

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

*2006-2007
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.

The first two standards that are currently being developed cover the areas of transportation and customer service. On June 13, 2006, the first anniversary of the passage of the AODA, the government announced the development of three new standards that will address information and communications, the built environment and employment.

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 highlights the achievements of the Ministry of Government Services' 2005-2006 accessibility plan and outlines the ministry's accessibility commitments for 2006-2007.

Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present the Ministry of Government Services Accessibility Plan for 2006-2007.

All public sector and broader public sector organizations are required by law to have an annual accessibility plan and to make it available to the public. This is the fourth year in which plans have been written and are being implemented by organizations such as ours across the province.

This is the first anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. This landmark legislation will foster the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

My ministry is committed to being more accessible by preventing, identifying and removing barriers. To this end, we are all working together in key areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment.

The Ministry of Government Services is building on our previous 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 employees, members of the public or ministry partners.

For example, my ministry was very successful in building accessibility considerations into ServiceOntario Centres that were opened across the province. These centres are part of the government's plan to make all routine public services available in one place and are intended to be totally accessible. Along with ramps and automatic door openers, these sites have special counters, floor textures, lighting and signage that make it easier for all people to get service.

In addition, we made important strides to make our workplace accessible to persons with disabilities by raising awareness of obstacles they may face. Consideration has also been given to barriers in the recruitment process that could discourage or prevent talented people from working in the Ontario Public

Service (OPS). Action taken on these items puts us in a good position to make the OPS the place to work – for everyone.

This ministry continues its work to better educate employees on accessibility by conducting audits on workspaces and public areas, by providing accessibility training and by publishing stories and information to help them be aware of access issues in their day-to-day routines. More examples are provided in the pages that follow.

The Ministry of Government Services is working closely with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to provide enterprise-wide leadership for all ministries in the areas of policy, communications, information technology and customer service.

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,

The Honourable Gerry Phillips, MPP
Minister of Government Services

Report on Achievements

2005 - 2006 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Government Services (MGS) was successful in achieving and, in some cases, surpassing the commitments outlined in its 2005-2006 accessibility plan. This section provides a status report on those commitments.

Customer Service

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will distribute the new procurement tools and provide training to ensure accessibility is considered in the procurement process.

Status Completed

Action

The Ontario Shared Services of MGS has posted guidelines for implementing procurement provisions of the ODA to MyOPS, the enterprise-wide employee intranet site. It includes a self-guided training presentation, a checklist and a list of frequently asked questions to ensure that purchases are accessible to people with disabilities. The directors of the branches that deal with procurement and purchasing have instructed their staff to promote the new guidelines to all of their clients.

2005-2006 Commitment

Publications Ontario will consider accessibility issues when reviewing the Ontario Gazette website and developing recommendations for implementation in 2006-2007. Publications Ontario will post a notice on the Gazette website to inform customers that alternate formats can be requested.

Status Completed

Action

Publications Ontario placed a notice on its website informing the public that publications were available in alternate formats upon request. Recently, that website was updated. During that upgrade, the notice about obtaining

publications in alternate formats was enhanced to make it even more customer-friendly.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will train its front-line staff by using the customer services training package for welcoming customers with disabilities.

Status In Progress

Action

MGS has developed a plan for training front-line staff on how to provide goods and services to people with disabilities. This plan includes training front-line managers who will then train their staff.

Timeframe

The training plan has been completed. Using any available information from other ministries, MGS will develop a training curriculum that will be adaptable for the many regional office locations as well as the specialized nature of the Archives of Ontario. During 2006-2007, training will start with managers of front-line operations and be followed by training for front-line staff. The training will continue in 2007-2008.

Rationale

When the Ministry of Government Services was created in 2005, it integrated several organizations with front-line service delivery operations. The ministry has more than 100 regional offices across the province. There are 53 Land Registry offices and 63 ServiceOntario Centres. Developing and implementing a curriculum for these offices is complex and will be carried out in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will review its Accessibility Planning Working Group to ensure it meets its obligations under the ODA and the AODA.

Status Completed

Action

All ministry divisions are represented in the working group.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will review, analyze and make necessary changes to the Accessibility Survey questionnaire drafted in 2004-2005 based on the AODA.

Status Completed

Action

The Accessibility Survey will be more relevant after other accessibility initiatives have become part of day-to-day operations. Until that time, MGS is soliciting feedback through special events, ministry-wide communiqués and other sources to obtain information that will help make the ministry more accessible.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will ensure that the government's portal strategy committee recommends that each ministry website displays a main ministry contact phone number accompanied by a main TTY (Tele-typewriter) number. The ministry will also advise other ministries on how to prepare their websites for this new standard.

