of Citizenship's 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.

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