

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

***2006-07
Accessibility Plan***

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Introduction

In June 2005, the Ontario government took a strong stand on accessibility when it passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) into law.

The AODA lays out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of new, mandatory accessibility standards for some of the most important aspects of people's lives.

The first two standards that are currently being developed cover the areas of transportation and customer service. On June 13, the first anniversary of the passage of the AODA, the government announced the development of three new standards that will address information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

While the government is moving forward to implement the AODA, there will be a transition period where government and the broader public sector will continue to meet their 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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 mean real and effective change.

This document is the fourth annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It highlights the achievements of the 2005-06 plan and outlines the commitments for 2006-07 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 commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province where people of all abilities have a chance to fully achieve their potential.

NOTE: The information in this Accessibility Plan is current as of August 1, 2006.

Message from the Minister



I am very pleased to provide you with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 2006-07 Accessibility Plan.

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, requires all public sector and broader public sector organizations to have an annual Accessibility Plan and to make it available to the public.

This year marks the first anniversary of the landmark *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, (AODA)--legislation that will foster the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

To celebrate this milestone, our government recently announced that we will develop new accessibility standards for communications and information, the built environment, and employment. This is in addition to standards already being developed which deal with customer service and transportation.

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.

My ministry is committed to improving accessibility through identifying, removing and preventing barriers. This involves working within our ministry, across government and with our stakeholders in key areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment.

Within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we are building on the success of our previous three plans and continuing to look for ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities who come into contact with this ministry, regardless of whether they are staff, members of the general public or ministry stakeholders.

In particular, the ministry continues to work to better educate staff on accessibility and will work to raise awareness of disability issues among staff, particularly management staff, during 2006-07. In addition, the ministry will continue to support our delivery partners in their efforts to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

If you have any comments or concerns, I encourage you to send them using the contact information located at the end of this document.

Sincerely,

Chris Bentley
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities

Report on 2005-06 Achievements

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.

Status: On-going.

Action:

Document has been reviewed; an action plan to utilize the document has been prepared and will be reviewed by senior staff of both ministries.

Commitment:

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

Status: On-going.

Action:

Procurement staff have addressed the ODA in training sessions during 2005-06 and have continually reinforced ODA requirements in all procurement processes carried out during the year.

Commitment:

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

Status: On-going.

Action:

I & IT staff will continue to explore, research and share knowledge gained regarding digital tools developed for special needs across the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Education.

Commitment:

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

Status: On-going.

Action:

I & IT continues to develop a deeper understanding of Special Needs Opportunity Windows (SNOW), an information technology used in Provincial Schools, and its resources so that materials available through this government-supported resource can be added to the resources available to OPS employees.

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 website;
- 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 and
- ensure that the Guide to Web Publishing contains current accessibility guidelines.

Status: On-going.

Action:

All items listed are carried out on an ongoing basis.

Commitment:

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

Status: On-going.

Action:

A Lunch & Learn took place, featuring Catherine Frazee, Co-director, Ryerson RBC Institute for Disability Studies Research and Education, and former Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The website maintains compliance with accessibility commitments. Accessibility is highlighted in the “Spotlight” section, which links to a page that includes the ministries’ ODA plans, as well as information on Equal Opportunity and Human Rights. There is also an enhanced “shadow site” ready for launch as soon as directed.

A one-page summary of the ministry’s Accessibility Plan was created and shared with the collective bargaining agents. This summary has been incorporated into the ministries’ orientation package and/or posted on the web page that houses the full plans.

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.

Status: On-going.

Action:

The checklist developed to support OPS ODA clients in their day-to-day work environment continues to be upgraded and fine-tuned.

I&IT will continue to seek strategies that will allow for the development of ODA-compliant materials to support employees OPS-wide.

I & IT continue to ensure that hardware and software supporting OPS clients in their work environment is fully ODA-compliant.

Commitment:

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

Status: On-going.

Action:

The ministries are continuing to ensure that publications posted on the ministries' websites are accessible to all.

Commitment:

Build on existing acts and regulations, guidelines and standards, including the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities released in October 2004 to improve barrier accessibility in ministry buildings.

Status: On-going.

Action:

All designers, architects and engineers were advised that, as part of the contract agreement, the final design must meet ODA accessibility requirements, including the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities, over and above the existing acts and regulations, guidelines and standards.

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:

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

Status: On-going.

Action:

During 2005-06, the Postsecondary Advisory Committee on Disabilities held three full committee meetings. In addition, each of the three sub-committees (Research, Pathways/Transitions and Student Financial Assistance) met several times to develop short-, medium- and long-term priorities for the Minister.

Commitment:

The ministry will continue to:

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

Status: The GOLD project has been completed

In addition to the 2005-06 commitments

Under the Access and Opportunity Strategy, which is a key component of the Reaching Higher Plan, additional funding was provided to colleges and universities and other partners to support students with disabilities.