Status Completed

Action

The Ontario government has standards that govern the design elements of publicly accessible websites. Those standards now include, as a mandatory requirement, the inclusion of a TTY number displayed alongside other ministry contact numbers. Ministries were consulted and made aware of this change through the government's website committee.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will ensure examples of letterheads and business cards on the website include TTY numbers. It will also inform other ministries of this change.

Status Completed

Action

The government's Visual Identity Program sets design and format rules for printed and online use of logos and other identifiers of the Province of Ontario. These samples have been updated to include TTY numbers for people with a

hearing disability. Ministries will be informed that TTY numbers are to be incorporated into all future designs.

Employment

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will continue providing online accessibility training to managers and employees across the OPS.

Status Completed

Action

A computer-based training module has been updated to integrate the key information about the ODA and AODA. The AODA is focused on developing accessibility standards in key sectors of Ontario. As those standards become formalized, the online module will continue to be updated.

The module was also improved to make it easier for ministries to track usage and monitor participation. It now automatically notes completed training in a user's learning history.

MGS is also working with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario on an e-learning course on serving customers with disabilities. The course will be launched within the OPS in the fall of 2007.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will promote improved policies for employment accommodations and return to work for people with disabilities.

Status Completed

Action

MGS developed a comprehensive set of tools to support clients when the new policy is implemented in 2006-2007.

2005-2006 Commitment

The criteria for the employment accommodation fund will be reviewed.

Status In Progress

Action

The employment accommodation fund helps employees with disabilities, illnesses and injuries fully participate in the workplace. A process has been established for reviewing criteria used to determine which applications qualify for funding. That process is now effectively being used to better manage this annual fund.

Timeframe

The employment accommodation fund criteria will be reviewed by March 31, 2007.

Rationale

Experience gathered from policy and statute reviews will be used to review the employee accommodation fund applications in a more comprehensive and efficient manner.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will provide its policy review guide to the accessibility directorate for distribution to ministries.

Status Completed

Action

A guide for reviewing policies according to the ODA has been posted on the accessibility directorate's Intranet site for other ministries to use in reviewing their policies under the act.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will review its job competition practices to identify areas to improve quality of service, access and accommodation for people with disabilities.

Status Completed

Action

Reviews of internal ministry recruitment practices revealed barriers such as the height of work surfaces, the location of desk drawers and the availability of automatic door openers. The review provided valuable insights on how to ~~that will~~

make competitions more accessible for people with disabilities. It will make MGS a more responsive workplace and it will provide greater awareness of the value of providing accessibility.

As well, in 2005-2006, MGS made more competitions open to the public than in previous years, making more opportunities available to people with disabilities.

Communications and Information

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will continue to raise awareness about disabilities, barriers and the requirements of the ODA and AODA by adding information to the “accessibility information” link on the ministry’s Intranet site.

In addition, two separate articles will be published in Topical, the OPS staff newsletter, focused on accessibility issues, barrier identification and types of disabilities. The ministry will also implement an internal accessibility communications plan to ensure ministry employees understand disability issues, requirements of the ODA and impacts on the ministry.

The lunch and learn “pilot” event will be reviewed based on feedback from participants, and refined for a larger audience. A portion of this event will be incorporated into the employee orientation session.

Status Completed

Action

The accessibility link was moved from the Management Board Secretariat and Ministry of Consumer and Business Services websites to the MGS Today Intranet site.

An article titled, “Welcoming clients with disabilities,” was published in Topical on May 10, 2006. This article brought an inspirational story about accessibility in customer service to its readers. It profiled the inclusion of accessibility as an important aspect of providing excellent customer service by describing a workshop conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs entitled “Client Service Excellence.” MGS is preparing a second article that will highlight how accessibility was addressed at the annual Showcase Ontario event. This article will be published in Topical by September 30, 2006.

A lunch and learn pilot project was tested and received very positive reviews from the participants. It has since been modified for a variety of events, venues and communication products.

2005-2006 Commitment

A portion of the Accessibility lunch and learn event will be incorporated into the employee orientation session.

Status In Progress

Action

MGS accessibility specialists will work with the staff developing the employee orientation program to ensure that accessibility requirements are maintained and that accessibility awareness and educational information are included as part of the orientation sessions.

