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Friday, November 19, 2004

Ministry of Northern Development and Mines 2004-2005 Accessibility Plan

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We welcome your comments about the ODA. Please feel free to identify any accessibility barriers at any of our office locations. E-mail: accessibilityplanningteam@ndm.gov.on.ca

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Introduction

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

This document is the second annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. It highlights achievements of the 2003 -04 plan and outlines commitments for 2004 -05 so that no new barriers are created and existing ones are removed over time.

Ministries across government are increasing awareness of accessibility and integrating accessibility into daily business practices in a number of areas, including staff training, public information, facilities, and program and service delivery processes.

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.

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Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present my ministry's second annual plan for improving accessibility to the services and employment that Northern Development and Mines offers in Northern Ontario.

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.

We are delivering real, positive change that will make Ontario strong, healthy and prosperous. This Fall, the government will introduce measures to make the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) strong and effective.

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

The government is committed to working with Ontarians with disabilities on measures that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province. We are proud to say that we are steadily breaking down barriers and improving accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R. Bartolucci".

The Honourable Rick Bartolucci

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Report on Achievements of 2003-2004

Planning Commitments

Commitment: The ministry will incorporate the annual accessibility planning process in its annual planning budget cycles as directed by corporate business planning guidelines.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: 2004-05 Results-Based Plan is complete.

Rationale: The ministry will include accessibility in its annual operational plan.

Commitment: Continue the Accessibility Planning Working Group, established in the spring of 2003, to co-ordinate efforts in awareness and education, barrier identification and removal.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: The 2003 Accessibility Planning Working Group remains in place.

Rationale: We will rotate group members on a two-year staggered basis in an effort to ensure continuance of knowledge and momentum.

Commitment: Have regard for accessibility in the hiring and accommodation of employees.

Status: Completed and ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: We will continue ODA for managers on-line training.

Commitment: Have regard for accessibility when purchasing goods and services in accordance with timelines in new corporate directives.

Status: In progress.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing.

Rationale: As a general practice, ministry staff consider accessibility issues when obtaining goods and services for the ministry. With the Government's recent release of formal procurement guidelines, ministry processes will be formalized in 2004 -05 and communicated to staff to ensure compliance and consistency.

Commitment: Have regard for accessibility in government-funded capital programs in accordance with timelines in pending guidelines.

Status: In progress, pending release of Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

Action and Timeframe: Once ORC has finalized guidelines for government facilities, a review will be made.

Rationale: Awaiting release of guidelines from ORC.

Commitment: Conduct an internal review of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines Act to ensure the appropriate use of language with respect to people with disabilities, as well as to identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities.

Status: In progress.

Action and Timeframe: In June 2004, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) provided a template for use in reviewing legislation. Legal Services will refer to the template while reviewing any and all Ministry of Northern Development and Mines Acts.

Rationale: Will be completed during the 2004/05 accessibility planning period.

Commitment: Ensure that all new managers and supervisors complete ODA training on accommodating the accessibility needs of employees and job applicants who have disabilities.

Status: Completed and ongoing.

Commitment: Ensure all ministry staff have a general awareness of corporate guidelines concerning accessibility.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: Ongoing updates will be provided through public folders and the ministry newsletter.

Rationale: Accessibility awareness should be ongoing due to changes in staffing.

Commitment: Partner with other ministries and agencies to ensure training sessions in disability awareness and customer service are developed and made available to ministry employees.

Status: In Progress.

Action and Timeframe: The ministry will consult the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to assist in identifying suitable training programs. The ministry will implement training for ministry staff on disability awareness and customer service.

Rationale: The ministry will consult the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to assist in identifying existing training programs that are suitable to the needs of ministry staff.

Commitment: Conduct an anonymous employee survey to assess level of knowledge of accessibility issues among staff and to identify barriers for employees and clients.

Status: Completed.

Commitment: Develop a process for identification of barriers (i.e. mailbox posted on Internet and intranet).

Status: Completed and ongoing.

