

MINISTRY OF CULTURE

2008-2009
ODA Accessibility Plan



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Introduction

Ontario is making progress towards building an accessible province by 2025. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) has laid the foundation to meet this goal. Under the act, Ontario is developing standards that will remove the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

On January 1, 2008, the first accessibility standard under the act came into force. Through the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, people of all abilities will be able to get the service they need. Public sector organizations, including the Ontario government, will need to comply with this standard by 2010. Private sector and non-profit organizations will need to comply by 2012.

In 2009, more standards will be released in other important areas, including:

- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Employment
- The built environment.

The Ministry of Culture's (MCL) sixth annual accessibility plan highlights its 2008 achievements breaking down barriers for people with disabilities. It also outlines this ministry's commitments in the coming year to making programs, policies and services more accessible for all Ontarians.

In 2007-2008, the MCL website was reconfigured to conform to the current government web standard for accessibility. Any documents in inaccessible formats can be converted to HTML format should there be a user need or request. The Human Resources Branch continued to promote the new Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy by providing advice to managers and encouraging them to review the policy and support materials. Information sessions featuring representatives from intellectual, mental health and learning disability organizations are planned in 2009. The ministry continues to build its planning team capacity, particularly in delivering on the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

This accessibility plan is unique, because it reflects our transition between the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) and the AODA. The ODA applies to the Ontario government and all broader public sector organizations. Under this act, the ministry

develops annual accessibility plans to make its policies, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities.

Through the ODA, accessibility planning has laid a strong foundation for the Ministry of Culture to build on. MCL will continue to help make Ontario more accessible for people with disabilities and a more inclusive society for all Ontarians.

An executive summary of all Government of Ontario ministry accessibility plans is available at

http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/ministries_accplans08.htm.

Report on Status of Customer Service Requirements

The new Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into force on January 1, 2008. Transitioning the new regulation into the Ontario Public Service (OPS), this section was added to the ODA Planning Template.

All OPS ministries must comply with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service by January 1, 2010. To assist ministries with planning and compliance, initiatives in this section should correspond to the 11 requirements under the new Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the AODA, as listed below.

NOTE: MGS is currently working on a Service Directive, corporate policies and guidelines that may be used by each ministry to satisfy some of the following requirements. Further information on what can be used/leveraged will be provided to ministry ODA planning leads shortly.

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality and opportunity
3. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods, use your services and any other measures your organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access your goods and use your services.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.
6. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.

7. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.
8. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
9. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
10. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about your feedback process readily available to the public.

Introduction to Ministry Report on Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

Since the inception of the ODA annual reporting requirement, the MCL has undertaken a number of activities to promote staff and stakeholder awareness so that the needs of people with disabilities in the workplace are met. This year's Ministry of Culture plan focuses on compliance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* as mandated by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

In 2009-10, the ministry will review its current policies, procedures and practices and broaden its initiatives to ensure compliance with the new customer service standards. At the same time, the ministry will continue to promote accessibility awareness in the workplace and will work with external clients and stakeholders.

Focus Area: Customer Service

The ministry will establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities. Reasonable effort will be made to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Impact: Program

Commitment: New

The ministry is committed to ensure that accessibility requirements are met in the workplace and will broaden its activities in the coming year.

In the upcoming planning year, the ministry will undertake activities to ensure compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service in order to meet the compliance date of January 1, 2010.

Planned Actions:

The ministry will prepare a gap analysis in Winter 2008 to ascertain whether its current customer service practices meet AODA requirements. Ministry staff will prepare an action plan to ameliorate identified gaps by Winter 2008 with implementation in Summer 2009. Staff training and awareness programs on the new policies and procedures will be conducted in Fall 2009.

Implementation Timeline: Winter 2008 to Fall 2009.

Focus Area: Customer Service

The ministry will provide training to staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on relevant accessibility topics, as outlined in the customer service standard.

Impact: Program

Commitment: New

The ministry delivers a range of programs and services to the public and its clients. Staff training plans will be developed to meet specific program and service delivery objectives. In the upcoming year, the ministry will deliver accessibility awareness training to staff and will include such training in orientation for new staff.

The ministry will ensure that current training initiatives are consistent with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard. This commitment is intended to fulfill

the Customer Service Standard requirements for working with mandated third party service providers. Consistent with the above, the ministry will implement an appropriate compliance reporting mechanism.

Planned Actions:

The ministry will work to ensure that the *May I Help You?* e-learning course is included in all 2008/09 learning plans. Following a review of policies and practices for compliance with the Customer Service Standard, the ministry will revise and update policies and practices as required. A record of training provided and completed will be maintained.

Implementation Timeline: Ongoing Winter 2008 – Fall 2009

Focus Area: Customer Service

Impact: Service

The ministry will establish a process enabling people to provide feedback on how effectively goods or services to people with disabilities are being provided and will take appropriate action in response to complaints or concerns. The availability of this opportunity to provide feedback will be communicated publicly.

Commitment:

The ministry will develop and implement a formal process for the public to provide feedback on the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities. A monitoring and assessment tool to ensure that the Customer Service Standard requirements are met will be developed. It will be posted on both the ministry's intranet and internet site and will be provided in accessible formats.

Planned Actions:

The feedback process will take into account the following service delivery vehicles: in person, by telephone, in writing, electronically by diskette or email, or otherwise. Ministry staff and managers will receive orientation on the feedback process.

Implementation Timeline: Spring/Summer 2009

Focus Area: Customer Service

The ministry will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disabilities.