2006-07 Commitments—Measures to Prevent New Barriers

During 2006-07, the ministry commits to assess any new Acts or Regulations to ensure that they are compliant with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

As a result of the signed intergovernmental agreements, federal employees transferring to the province will become employees of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on January 1, 2007. Ministry staff will work with their federal partners to identify steps necessary to equip transferring federal employees to implement the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. An action plan will be developed for implementation.

The ministry will also review its customer service practices, in preparation for the implementation of the Customer Service Standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

2006-07 Commitments—Barriers to be Addressed

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities commits to identifying, removing and preventing barriers to persons with disabilities during 2006-07. This section summarizes the commitments.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Barrier: There is a potential barrier that persons with disabilities may not have access to internet and/or print information developed by the ministry.

Commitment: The ministry will continue to ensure that the ministry intranet and website meet or exceed accessibility requirements.

Responsibility: Communications Branch.

Timeline: On-going.

Barrier: There is a potential barrier that persons with disabilities may not have access to information.

Commitment: The ministry will continue to ensure that ministry publications are available in alternate formats on the website.

Responsibility: Communications Branch.

Timeline: On-going.

Barrier: There is a potential barrier that managers and employees may not have all the skills, knowledge and attitudes to address barriers faced by customers/clients with disabilities.

Commitment: See Employment Accommodation.

Responsibility: See Employment Accommodation.

Timeline: On-going.

EMPLOYMENT ACCOMMODATION

Barrier: There is the potential barrier that managers may be not fully aware of the requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* or of how to accommodate employees with disabilities.

Commitment: The ministry will continue to build on ministry managers' and employees' awareness of employment practices to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. Specifically, the ministry will:

- strongly encourage all managers and supervisory staff to complete the on-line training module, *The Ontarians with Disabilities Act—Maximizing the Contributions of Employees with Disabilities*;
- develop and implement a communications effort, stressing that knowledge of the ODA and the AODA can both improve internal and external service and can avoid complaints by staff and customers;
- design and implement a web-enabled survey of all ministry staff, based on *May I Help You* to promote awareness, with survey results also serving as a “baseline” against which to evaluate progress;
- design and encourage managers and employees to participate in learning opportunities, based on *May I Help You* and
- make available more intensive training sessions, if requested by senior staff.

Responsibility: Corporate Coordination Office, with the support of the Human Resources Branch and Communications Branch.

Timeline: Beginning in November, 2006 and on-going.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Barrier: There is a potential that ministry staff will not have current information and information technology resources.

Commitment: The ministry will provide on-going expertise, quality assurance measures and consultation to ministry staff on ODA issues associated with Information and Information Technology (I&IT). The ministry will maintain the current checklist of software and applications, developed in 2004-05, designed to facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities in day-to-day work activities. In addition, the ministry will explore the feasibility of developing an OPS-wide available checklist. The ministry will investigate partnering with other ministries to leverage existing accessibility initiatives related to Information and Information Technology.

Responsibility: I&IT.

Timeline: On-going.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Barrier: There is the potential barrier that ministry facilities will not be accessible.

Commitment: The ministry will ensure that the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities released in October 2004 to improve barrier-free accessibility in ministry buildings, are implemented. The ministry will undertake the same diligence with respect to the renewal of rental agreements to ensure that existing ministry properties are accessible.-

Responsibility: Corporate Finance and Services Branch, Service and Facilities Unit.

Timeline: On-going.

ACTS AND REGULATIONS

Barrier: There is the potential barrier that Acts, Regulations and the implementation of OPS Directives, Policies and Procedures may not be in compliance with the ODA.

Commitment: The ministry will ensure that Acts, Regulations, Guidelines and Standards reflect the principles of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

Responsibility: Legal Services Branch.

Timeline: On-going.

Commitment: The ministry will continue to adhere to the Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services.

Responsibility: Corporate Finance and Services Branch, Service and Facilities Unit.

Timeline: On-going.

2006-07 Commitments/Support for Ministry Partners

In addition to fulfilling its commitments as:

- an employer and
- a service provider,

the ministry will support its delivery partners. Following is a summary of the commitments:

The ministry will continue to support, through the Goal Ontario Literacy for the Deaf (GOLD) project, professional development of literacy and basic skills practitioners during the summer of 2006.

The ministry will continue to provide support to publicly assisted postsecondary institutions to meet their obligations to students with disabilities under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Additional funding is being provided to colleges and universities through the Access to Opportunities Strategy.

The ministry also provides direct financial assistance to students with disabilities through the Bursary for Students with Disabilities.

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

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

For more information

Questions or comments about the ministry's Accessibility Plan are always welcome.

Please telephone:

General Inquiry Number:	416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514
TTY/TTD Number:	1-800-263-2892
e-mail:	info@edu.gov.on.ca
Ministry website:	http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Directorate of Ontario website at <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html>. This site promotes accessibility and provides information on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

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

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