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**Cabinet Office  
2005-2006  
Accessibility Plan**

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## Introduction

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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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 Cabinet Office. 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.

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## Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments

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Cabinet Office supports the Premier, Cabinet, and its committees in the management and implementation of the government's priorities. The primary role of Cabinet Office is to facilitate government decision-making and to ensure that other ministries and central agencies work within the government's priorities and timelines.

Unlike other ministries, Cabinet Office does not directly administer legislation or regulations, or provide the kinds of programs and services that would generally be considered for review under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. As a result, Cabinet Office accessibility planning focuses on two main areas: the needs of employees or potential employees of Cabinet Office and other individuals who require access to Cabinet Office facilities, and the provision of communications advice and services that result in the production of documents available to the public.

All the planned commitments outlined in Cabinet Office's 2004-05 accessibility plan were achieved or are well underway. The installation of Designated Waiting Areas (DWA) in the Whitney Block represents a particularly significant accomplishment for Cabinet Office during the reporting period. DWAs provide an internal safe refuge for persons with disabilities who are unable to use the stairs in an emergency evacuation. Each DWA is equipped with seating and a telephone for two-way communication during an emergency. The commitment was achieved through the coordinated teamwork of the Whitney Block Users' Committee, chaired by Cabinet Office as building lead.

The following section provides a status report on all commitments set out in Cabinet Office's 2004-05 accessibility plan.

**Commitment:** Cabinet Office will implement the new Ontario Realty Corporation barrier-free guidelines, as applicable.

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** As the building lead for the Whitney Block, Cabinet Office chairs the Whitney Block Users' Committee (WBUC), which meets regularly to discuss and resolve facilities issues. Part of its regular business included sharing information regarding the Ministry of Government Services' *Standards for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities*, and the WBUC was prepared to work with the Ontario Realty Corporation to implement the standards/guidelines, where applicable to new projects.

**Commitment:** To provide accessibility for staff with disabilities, Cabinet Office will implement the *Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services under the ODA* .

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** In fall 2004, Cabinet Office senior management issued a reminder to managers regarding the release of the Ministry of Government Services' *Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act* . Management and staff with responsibility for procurement activities are aware of the guidelines. Issues regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities are integrated into the procurement process.

**Commitment:** Continue to build accessibility into the further development of the Premier's website.

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** Cabinet Office continued to undertake research on web accessibility and participated on intergovernmental working groups and committees that met regularly to discuss issues, best practices and new ideas. New websites that followed the government's accessibility guidelines were designed and launched – [www.strongontario.ca](http://www.strongontario.ca) and [www.sharedair.ca](http://www.sharedair.ca) .

**Commitment:** Cabinet Office will continue to comply with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) requirements regarding the availability of Cabinet Office publications in alternate format versions.

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** In April 2004, Cabinet Office released the publication *Investing in People – Creating a Human Capital Society for Ontario* (in English and French) prepared by the Panel on the Role of Government. The report examined the future role of government in the areas of promoting economic growth, strong communities, fiscal responsibility and accountability.

Cabinet Office will continue to work with Publications Ontario in responding to requests for Cabinet Office publications to be provided in accessible formats.

**Commitment:** Ensure accessibility at all stages of the recruitment process.

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** As follow-up to the 2003-04 Cabinet Office review of accessibility during the staff recruitment process, Cabinet Office developed an information package summarizing the legislation, policies and guidelines governing accessibility requirements at all stages of the OPS recruitment process. The information

package was distributed to all Cabinet Office managers in October 2004 and was posted on the Cabinet Office intranet site.

**Commitment:** All new managers and supervisors will complete online training on accessibility needs of employees with disabilities.

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** There is a process in place for all new managers and supervisors to be notified by e-mail that in order to comply with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, they must receive training in fulfilling the government's legal obligations to accommodate the accessibility needs of its employees and job applicants who have disabilities, through completing the ODA e-learning module under MyOPS, a government intranet site.