Impact: Program

Commitment: New/Ongoing

The ministry will undertake to ensure that customers are aware that ministry publications are available in alternate formats. The ministry will receive and respond to requests for accessible documents for people with disabilities in an efficient manner.

Results Achieved:

Communications Branch ensures that the ministry internet and intranet sites are regularly assessed to identify areas of improvement and remove any barriers. The TTY service, 1-800 service and list of interpreters is up to date.

The MCL website has been reconfigured to conform to the current government web standard for accessibility. Any documents in inaccessible formats can be converted to HTML format should there be a user need or request.

This ongoing commitment ensures that ministry staff are aware of the availability of ministry publications in alternate format and able to effectively promote their availability among clients, stakeholders and the public.

Planned Actions:

In compliance with the Customer Service Standard, the ministry will continue to ensure that its websites and publications are provided in alternate formats. Steps will be taken

to ensure that ministry staff are prepared to promote the availability of MCL publications in alternate formats.

Implementation Timeline: Ongoing throughout the year:
Winter 2008 to Fall 2009.

Focus Area: **Customer Service**

The ministry will communicate with people with disabilities taking into account such disabilities; will allow them to be accompanied by a service animal and will permit those who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing services.

Impact: Program

Commitment: New

The ministry will ensure accessibility requirements are part of the planning process for meetings and public events. This will ensure that all staff consider accessibility when planning events.

Planned Action:

As part of its review of policies and procedures, the ministry will ensure that the requirements under the Customer Service Standard pertaining to the organization of meetings and public events are met. The individual and particular needs of people with disabilities will be taken into account in the planning process.

Implementation Timeline: Winter 2008 through to Fall 2009.

Report on Other Accessibility Commitments

In the near future, the OPS will be obligated to comply with four new standards in the areas of transportation, information and communication, employment and the built environment.

A “barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice. Examples of methodologies to identify barriers include a policy or program review, surveys or customer feedback mechanisms.

The ministry is committed to improving accessibility by identifying, removing and preventing barriers. Ministry staff continue to implement this commitment internally, through liaison across government, with stakeholders and in interaction with the public. As new standards under the AODA are developed and implemented, the ministry will build upon the foundation of past accessibility planning in order to meet the new requirements.

Focus Area: Information and Communications

Impact: Program

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will continue to undertake activities, including information gathering and dissemination, to expand knowledge and understanding of intellectual, mental health and learning disabilities.

Planned Action:

Two staff learning and information sessions including representatives from intellectual, mental health and learning disability organizations are planned for 2009.

Implementation Timeframe: Sept 2008 – March 2010

Results Achieved: To be reported on in 2009/10 ODA Plan.

Focus Area: Information and Communications

Impact: Program

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will update its agencies on new or changed regulations/standards relating to agencies' obligations under accessibility legislation. The ministry will also encourage agencies to include accessibility in their programs and practices with regard to good business practices, especially those agencies serving the public.

Planned Action:

Ministry staff will forward information to agencies about their obligations under accessibility legislation, as appropriate. New information on the impact of accessibility initiatives will be communicated to agencies. When regulations/standards are prescribed for agencies, the ministry will follow up with them.

Implementation Timeframe: Sept 2008 – March 2010

Results Achieved: To be reported on in 2009/10 ODA Plan.

Focus Area: Employment

Impact: Program

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will maintain and continue to strengthen the role of the Accessibility Planning Team.

Results Achieved:

Implementation of this commitment continued in 2008. New members were recruited to strengthen the team and to better integrate an accessibility 'lens' in all ministry operations. For example, a staff member was recruited from the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat which became a part of MCL in 2008.

Planned Actions:

The ministry will continue to strengthen the Accessibility Planning team by recruiting new members, providing orientation, internet and intranet updates and performance development and learning plan reference.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing

Focus Area: Built

Impact: Program

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will ensure that all public office telephone lists will be presented in a font and manner that is accessible to staff and customers with visual impairments.

Planned Actions:

CNIB Print Guidelines will be forwarded to staff so that they can be used in offices to help create an accessible public phone list.

Implementation Timeline: Fall 2008

Focus Area: Built

Impact: Program

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all existing and future ministry premises are barrier free.

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Results Achieved:

A presentation on ministry emergency measures was made to senior ministry staff in September 2008 and this will be followed up with presentations to ministry staff in Fall, 2008.

There were no major impediments to the overall use of ministry offices by either staff or visitors.

Planned Actions:

The ministry will continue to review and remove the main barriers to accessibility in its offices and continue to periodically assess its built environment.

Implementation Timeline: Ongoing

Focus Area: Employment

Impact: Program

Commitment: Ongoing

The ministry will continue to review human resources-related activities to identify areas of improvement and remove any barriers (i.e., job descriptions, staff orientation, accessible accommodation).

Results Achieved:

The Human Resources Branch continues to promote the new Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy by providing advice to managers and encouraging them to review the policy and support materials.

Planned Actions:

New managers will be provided with information on the new Employment and Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy. The emphasis will be on raising awareness of the Employment standard that will be announced in 2009.

Implementation Timeframe: Fall/Winter 2008/09

Focus Area: Acts and Regulations

Impact: Program

Commitment: Completed/Ongoing

The ministry's legal staff will continue to review existing or proposed statutes and/or regulations to identify any barriers or potential impact with respect to accessibility.

Results Achieved:

The ministry did not introduce nor draft any new legislation in 2008.

Planned Actions:

All ministry legislation, regulations and policies will be reviewed, while they are in development, for barriers to accessibility.

Implementation Timeline: Ongoing throughout 2009.

For More Information

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 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.

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