

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

*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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU). 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 the Minister



With passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario is striving to be a world leader in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

Our government continues to take a leadership role in identifying, removing and preventing barriers and will continue to improve accessibility in the priority areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment. Building on past progress and accomplishments, we are laying the foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will ensure real and effective change takes place.

At the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we work every day to ensure that all Ontarians have opportunities to pursue the education and training programs that allow them to participate fully in our growing economy.

In 2004-05, this ministry demonstrated continued leadership in improving accessibility to education and training programs by establishing the Postsecondary Advisory Committee on Disability Issues. As the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I am pleased to chair this committee which will provide advice on strategies to support increased participation and academic success of individuals with disabilities in higher education.

It is important that the OPS lead by example in building on our successes and achievements and in becoming an accessible and inclusive employer and service provider.

The achievements highlighted in this year's plan, as well as the commitments to make further improvements in the coming year, demonstrate this ministry's efforts to support the government's commitment to make Ontario's communities strong, vital and accessible to people of all abilities.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Christopher Bentley
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005

Planning Commitments

Over the past year, the ministry continued to make progress on improving accessibility for persons with disabilities. The ministry's commitments and accomplishments for 2004-05 include:

Commitment:

Build on existing acts and regulations to improve barrier free accessibility in ministry buildings.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

- On an ongoing basis, design proposals are reviewed to ensure that barrier free requirements in all acts and regulations are met in ministry buildings.
- As part of the ministry's *Emergency Evacuation Procedures*, developed in 2004-05, all ministry directors are required to provide a cell phone/walkie talkie and assistance to employees requiring special assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Commitment:

Implement the Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

- In June 2005, Management Board Secretariat made available to all Ontario Public Service (OPS) employees, on its website, new tools for procurement, including:
 - o An e-tutorial on *Guidelines for Implementing Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001)*
 - o A *Procurement Requirements Checklist*, which provides employees with an easy-to-use tool for having regard to accessibility for persons with disabilities when purchasing goods or services
 - o Qs & As (Questions & Answer) about accessibility in the procurement, by OPS employees, of goods and services.
- To heighten ministry staff awareness of accessibility in procurement, the MBS procurement materials were posted on the ministry's internal website and communicated to staff.
- The ministry made training presentations to ministry staff on procurement policies and practices including ODA requirements.

Commitment:

Build on the 2003-04 commitment to develop a checklist for software and applications dedicated to accessibility solutions.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The checklist was developed and is available to ministry staff.

Commitment:

Ensure that the ministry intranet and website meet or exceed accessibility requirements by carrying out the following measures:

- Provide ongoing expertise, quality assurance measures and advice on achieving compliance with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)
- Carry out tests, as required, of community service cluster websites to ensure compliance with the Act
- Ensure that new web pages are accessible as defined by the Act
- Provide updates and information on accessibility issues to staff who develop intranet sites
- Implement the accessible intranet template ministry-wide
- Review new web pages to ensure they are accessible
- Update the software used for creating accessible web pages
- Purchase new/upgrades to software to create accessible web pages
- Ensure that the *Guide to Web Publishing* contains current accessibility guidelines.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

All of the items listed above are carried out on an ongoing basis to ensure the ministry intranet and the website are accessible to people with disabilities.

Commitment:

Ensure that publications are available in alternate formats.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

The ministry continues to ensure that publications posted on its website are accessible to all.

Commitment:

Communicate to institutions that receive capital funding of the requirement to ensure that facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. In the *Guidelines and Requirements for the Funding of Capital Projects* that are part of the facilities renewal and major capital support programs, institutions are advised that, "Funding provided through this program is intended to be used to supplement the institution's own facilities and deferred maintenance programs to undertake repairs to existing facilities, including, improvements to remove accessibility barriers to people with disabilities and water system improvements."