Rationale

In 2005, MGS was created from the merging of the former Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, Management Board Secretariat and the Centre for Leadership and Human Resource Management. The ministry is integrating the best practices from the previous ministries' orientation programs to create a new MGS orientation program for new employees. Accessibility will be a key feature of that MGS orientation program.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will include an area for accessibility in the "Management Board Submissions Guide" developed for all ministry employees. The ministry will post the guide on the ministry's Intranet site.

Status Completed

Action

As a result of the reorganization of ministries in 2005, and the resulting realignment of ministry functions, this commitment was transferred to the Ministry of Finance.

2005-2006 Commitment

All ministry infrastructure requests will be reviewed to ensure they do not impede accessibility.

Status Completed

Action

All MGS infrastructure requests are reviewed for accessibility issues before they are submitted to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Built Environment

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will build four customer service counters at ServiceOntario Centres and ensure they are accessible.

Status Completed

Action

The government adopted a new set of accessibility standards in October 2004 as part of its strategy to implement the ODA for all government facilities. The ministry has required full implementation of these standards at its new ServiceOntario Centres. Also, as part of the design process, it has obtained advice and feedback from accessibility experts and stakeholders.

Five new ServiceOntario Centres across the province are fully accessible, including three-level counters that allow employees to serve clients using wheelchairs throughout the centre. These centres have been designed so that employees using wheelchairs can serve the public as well.

The centres feature wicket identifiers that include raised letters and Braille labelling, accessible client-access work stations, wheelchair-height form-filling surfaces, designated wheelchair waiting areas, fully accessible display stations and barrier-free washrooms.

For people with visual disabilities, ServiceOntario Centres feature flooring in different colours and textures to define the counter area and, in some cases, direct clients to and from the counters. A reflective white ceiling reinforces the bright lighting at the counter, and dark grey countertops contrast with the

surroundings and with papers used at the counters. Cane-detectable floor rails are installed under all counters and form-filling stations.

TTY access is provided at all sites, and in the future, finalized site directories will include audio assistance.

Acts and Regulations

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will support the implementation of the new AODA.

Status Completed

Action

MGS brought together organizations that created a ministry double the size of the individual predecessor ministries. Therefore, it was necessary to create a dedicated position to lead the ministry's accessibility efforts. This person works with all areas of the ministry, including the divisions supporting the AODA, to ensure that accessibility plans are consistent with the accessibility standards that are established by the Standards Development Committees created to implement the AODA.

2005-2006 Commitment

The ministry will consider the effect of policy and legislation on accessibility for people with disabilities. Also, the ministry will continue reviewing legislation by examining barriers in four Acts: Public Service Act, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the County of Middlesex Act, 1979.

Status Completed

Action

Ministry staff are currently reviewing legislation to identify barriers to persons with disabilities. MGS is also committed to ensuring accessibility is a key part of any new legislation.

MGS reviewed the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Service Act and the County of Middlesex Act, 1979.

No barriers were found in the freedom of information statutes. The Public Service Act is under review. The County of Middlesex Act, 1979, was repealed.

Other Achievements in 2005-2006

The Archives of Ontario

The Archives of Ontario provides excellent customer service to the public of Ontario by ensuring Ontario's recorded history is preserved and accessible. In 2005-2006, the Archives of Ontario reviewed five internal policies to ensure no barriers were present. It reviewed records accessioning (the process of taking records into the custody of the Archives of Ontario), appraisal and acquisition, exhibition loans, exhibition preparation and the preservation policy. The Archives of Ontario also installed an automatic door opener at its current customer service facility on Grenville Street in Toronto. This automatic door opener now makes access to the main floor reading room easier for people with disabilities.

Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers

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

Customer service

- The ministry will reinforce with all managers the value, importance and obligation to prevent, identify and remove barriers in the recruitment process. MGS will also make materials and activities available to raise awareness about accessibility.
- The ministry will review, update and add new material to its accessibility website, to reflect the many changes in the ministry since 2005. For instance, it will now include the integration of the ODA with the AODA.
- The government has significantly improved access to services, previously limited to mail or in-person, through the introduction of new e-services such as online marriage certificate requests. As ServiceOntario transforms enterprise-wide service delivery for the OPS through multi-channel development, such as electronic, in-person, kiosk, and telephone, and progresses towards an integrated delivery network, it will ensure that these transformations include accessibility.
- Accessibility issues will be considered during the development of the new Publications Ontario e-commerce website.
- The AccessNow system of the Companies and Personal Property Security Branch has received funding approval to make it web-enabled. This enhancement will include accessibility standards.

