

MINISTRY OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND MINES

*2005-2006
Accessibility Plan*



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Message from Minister of Northern Development and Mines	2
Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments	3
Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006	8
For More Information	11

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 Northern Development and Mines. 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



I am pleased to present my ministry's third annual plan for improving access to the programs, services and employment opportunities of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

This government continues to take a leadership role in identifying, removing and preventing barriers, and improving accessibility through a participatory, proactive and integrated approach that spans the priorities of customer service, employment, communications and information as well as all provincial facilities.

The achievements highlighted in this year's plan, as well as further improvements planned this 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.

In 2004-05, my ministry implemented TTY (teletypewriter) service from one central location to provide ministry-specific TTY service to our clients. As well, we've opened three new ServiceOntario counters in the North, which have been designed with special equipment and facilities to ensure our services are accessible to people of all abilities.

The government will continue to build on a foundation of past progress and accomplishments as we strive to develop accessibility standards that ensure real and effective change takes place. We are proud to say that we are steadily breaking down barriers and improving opportunities for Ontarians with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Bartolucci". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Rick Bartolucci

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005

Planning Commitments

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: All new managers and supervisors in the ministry are advised of the mandatory training via the manager's orientation checklist.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The APWG continues to plan, monitor, evaluate and report on progress in enhancing and improving accessibility to people with disabilities, and continues with its assigned tasks. In an effort to ensure sustained efforts, two members have been replaced.

Commitment: The ministry will implement the MBS Procurement Guidelines.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: All staff were informed of the MBS Procurement Guidelines. In an effort to assist staff in this function, several accessibility articles were posted in the ministry newsletter providing procurement examples, generic wording to use when advertising for an event, and advertising the accessibility mailbox.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The APWG Lead continues to consult with the Directorate in an effort to keep the working group current on ODA standings.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Lease renewals are continuously reviewed to ensure they meet ODA requirements.

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: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Some renovations have been made, such as the placement of chairs in designated waiting areas, and the creation of an ODA compliant entrance with posted signage advising the public of such. The user group continues to meet quarterly and make improvements wherever possible.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The Internet is ODA compliant and the site is monitored and tested daily. Work is complete for the new intranet which is consistent with the requirements of the ODA. Subsequent testing to ensure compliance is 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'.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: In all locations, where the ministry is identified as the building lead, the ministry has added onto procedures already in place to continue to improve emergency evacuation processes for staff and ensure a public evacuation protocol was in place. This was achieved by working with the building committee and with the local fire departments.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services (MCBS) is working on signage for Service Ontario sites. In other areas, signs are replaced as needed, in an accessible format and at an accessible height. Work with the Ontario Realty Corporation is ongoing in regards to signage in Ontario government buildings.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Details regarding alternate formats are posted on the home page of the ministry intranet. Also, articles advertising alternate formats were posted in the ministry newsletter.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: A newsletter article was posted, reminding staff of the accessibility mailbox. We will continue to respond to enquiries regarding accessibility.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The review of capital projects will continue, as required, taking into account the new Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Review of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines Act and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act was completed and no barriers were identified.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Regard for accessibility is considered in the annual operational planning process when identifying achievements, making commitments and allocating resources.

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: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Made managers of customer service areas aware of MCI's training manual, "May I Help You - Welcoming Customers with Disabilities".

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: An article regarding accessibility was posted in the ministry newsletter and included a standard paragraph identifying accessibility needs and requirements for staff use when advertising for ministry events.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The current complaint resolution process has been reviewed and tested and it has been determined that this process meets accessibility requirements.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Three audits were completed in reception/public areas.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: TTY service has been implemented in our Blind River Government Information Centre. Two staff members were trained to use the TTY equipment, and are now able to provide ministry-specific TTY service to our clients. The TTY telephone number has been advertised in various telephone directories and on the ministry Internet.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: Numerous newsletter articles have been posted and several memos have been sent to all staff regarding accessibility, procurement requirements, procurement tools, and ORC Barrier-Free Guidelines. The ministry's Accessibility Plan is posted on the front page of our intranet and Internet sites. Information regarding how to acquire publications in alternate formats is posted on the ministry's intranet site. Information about the accessibility mailbox is posted on the ministry's intranet site regarding identifying any accessibility barriers in the workplace. A space is kept open in every second edition the ministry's newsletter for accessibility articles. The ministry provided training and awareness through various methods such as lunch 'n learn sessions: depression (North Bay, October/04), mental health awareness (Sudbury, December/04), and ergonomics (Sudbury with videoconferencing to Timmins, Thunder Bay and Dryden, November/04); and promoting local information sessions such as "Mental Health Awareness" by the Sudbury Health Unit, (December/04).