**Commitment:** Promote awareness among Cabinet Office staff regarding accessibility for people with disabilities.

**Status:** In progress

**Action and Timeframe:** Cabinet Office's senior management brought accessibility issues to the attention of staff and managers, as appropriate. As the first step in planning educational material for Cabinet Office staff, the Corporate Planning and Services Branch sent a representative for full-day training at a Customer Service Awareness Training Workshop sponsored by the Accessibility Directorate Office in December 2004. The core members of Cabinet Office's accessibility planning group discussed the information from the workshop at a subsequent planning session, and considered various training approaches. Cabinet Office has also been in contact with the Directorate regarding possible assessment of accessibility awareness among staff.

**Rationale:** During 2004-05, the core team members of the accessibility planning group considered the resources available to promote staff awareness of accessibility and made plans for the delivery of training in the following year. Initial training efforts in 2005-06 will focus on the area of customer service – see *Commitments and Strategies for 2005-06* (Employment category) for further details.

**Commitment:** Inform new employees of Cabinet Office about employment-related accessibility for people with disabilities under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

**Status:** In progress

**Action and Timeframe:** As part of their orientation material, new employees receive a copy of the *Whitney Block Emergency and Evacuation Procedures Handbook*. All sections of the handbook, including the material on emergency evacuation for people with disabilities, were reworked in 2004 and the new edition was issued in January 2005. The handbook encourages persons who require assistance in an emergency evacuation to complete a Special Assistance Evacuation Form (included in the Handbook appendices) where they can specify the type of help they would require in order to evacuate.

**Rationale:** With personal safety as a priority concern, the first step taken to inform new Cabinet Office staff about accessibility in the workplace focused on the review and revision of the *Whitney Block Emergency and Evacuation Procedures Handbook*, in particular the information for persons with disabilities. As an additional step in fulfilling the commitment, Cabinet Office will include accessibility information in staff orientation material or employment documentation. See *Commitments and Strategies for 2005-06* (Employment category) for further details.

**Commitment:** The Cabinet Office accessibility planning group, working with Whitney Block Users' Committee, will continue to identify barriers through the accessibility plan's implementation process. The planning group will monitor and report to senior management in-year on implementation of this plan.

**Status:** Complete for 2004-05 and ongoing

**Action and Timeframe:** Core team members of the accessibility planning group met regularly during 2004-05 to monitor implementation of the plan and reported back on the status to senior management. The core team brought forward issues regarding potential barriers to the regular meetings of the Whitney Block Users' Committee (WBUC) for debate and action. The installation of Designated Waiting Areas on floors 2 to 6 of the Whitney Block marked an important achievement by the Cabinet Office-chaired WBUC. The DWAs provide an internal safe refuge for persons with disabilities who are unable to use the stairs in an emergency evacuation. Each DWA is equipped with seating and a telephone for two-way communication during an emergency.

In addition, signage with directions indicating the accessible route to enter Whitney Block was put in place outside the building for the information of persons who are unable to use stairs to enter the building. The feasibility of installing a ramp for the Whitney Block was the subject of extensive discussions at WBUC meetings during 2004-05 – see *Commitments and Strategies for 2005-06* (Built Environment category) for details on future plans.

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## Commitments and Strategies for 2005-2006

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### Cabinet Office continues to be committed to three important areas for action in 2005-06:

- Promoting awareness among Cabinet Office employees regarding accessibility for people with disabilities
- Further identification of barriers to accessibility
- Championing initiatives to improve accessibility

## Customer Service

**Commitment:** Ensure that accessibility needs are built into all existing and future Cabinet Office maintained internet websites, including the Premier's website.

**Action:** Cabinet Office websites will be assessed to ensure that they are barrier-free, and continually updated to use available accessibility technology.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

**Commitment:** Cabinet Office staff with responsibility for procurement will continue to ensure that all procurement is in compliance with legislative requirements, corporate directives and guidelines, including *the Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services under the ODA*, and will also undertake appropriate training.

**Action:** Cabinet Office will ensure that procurement staff work with managers to consider and address any accessibility needs prior to the procurement of goods and services. In addition, procurement staff will complete the on-line presentation developed by the Ministry of Government Services and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration regarding procurement planning and the process for "having regard" to the accessibility for persons with disabilities when purchasing goods or services.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

**Commitment:** The Cabinet Office accessibility planning group will continue to identify and address barriers through the appropriate forum. The group will also monitor and report to senior management on the implementation of this plan.

