

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

*2007-2008
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.

Five key areas have been identified for the first accessibility standards: customer service, transportation, information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

The accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor and will come into force on January 1, 2008.

An initial proposed standard on accessible transportation has been developed by the Transportation Standards Development Committee. It was posted for public review on June 27, 2007 and will be available for public comment until September 28, 2007.

The Standards Development Committee that will draft the proposed information and communications standard was established and began meeting in April, 2007. The committees developing the accessible built environment and accessible employment standards have been selected and will begin meeting in the fall of 2007.

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 fifth annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It highlights the achievements of the 2006-07 plan and outlines the commitments for 2007-08 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.

Message from the Minister



I am very pleased to provide you with the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities 2007-08 Accessibility Plan.

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

This year marks the second 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.

I am pleased to note that the accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor on August 11, 2007 and will come into force on January 1, 2008.

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.

Within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we are building on the success of our previous four 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.

Among our accomplishments last year, the ministry provided more than \$41.1 million to help students with disabilities succeed in postsecondary studies — an increase of 23 per cent since 2003-04. More than \$31 million of this funding was provided to colleges and universities; the remaining \$10 million was provided to individuals and other organizations.

My ministry remains 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.

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,

Christopher Bentley
Minister

Report on Achievements

2006 - 2007 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, planned commitments for the past year, outlined in its 2006-2007 accessibility plan. This section provides a status report as of May 25, 2007.

Commitment

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 (ODA), 2001. An action plan will be developed for implementation

Status

Complete

Action

Prior to the January 1, 2007 transfer of federal staff and resources, “transferring-in” staff were provided with information on the ODA as part of a broad-based orientation to the Ontario Public Service. In addition, managers were informed of the duty to accommodate requirements under the Act.

Commitment

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

Status

In progress

Action

A draft readiness assessment has been prepared by the Ministry and has been reviewed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Timeframe

2007-08

Rationale

The assessment will be revised and implemented upon release of the upcoming regulations to incorporate approved Customer Service Standards.

Commitment

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.

Status

Complete

Action

Continued Ministry funding of the Goal Ontario Literacy for the Deaf (GOLD) project supported the professional development of approximately 40 literacy and basic skills practitioners. The training was delivered at the GOLD conference, June 5 – 9, 2006.

Commitment

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

Status

Complete

Action

A \$4 million investment in 2006-07 as part of the government's Access to Opportunities Strategy helped colleges and universities provide new supports and services to students with disabilities.

Additional Achievement:

As part of the implementation of Employment Ontario and the information and referral service, Ontarians, particularly those with disabilities, are now able to use the Employment Ontario website to locate accessible employment and training services by community. Agencies offering Employment Ontario services are noted by a clearly marked icon. The Employment Ontario website is available at www.ontario.ca/employmentontario.

Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, its ongoing and multi-year commitments described in the accessibility plans it issued up to and including the year 2006 - 2007. This section provides a status report as of May 25, 2007.

Commitment

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.

Status

Ongoing

Action

New Acts and Regulations are customarily assessed to ensure compliance with ODA.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing

Action

Existing Acts, Regulations, Guidelines & Standards continue to be assessed to ensure ODA principles are reflected.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing

Action

The Ministry continues to ensure that the intranet and websites remain ODA-compliant.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing

Action

Publications remain available in HTML, PDF and/or plain text formats on the website.

Action

Additional Achievement:

The Ministry is in compliance with internal standards - *New Guidelines for Accessibility of Memos* - to ensure that all Ministry employees with visual impairment or those who use text recognition software have access to our materials and communications.

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.

Status

Ongoing

Action

Training: In progress.

Following the Accessibility Expo hosted jointly by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the Ministry of Community and Social Services in May 2007, managers will be reminded again of their responsibility to complete the on-line training module.

Action

Communications: Ongoing

On December 5, 2006, the ministry published an online article, *Making Ontario Accessible* in The Gazette, the ministry's staff newsletter, with descriptions of the ODA and AODA. For additional information, links to relevant OPS websites on the ODA, AODA and accessibility planning were also included.

Action

Staff survey: Deferred

Ministry-wide staff survey of staff views/understanding of disability issues has been deferred.

Timeframe

Deferred to 2007-08

Rationale:

The staff survey will be implemented just prior to the launch of the new on-line training module and World Usability Day – scheduled for late 2007, to generate awareness of disability issues.

Action

Learning opportunities: Ongoing

All staff were encouraged to attend an Accessibility Expo – *Accessibility benefits us all – Be a champion*. The expo was hosted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in Toronto, on May 28 and 29, 2007, and featured information, ideas and innovation that raised awareness of the benefits of accessibility by exploring the barriers to accessibility and the many and varied solutions to overcome these barriers.

Action

Additional Achievement: Complete

Information on *New Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy and Support Materials* was distributed to Ministry staff on March 30, 2007. Links to the new policy and supporting materials were provided.

Materials include:

- updated Employment Accommodation/Return To Work Operating Policy and associated support materials;
- tips and best practices;
- questions and answers.

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

Specifically, the ministry will support the Assistive Technology Symposium, Tools for Learning September, 2006.

Status

Ongoing

Action

Consultations were held with other ministries to support development of combined common checklist. Partnership delivered amalgamated common checklist and will posted online in June. IT will continue to review and update checklist as required.

I & IT ensured ODA compliancy in Literacy & Numeracy and Adult Learning projects.