Commitment: Conduct an accessibility audit in reception/public areas as well as site reviews, to identify architectural barriers in service offices using ORC guidelines.

Status: In progress, pending release of Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

Action and Timeframe: Once ORC has finalized guidelines for government facilities, the audit will commence.

Rationale: Awaiting release of guidelines from ORC.

Commitment: Human Resources Branch will review recruitment and orientation processes to identify areas for improvement to ensure accommodation and accessibility for people with disabilities. Any areas identified in which accessibility cannot be ensured in this fiscal year will be carried forward as a priority into next fiscal year.

Status: Completed.

Commitment: Respond to requests for ergonomic and accessibility assessments from all employees.

Status: Completed.

Commitment: The Accessibility Planning Working Group (APWG) will monitor the implementation of the ministry's plan and provide regular reports to Senior Management and updates to ministry staff.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: The APWG Chair has been keeping Senior Management informed. Suggest that managers have an APWG member present the status of the Accessibility Plan once per year at various staff meetings.

Rationale: To keep information flowing throughout the ministry.

Commitment: The APWG will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate on implementation of the Accessibility Plan and on the preparation of the 2004 -05 plan, as required under Section 10 of the ODA.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: Report on Status of deliverables developed and reviewed by the APWG.

Rationale: Continued consultation with the Directorate allows the working group to keep current on ODA standings.

Commitment: Provide guidance to all ministry staff on the procedures for responding to requests for publications in alternate formats and include the instructions on ministry Internet and intranet sites.

Status: Completed and ongoing.

Commitment: Adopt the policy that planned consultations are communicated in an accessible format, held in accessible locations and accommodate accessibility needs whenever feasible.

Status: Completed.

Commitment: Ensure all future third party lease renewals include provisions to ensure sites are barrier -free.

Status: Ongoing.

Action and Timeframe: Reviews are ongoing as leases come up for renewal.

Rationale: As third party leases are renewed, provisions must be included to ensure sites are barrier -free.

Commitment: In collaboration with the other tenants in the Whitney Block User Group, develop and prioritize the removal of barriers with the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), the building's owner.

Status: In progress.

Action and Timeframe: Pending release of ORC's Barrier-Free Design Guidelines to develop plan of action.

Rationale: Awaiting release of guidelines from ORC.

Commitment: Continue to ensure that the ministry's Internet sites are accessible (where technically feasible), including testing all new site content to ensure usability by people with disabilities.

Status: Completed and ongoing.

Commitment: Ensure that the ministry's intranet sites are accessible, including testing all new site content to ensure usability by people with disabilities.

Status: In progress.

Action and Timeframe: Launch of ODA compliant intranet site planned for the fall of 2004.

Rationale: Different website design and different software were selected, which has delayed the launch to the fall of 2004.

Commitment: Continue providing TTY telephone sets to accommodate employees who are deaf, deafened or

hard of hearing.

Status: Completed.

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Commitments and Strategies for 2004-2005

Legislative Requirements

Commitment: Continue to have regard for accessibility in the hiring and accommodation of employees.

Action: We will continue ODA for managers on-line training.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: The Accessibility Planning Working Group (APWG), which was established to plan, monitor, evaluate and report on progress in enhancing and improving accessibility to people with disabilities, will continue with its assigned tasks.

Action: We will rotate group members on a staggered two-year basis in an effort to ensure continuance of knowledge and momentum.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: The ministry will implement the MBS Procurement Guidelines.

Action: All staff responsible for the procurement of goods and services will receive training based on the guidelines.

Timeframe: 2004/2005.

Commitment: The APWG will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate on implementation of the Accessibility Plan and on the preparation of the 2005 -06 plan, as required under Section 10 of the ODA.

Action: Continue consultation with Directorate, in an effort to keep working group current on ODA standings.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Ensure all future third party lease renewals include provisions to ensure sites are barrier -free.

Action: Review all lease agreements to ensure that they meet ODA requirements.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: In collaboration with the other tenants in the Whitney Block User Group, develop and prioritize the removal of barriers with the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), the building's owner.