Employment

- MGS will continue providing information to ministries about access to the online training module and look into the possibility of modifying it to allow ministries to independently track usage.

- MGS will launch a program to ensure new employees understand their obligations and the ministry's commitment to prevent, identify and eliminate barriers to people with disabilities.

Communications and information

- The need to raise awareness, inspire, and train staff is key to moving the ministry's culture to one that includes accessibility as a daily mind-set. MGS is creating an information toolkit, called the "Accessibility Awareness Experience" which takes a wide range of accessibility information and structures it for multiple applications. This will be used to help the ministry move towards that cultural mind-set. The "Accessibility Awareness Experience" will be modified and used in a number of ways in 2006-2007. It will be used at Showcase Ontario and the Public Service Quality Fair to promote awareness and inspire employees to think about accessibility in their jobs.
- MGS will host a booth at Showcase Ontario to profile the ministry's accessibility initiatives. The booth will provide information to educate, inform and inspire visitors about the importance and value of identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities.
- MGS will apply to have a booth at the Public Service Quality Fair to raise awareness about accessibility.
- The Office of the Corporate Chief Information Officer (OCCIO) will revise and update accessibility standards and guidance materials to incorporate new findings and refine existing techniques for developing and maintaining accessible websites.
- The OCCIO will incorporate accessibility guidance and standards into the broader OPS web framework.
- The OCCIO will participate in the development of the Information and Communication Technologies Accessibility Standard.
- The OCCIO will investigate new assistive technologies and innovative techniques for extending the accessibility for provincial government web products (e.g., screenreader software, podcasts and keyboard shortcuts).
- The OCCIO will continue to ensure the accessibility of ministry websites by developing a detailed audit methodology for evaluating website accessibility according to current standards and guidelines.

Built environment

- Infrastructure requests and accommodation design programs are reviewed to ensure that they meet and, where possible, exceed current standards for accessibility.

Acts and regulations

- MGS is committed to ensuring accessibility is a key part of any new legislation.

Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed

The Ministry of Government Services commits to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities in the coming year. This section summarizes these commitments.

Customer service

Barrier

Potential barriers to accessing Ontario's recorded history.

Commitment

The Archives of Ontario provides customer service to the public of Ontario by ensuring Ontario's recorded history is preserved and accessible. Over the years, the Archives of Ontario has maintained a very high standard of accessibility. The services provided by the Archives of Ontario are very specialized covering requirements that range from preserving the government's art collection to the maintenance of physical environments that ensure the proper handling and treatment of old documents and other relics. The MGS' Corporate Services Division will partner with the Archives of Ontario to ensure that the ministry's front-line staff training strategy is adapted to meet the specialized needs of staff who deliver services to the customers of the Archives of Ontario.

Responsibility

Corporate Service Division and the Archives of Ontario

Timeline

Completion of the training curriculum will occur by March 31, 2007.

Employment

Barrier

Potential barriers in corporate human resources policies.

Commitment

The ministry will finalize and implement a new policy for employment accommodations and return to work (EARWP). The ministry will also review the OPS performance management operating policy for barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Responsibility

Human Resource Management and Corporate Policy Division

Timeline

The policy and supporting materials for the EARWP will be implemented by March 31, 2007. The review of the OPS performance management operating policy will be completed by March 31, 2007.

Barrier

Potential barriers in accessing the employment accommodation fund (EAF).

Commitment

The ministry will use the review process established in 2005-2006 to analyze the criteria for receiving funding through the employee accommodation fund.

Responsibility

Human Resources Management and Corporate Policy Division and the Ontario Shared Services

Timeline

By March 31, 2007, the criteria for access to the EAF will be reviewed. This will include a review of the role played by ministry EAF coordinators in the process.

Communications and information

Barrier

Potential accessibility barriers at Showcase Ontario

Commitment

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre has been selected as the location for Showcase Ontario 2006 because it meets and exceeds accessibility guidelines. The 2006 Showcase Ontario team provides sign language interpreters for educational sessions and customized government exhibits that are wheelchair accessible. An accessibility exhibit will be present that will consist of four activities to increase accessibility awareness. As part of the event's education program, three sessions will be held. The first will present an e-learning module on customer service for people with disabilities. The second will demonstrate the new AODA website. The third will be a session relating to AODA Standard Setting Process for Information and Communications Technologies. Lastly, accessibility staff will continue to provide Showcase Ontario organizers with advice to ensure barriers are effectively managed.