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

Through the Facilities Renewal Program (FRP), postsecondary institutions receive funding to be used to supplement the institution's own facilities and deferred maintenance programs and to repair existing facilities, including improvements to remove accessibility barriers to persons with disabilities. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that their facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Commitment:

All new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services will be assessed with respect to their impact on persons with disabilities.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:**Regulations**

The Ontario Student Loans Regulations (268/01 and R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 774) were amended to include the Medical Loan Forgiveness Program. Under this program, the minister may terminate individuals' obligations to repay Ontario Student Loan debt if they have permanent disabilities that will substantially reduce their earning capacity for their expected lifetime, and would incur exceptional hardship to repay the loan.

Programs and Services

Actions within the ministry's training programs include:

- In Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS):
 - o The LBS Program provided support to approximately 368 Deaf adult literacy learners through eight service delivery agencies operating through 14 sites in 2004-05. This includes four LBS sites which are operated by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) specifically for adult learners who are Deaf/blind.
 - o The ministry, in partnership with the National Literacy Secretariat, has funded a number of research and development projects related to learning disabilities issues.
- The Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund (AEF) invests \$10 million annually so that Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology delivering apprenticeship training programs

will have the opportunity to acquire up-to-date equipment, update facilities, and support increased apprenticeship placements. AEF funding can also be used to assist colleges in purchasing equipment to assist persons with disabilities who are receiving apprenticeship training. In 2004-05, Fanshawe College used AEF funding to purchase laptop computers with specialized software. The laptops were loaned to apprentices with learning disabilities or text-based related learning problems to support apprenticeship in-classroom training. Specialized work benches have also been purchased.

Commitment:

Consider the accessibility needs of people with disabilities when policies and programs are developed.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

On an ongoing basis, new submissions are reviewed to ensure that barriers to people with disabilities are addressed.

Commitment:

Continue to build on employment practices and processes to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities.

Status: Either completed or in progress as indicated below

Action and Timeframe:

- The ministry's employee orientation package has a component on accessibility for all employees; the manager's orientation package contains a tip sheet on what accessibility means and the manager's role in ensuring employees have access to supports. (Completed)
- Applicants in the ministry's recruitment process are supported with information in accessibility/alternate formats. (Completed)
- The Ministry of Government Services' computer-based learning on accessibility, *Maximizing the Contribution of Employees' with Disabilities*, is communicated to and offered to all managers/supervisors. (Completed)
- The ministry's human resources website is being re-designed to clarify links (information and links on the existing site are under Accommodation). (In Progress)
- The ministry's human resources website design format is in compliance with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001) accessibility format. (Completed)
- Outreach material for external recruitment, which is under development, will be in accessible formats. (In Progress)

Commitment:

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.

Status: Ongoing

Commitment:

Provide staff with a new e-mail guide that includes information on best practices in e-mail communications.

Status: In progress

Ministry staff have conducted research with respect to email best practices, including practices for accessible email communications. Based on that research, staff have developed a plan and are proceeding to draft a guide for internal use. The new guide will be completed during the month of September and a final draft will be presented by early October.

Commitment:

Raise staff awareness of accessibility issues and how to remove barriers for the public and staff.

Status: Completed

Action and Timeframe:

Initiatives undertaken by the ministry in 2004-05 to raise staff awareness include;

- A staff “Lunch & Learn” session with an invited guest speaker, Catherine Frazee, who has lectured and published extensively in Canada and abroad on issues related to disability rights, disability culture and the disability experience. The session topic was Accommodation: More than a Hotel Room. The session addressed: How does the “Duty to Accommodate” affect me? What is it and how does it matter?
- The United Nations designated December 3, 2004 as International Day of Disabled Persons. Its theme for the year “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” is based on the goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities. On December 1, an article, published in the ministry’s internal newsletter, the *Gazette*, challenged each employee to consider whether there is one thing they can do at home or in their community to help remove barriers and improve awareness of persons with disabilities and to take action. Some of the ideas included in the article were:
 - o Thank a store-owner or proprietor for installing an accessibility feature (e.g., Braille markings on elevators, electric doors).
 - o Write a letter to a community or entertainment centre that needs to pay more attention to accessibility issues.
 - o Start or support a “circle of friends” for someone in your community who has a disability. Find ways to help that person participate as fully in community life as they would like.

Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

This section presents the ministry's plan, including new commitments and initiatives, for the coming year.