**Action:** The accessibility planning group will meet quarterly to monitor the implementation of the plan, and recommend further improvements. Cabinet Office, as co-chairs of the Whitney Block Users' Committee (WBUC), will bring forward any relevant items to the WBUC for discussion and appropriate action.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

## Employment

**Commitment:** Inform new Cabinet Office employees about employment-related accessibility for people with disabilities under the current legislative requirements (carry-over commitment from 2004-05 Accessibility Plan).

**Action:** Cabinet Office will incorporate accessibility information in orientation material or employment documentation for new staff.

**Action:** In a continuing effort to provide employment-related accessibility, Cabinet Office, in collaboration with the Whitney Block Users' Committee, will review, revise and re-distribute as necessary to Cabinet Office staff the *Whitney Block Emergency and Evacuation Procedures Handbook*, to ensure continued compliance with Ministry of

Government Services' directives and the current legislative requirements.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

**Commitment:** Cabinet Office will continue to assess and accommodate staff needs related to workstation ergonomics, upon request.

**Action:** Cabinet Office will arrange for ergonomic assessments, upon request. Measures to remove any barriers identified as a result of the assessment will be taken, as appropriate. The number of ergonomic assessments and subsequent actions taken will be documented for report-back purposes.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

**Commitment:** Continue to promote accessibility awareness throughout Cabinet Office (carry-over commitment from 2004-05 Accessibility Plan), and ensure that front-line customer service staff are trained regarding accessibility for people with disabilities requirements.

**Action:** Cabinet Office will identify all front-line customer services staff and ensure that they complete the customer service training package developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. All remaining Cabinet Office staff will be encouraged to review this information as a tool to raise the level of accessibility awareness and increase the knowledge of staff.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

## Communications and Information

**Commitment:** As part of its regular analysis of Cabinet submissions, Cabinet Office will include considerations, where appropriate, of implications for persons with disabilities and of how the proposed initiative would further the government's goal of a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

**Action:** Cabinet Office policy advisors will, where relevant, discuss accessibility issues with ministries in the course of providing guidance during the Cabinet submission process.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

**Commitment:** Two Cabinet Office staff will help implement the accessibility standards development process by supporting the inter-ministerial team to assist with the continuing implementation of standards. As well, Cabinet Office will facilitate the transfer of responsibility for accessibility issues for people with disabilities from MCI to MCSS.

**Action:** Attendance at inter-ministerial meetings to further development of accessibility standards; ongoing advice to ministries about the transfer of the accessibility issues for people with disabilities file.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06

**Commitment:** Continue to build accessibility into the further development of the Cabinet Office intranet website.

**Action:** The Cabinet Office intranet site will be upgraded to include links to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and its on-line training modules. The intranet site will maintain a link to Cabinet Office's current accessibility plan for convenient reference by staff. Cabinet Office will continue to work towards an intranet that is barrier-free to all ministry staff.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

**Commitment :** Cabinet Office will continue to comply with the ODA, 2001 requirements regarding the availability of Cabinet Office publications in alternate format versions.

**Action:** Cabinet Office will continue to work with Publications Ontario in responding to requests for publications in accessible formats.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing

## Built Environment

**Commitment:** Cabinet Office, working with the Whitney Block Users' Committee and in cooperation with facilities management and the Ontario Realty Corporation, will continue to champion the implementation of any feasible infrastructure improvements to address accessibility issues.

**Action:** Members of the Whitney Block Users' Committee will undertake research and meet with facilities management and the Ontario Realty Corporation to discuss the feasibility of installing a ramp for the Whitney Block.

**Action:** Cabinet Office, working with the Whitney Block Users' Committee, will continue to advocate facility management's plans to upgrade the fire alarm systems in the Whitney Block to comply with the Ministry of Government Services' codes and guidelines. As part of the proposed plan, visual and audible alarms will be installed and fire alarm pull stations will be adjusted to comply with the *Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities* .

**Action:** Cabinet Office will initiate discussions at a regularly scheduled Whitney Block Users' Committee meeting to assess the feasibility of installing handrails in the vestibules at the north and south entrances; as well as possible signage at the underground entrance from the Queen's Park subway station leading to the Whitney Block, to indicate an alternative entrance for individuals who may have difficulties navigating the stairs.

**Timeframe:** Fiscal year 2005-06 and ongoing



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## For more information

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

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Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web site at: <http://www.mcscs.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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