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.

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The APWG lead kept senior management apprised of the ministry's ODA plan.

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

Status: Complete.

Action and Timeframe: The ministry forwarded a message to all staff with tools and checklists on disability considerations with regards to procurement requirements to assist staff in their work.

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

Status: In Progress.

Action and Timeframe: A second survey will be sent out in early fall of 2005 and will use web-based technology for increased anonymity. Comparisons of results will be made between the first and second surveys to see what improvements have been made.

Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

Customer Service

Commitment: Ensure general awareness and compliance to the implementation of the MBS Procurement Guidelines.

Action: In an effort to ensure that accessibility continues to be considered in the procurement of accessible goods and services - both for use by employees and the general public - informal audits of procurement practices will be conducted. Reminders will be sent to staff via the public folders and the ministry newsletter regarding the documentation of purchases over \$5,000, and to have regard for accessibility for all procurement.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Commitment: Ensure clients and staff receive accessible service.

Action: Where face to face meetings are required and the need is identified, we will establish guidelines and procedures for procuring the services of a trained interpreter/note taker for ministry clients with disabilities, with the appropriate lead time.

Timeframe: By September 30, 2006.

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: Continue to monitor our Internet and intranet sites for ODA compliance, and ensure that all web staff are trained in the areas of ODA compliance for web design. Also ensure that any new sites abide to accessibility policies, and that all new software is ODA compliant.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Commitment: Continue to provide accessibility training opportunities and awareness to staff in order to ensure all internal/external services are provided in an accessible format. For example, ensure all internal staff meetings and external events are accessible and provide accessible formats of materials.

Action: Ensure staff are aware of the on-line training modules available on the MCI intranet site for 'Planning for Accessible Events 101' and "May I Help You – Welcoming Customers With Disabilities" through the ministry's public folders and the newsletter.

Timeframe: By June 30, 2006.

Commitment: The accessibility planning working group (APWG) will continue to consult with the Directorate on the implementation of the Accessibility Plan and on the preparation of the 2006-07 plan, as required under Section 10 of the ODA.

Action: Continue consultation with directorate to keep working group current on ODA standings.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Employment

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

Action: Continue to ensure new managers or supervisors complete the ODA for managers' on-line training.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Communications and Information

Commitment: Ensure that external ministry presentations are done in accessible format when required.

Action: Ensure that there are instructions and templates posted on the intranet to guide staff on how to make a presentation in an accessible format.

Timeframe: By September 30, 2006.

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

Action: Post newsletter articles and send reminders to staff through Public Folders on the procedure to follow when responding to requests for publications in alternate formats.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Built Environment

Commitment: Ensure ministry buildings and facilities are accessible for people with disabilities.

Action: Conduct accessibility audits in buildings and facilities where there are people with disabilities to identify possible problem areas, in buildings where the ministry is identified as the building lead.

Timeframe: By September 30, 2006.

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

Action: Continue to ensure that any new or replaced signs in buildings are in an accessible format and positioned at an accessible height.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

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: Continue to meet with the Whitney Block user group and discuss methods of removing barriers.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Commitment: Continue to 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 the ODA requirements.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Commitment: Continue to have regard for accessibility in government-funded capital programs in accordance with Barrier-Free Guidelines.

Action: If we construct a new facility or make significant renovations to government owned or leased buildings, commit to implementing the ORC Standards for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities.

Timeframe: Throughout the year.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment: Conduct internal review of the Northern Services Boards Act, the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, and the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission 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 30, 2006.

For More Information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (705) 564-7444

TTY number: 1-866-349-1388

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 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.

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

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