Customer Service

Programs and Services

Commitment:

The ministry will provide support to the newly-established Postsecondary Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (PACDI) with the mandate of providing advice to the Minister on:

- o Education-related disability issues affecting publicly-funded postsecondary students with disabilities to ensure impact of ministry's funding can be maximized
- o Priority disability-related research initiatives.

Timeframe: Throughout 2005-06.

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to:

- o Fund research projects, alone and in partnership with the National Literacy Secretariat, that relate to literacy and adults with disabilities
- o Provide research and development funding to Goal Ontario Literacy for the Deaf (GOLD) to design and deliver on-demand supportive training for LBS practitioners who work with persons who are Deaf/Deafblind.

Timeframe: 2005-06

Commitment:

Review the training package, "May I Help You" - Welcoming Customers with Disabilities, developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, and determine how it can best be used within the ministry. The package is to be used to deliver a workshop on providing services to customers with disabilities. The purpose of the workshop is to raise the level of disability awareness and increase the knowledge of staff about how they can meet the needs of their customers with disabilities.

Timeframe: By March 2006

Procurement

Commitment:

Continue to incorporate the *Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services* into the ministry's procurement of goods and services.

Action:

Continue to make training presentations to ministry staff on procurement policies and practices, including ODA requirements.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

Provide on-going expertise, quality assurance measures and consultation to ministry staff on ODA issues associated with Information and Information Technology (I&IT).

Action:

- Maintain expertise and currency with software and applications designed to facilitate persons with disabilities in their day-to-day work activities.
- Investigate I&IT accessibility-related technology used in the Ministry of Education's (EDU) provincial schools to determine its possible use in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU).

Timeframe: Ongoing

Commitment:

Investigate partnering with other ministries to leverage existing accessibility initiatives related to Information and Information Technology.

Action:

Research SNOW (Special Needs Opportunity Window), which is an information technology application used in EDU's Provincial Schools, for possible partnership opportunities with TCU and other ministries.

Timeframe: By March 2006

Commitment:

Continue to ensure that the ministry intranet and website meet or exceed accessibility requirements by carrying out the following measures:

- Continue to obtain feedback from stakeholders regarding the accessibility of the ministry websites
- Provide ongoing expertise, quality assurance measures and advice on achieving compliance with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

- Carry out tests, as required, of community service cluster websites to ensure compliance with the Act
- Ensure that new web pages are accessible as defined by the Act
- Provide updates and information on accessibility issues to staff who develop intranet sites
- Implement the accessible intranet template ministry-wide
- Review new web pages to ensure they are accessible
- Update the software used for creating accessible web pages
- Purchase new/upgrades to software to create accessible web pages
- Ensure that the guide to web publishing contains current accessibility guidelines.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Employment

Commitment:

Continue to build on managers' and employees' awareness of employment practices to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Action:

Initiatives will include:

- A Lunch & Learn series on accessibility that would include the following topics:
 - Accommodation, building on the initial session held earlier in the year on what accommodation means, why it matters and how "duty to accommodate" affects each individual
 - Accessibility aspects of return to work requirements.
- On-going enhancement of the human resources website related to accessibility, including communication to managers and employees of information to be found on site
- Communication to managers regarding the Ministry of Government Services-developed computer-based learning module on accessibility
- Incorporating accessibility principles into performance and learning planning support materials for managers.

Timeframe: Throughout 2005-06

Commitment:

Maintain the current checklist of software and applications, developed in 2004-05, designed to facilitate persons with disabilities in their day-to-day work activities. In addition, explore the feasibility of developing an OPS-wide available checklist.

Timeframe: 2005-06

Communications and Information

Commitment:

Continue to ensure that ministry publications are available in alternate formats.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Built Environment

Commitment:

Continue to review design proposals for ministry buildings to ensure that barrier free requirements in all acts, regulations, guidelines and standards, including the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities released in October 2004, are met.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

All new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services will be assessed with respect to their impact on persons with disabilities.

Timeframe: Ongoing

For More Information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: 416-325-2929 or 1-800 number: 1-800-387-5514

TTY/TTD number: 1-800-263-2892

E-mail: info@edu.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.edu.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.

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