Action: Awaiting ORC's Barrier-Free Design Guidelines to develop plan of action.

Timeframe: Pending release of ORC Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

Commitment: Ensure that the ministry's Internet and intranet sites are accessible, and test all new site content to ensure usability by people with disabilities.

Action: Work is in progress for new intranet that is consistent with the requirements of the ODA.

Timeframe: Launch of intranet planned for fall of 2004. Subsequent testing will be ongoing.

Commitment: The ministry will address emergency evacuation processes and procedures for people with disabilities in locations where the ministry is identified as the 'building lead'.

Action: The ministry will build on existing procedures already in place to continue to improve emergency evacuation processes. This will be achieved by working with building committees and with local fire departments to review and build on the existing procedures and processes.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Ministry staff will consider accessibility when replacing signage in buildings.

Action: As signs are purchased and replaced, ensure they are in an accessible format and positioned at an accessible height.

Timeframe: Ongoing – as changes are required.

Commitment: Continue to provide guidance to all ministry staff on the procedures for responding to requests for publications in alternate formats and include the instructions on ministry Internet and intranet sites.

Action: We will continue providing guidance and information.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Continue process for identification of barriers (i.e. mailbox posted on Internet and intranet).

Action: We will continue to respond to enquiries regarding accessibility.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Continue to have regard for accessibility in government-funded capital programs in accordance with timelines in pending guidelines.

Action: In progress, pending release of Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

Timeframe: Pending release of ORC Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment: Conduct an internal review of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines Act and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act to ensure the appropriate use of language with respect to people with disabilities, as well as to identify any programs established in law that may have an impact on people with disabilities.

Action: Review the Acts using a generic set of guidelines.

Timeframe: By September 2005.

Policies

Commitment: The ministry will incorporate the annual accessibility planning process in its annual planning and budget cycles as directed by corporate business planning guidelines.

Action: The ministry will include accessibility in its annual operational plan.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Commitment: Partner with other ministries and agencies to ensure training sessions in disability awareness and customer service are developed and made available to ministry employees.

Action: The ministry will consult with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to assist in identifying suitable training programs. The ministry will implement training for ministry staff on disability awareness and customer service.

Timeframe: As available and appropriate.

Commitment: Continue to ensure consideration for ODA at ministry events.

Action: Include a standard paragraph identifying accessibility needs and requirements.

Timeframe: Advertising will be done as events occur.

Commitment: Ensure a mechanism is in place for customers to file a complaint regarding accessibility.

Action: APWG will review the complaint mechanism currently in place and modify as necessary.

Timeframe: As soon as possible.

Programs and Services

Commitment: Conduct an accessibility audit in reception/public areas as well as site reviews, to identify architectural barriers in service offices using ORC guidelines once released.

Action: Once ORC has finalized guidelines for government facilities, audit will commence.

Timeframe: Pending release of Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

Commitment: Provide TTY service from one central location to service the ministry's clients.

Action: The APWG will research this possibility, and identify best possible options.

Timeframe: As soon as possible.

Practices

Commitment: Ensure general awareness of accessibility, including corporate policies, is provided to all ministry staff through ongoing internal communications.

Action: Updates will be provided through the public folders and the ministry newsletter.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Commitment: The Accessibility Planning Working Group (APWG) will monitor the implementation of the ministry's ODA plan and provide regular reports to Senior Management, and updates to ministry staff.

Action: APWG Chair to keep Senior Management apprised. Have an APWG member make a presentation on the status of the Accessibility Plan once per year at various staff meetings.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Commitment: Tools and checklists on disability considerations will be developed to assist staff in their work.

Action: Research and identify best practices to develop the tools and checklists required.

Timeframe: By September 2005.

Commitment: Assess the level of knowledge of accessibility issues among staff.

Action: Conduct a second survey using web-based technology for increased anonymity.

Timeframe: By April 2005.

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For more information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (705) 564-7444

1-800 number: 1-877-817-6636

E-mail: http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/mndm/Feedback_e.asp

Ministry website address: http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/MNDM/Default_e.asp

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration'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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