Responsibility

Corporate Services Division, the Modernization Program Management Office and Office of the Corporate Chief Information Officer

Timeline

Showcase Ontario 2006 takes place in September. Accessibility considerations are an important part of advance planning for the event.

Barrier

Potential accessibility barriers at the Public Service Quality Fair (PSQF)

Commitment

MGS will review the PSQF accessibility measures and will work with partners to make this event more accessible to people with disabilities.

Responsibility

Corporate Services Division

Timeline

The PSQF takes place in October. Planning for this event begins in the summer.

Barrier

Some ministry-wide, online memos could not be read by screen-reading technology.

Commitment

The ministry will develop enterprise-wide guidelines for creating and distributing accessible internal documents.

Responsibility

Government Services Delivery Information and Information Technology Cluster

Timeline

This project will be completed by March 31, 2007.

Built environment**Barrier**

Some front-line services are not accessible to people with disabilities.

Commitment

All new ServiceOntario Centres will conform to the standards for barrier-free design of Ontario government facilities. Recently completed centres will be audited for compliance with the standards and with accessibility best practices. MGS is considering eight sites for new ServiceOntario counters. Accessibility will be a key component in the planning and design of the new centres.

Responsibility

ServiceOntario and Corporate Services Division

Timeline

The compliance audit will be completed in 2006-2007. Barrier-free design and construction of new ServiceOntario Centres will continue through 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.

Acts and regulations**Barrier**

Potential barriers in legislation.

Commitment

The MGS' Legal Services Branch will review the following statutes to identify any barriers to persons with disabilities:

- 1) The Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993 and these regulations:
 - a) General O.Reg. 146/97
 - b) Public Bodies O.Reg. 632/94
 - c) Toll Devices - Period of Valuation O.Reg. 114/97
 - d) Toll Highway Designations - O.Reg. 608/94

- 2) The Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998

The ministry's Legal Services Branch will also ensure that an ongoing review of the Public Service Act includes an assessment for barriers to accessibility in any amendments arising out of this review.

In keeping with the achievement from last year of preventing barriers in legislation as it is being developed, MGS will consider accessibility issues during the development of the MGS Modernization Act.

Responsibility

Legal Services Branch

Timeline

This review will be completed during the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

The review of the Public Service Act and the Modernization Act will occur while the bills are being drafted.

Barrier

Several barriers exist in the daily lives of people with disabilities who live, work in and visit Ontario.

Commitment

Provide leadership to support the AODA

The Ministry of Government Services plays a dual role in developing standards to support the legislation as well as leading the design of an enterprise-wide OPS Accessibility Leadership Strategy.

The Assistant Deputy Minister of the Modernization Division will co-chair the government's Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee for AODA. The Director of the Transformation, Innovation and Excellence Branch will lead the Standards Development Committee for Customer Service. The Director of the MGS Communications Branch will continue to be involved by developing communication and information standards as well as supporting the above two delegates.

The OCCIO, through the Office of the Corporate Chief Strategist, has responsibility for ensuring that accessibility is a component in the implementation of the government's I&IT strategy. The OCCIO will play a leadership role in the development of an information and communications technology accessibility standard, through a standards development committee under the AODA. The Assistant Deputy Minister of the Modernization Program Management Office will lead the design of the OPS Accessibility Leadership Strategy. The objectives of the OPS Accessibility Leadership Strategy are to:

- Position the OPS as an organization that can demonstrate accessibility best practices in accordance with ODA
- Adopt an enterprise approach and prepare ministries for implementation of accessibility standards under the AODA in the areas of customer service;

- information and communications; employment and accommodation and built environment to establish and demonstrate leadership in accessibility practices
- Support the vision of a modern public service, which is to operate as one enterprise by delivering high-quality, accessible, cost-effective services, with a work force representative of Ontario's diverse population.

The deliverables include understanding the current state in the OPS, a jurisdictional scan, consultations with key corporate areas, scope definition and scope approval. Once scope decisions are made, project planning will begin.

Responsibility

Modernization Division, Office of the Corporate Chief Information Officer and the Modernization Program Management Office

Timeline

This activity will continue throughout 2006-2007.

For More Information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (416) 326-8555

TTY number: (416) 325-3408

1-800 number: 1-800-889-9768

E-mail: infoMGS@mgs.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.mgs.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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