I & IT provided support to teachers at the Assistive Technology Symposium, Tools for Learning September, 2006 by demonstrating effective use of assistive technologies. To increase reach of learning to those not able to attend in-person:

- workshop components were posted online for access by any teacher; and
- 6 key workshops were delivered by webcast.

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 continue to improve accessibility when planning major capital projects, especially converting washrooms to barrier-free washrooms. The ministry will undertake the same diligence with respect to the renewal of rental agreements to ensure that existing ministry properties are accessible.

Status

Ongoing

Action

Wherever feasible and possible, in office renovation projects all requirements have been met.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing

Action

Procurement of goods and services continues to adhere to the *Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

Commitment

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.

Status

Ongoing

Action

The Ministry provided more than \$41.1 million in 2006-07 to help students with disabilities succeed in postsecondary studies — an increase of 23 per cent since 2003-04.

In 2006-07, more than \$31 million of this funding was provided to colleges and universities; the remaining \$10 million was provided to individuals and other organizations.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing

Action

In 2006-07, the Ministry provided a total of \$2.76 million to 8,503 students with disabilities through the Bursary for Students with Disabilities.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing

Action

PACDI met four times in 2006-07, and through the work of three subcommittees, focused on financial assistance and transition supports from secondary to postsecondary studies and from postsecondary studies to employment, and identified research priorities.

In March 2007, a series of regional workshops was held to discuss supports for students and graduates with disabilities to help them find meaningful employment and ease their entry into the job market.

Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers

In the coming year, the ministry commits to assess its acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities. This section summarizes these commitments.

Customer service

Commitment

The ministry will complete an initial review of the ministry's customer service practices, in preparation for the implementation of the Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Timeline

2007-08

Commitment

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.

Timeline

2007-08

Employment

Commitment

The ministry, led by the Corporate Finance and Services Branch, Facilities and Emergency Management Unit, will continue to support the awareness initiatives for emergency preparedness for people with disabilities.

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitment

The ministry will continue to build on ministry managers' and employees' awareness of employment practices and continue to provide training opportunities to ensure improved accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Specifically, the ministry will

- implement a staff survey to promote awareness of disability issues and to promote the new on-line training module scheduled for release in 2007;
- promote corporate accessibility events/initiatives to staff;
- profile external accessibility initiatives such as World Usability Day – November 8, 2007;
- provide regular updates to senior management on AODA standards development process to ensure full participation and support, and readiness to implement; and
- continue to promote management training utilizing the online training module - *The Ontarians with Disabilities Act—Maximizing the Contributions of Employees with Disabilities*.

Timeline

Ongoing

Communications and information

Commitment

Lack of awareness of tools and resources on accessibility and the ODA can be a current and future barrier to the development of integrated, accessible I & IT business solutions.

The Technology and Business Solutions Branch of the Learning Ministries will commit to post on ClusterNET relevant ODA resource materials. (ClusterNET is a cluster-wide intranet that allows cross-ministry collaboration and information-

sharing of I & IT knowledge.) Specifically, links to current ODA standards and policies, as well as tools for ODA-compliance will be made available for all staff across the seven ministries of the cluster.

Tools

Stellent and Adobe Acrobat 8 using the disability tools therein

Timeline

Beginning in 2007, this will be an ongoing commitment to post materials as directed by the Accessibility Resource Group

Commitment

Successful integration into the workplace for persons with disabilities requires a variety of support tools (i.e. software).

The Technology and Business Solutions Branch of the Learning Ministries will continue its commitment to the maintenance and updating as required, of 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.

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitment

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

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitment

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

Timeline

Ongoing

Built environment

Commitment

The ministry, through our Corporate Finance and Services Branch, 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 continue to improve accessibility when planning major capital projects, especially converting washrooms to barrier-free washrooms. The ministry will undertake the same diligence with respect to the renewal of rental agreements to ensure that existing ministry properties are accessible.

Timeline

Ongoing

Acts and regulations

Commitment

The Legal Services Branch will ensure that Acts, Regulations, Guidelines and Standards reflect the principles of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitment

During 2007-08, the Legal Services Branch in the ministry commits to assess any new Acts or Regulations to ensure that they are compliant with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitment

The ministry, led by the Corporate Finance and Services Branch, will continue to adhere to the Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services.

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitment

Information technology goods and services (hardware/software) may pose barriers if there are no processes to check for ODA compliance.

The Technology and Business Solutions Branch of the Learning Ministries will continue its commitment to OPS procurement guidelines to ensure that accessibility has been considered in the procurement of goods and services.

The *ODA Procurement Requirements Checklist* will be used to ensure ODA compliance across developing business solutions.

Timeline

Ongoing

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 summarizes the commitments to prevent new barriers to persons with disabilities.

Commitment

The ministry will continue to support through funding from the Employment and Training Division (formally the Labour Market and Training Division), the Goal Ontario Literacy for the Deaf (GOLD) project; specifically professional development of literacy and basic skills practitioners during the summer of 2007.

Timeline

2007-08

Commitment

Additional funding will be provided to colleges and universities through the Access to Opportunities Strategy.

Timeline

2007-08

Commitment

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.

Timeline

Ongoing

Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities commits to identify and remove barriers to persons with disabilities in the coming year. This section summarizes these commitments.

Support for Ministry Partners:

Customer service

Barrier

Students with disabilities may need additional financial assistance to accommodate the disability/special need, and to help them succeed in postsecondary studies.

Commitment

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

Timeline

2007-08

For More Information

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

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

TTY number: 1-800-263-2892

1-800 number: 1-800-263-2891

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

Ministry website address: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web portal at: 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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