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MGS 2008-2009 Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The new Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation came into effect on January 1, 2008. To transition OPS ministries to the new regulation, a section has been added to ministry accessibility plans to highlight initiatives that the ministry is undertaking to meet its obligations under this regulation.

The following section focuses on the achievements towards the Ministry of Government Services' (MGS) 2007-2008 Accessibility Plan commitments. Soon, the OPS will be obligated to comply with four new standards in the areas of transportation, information and communication, employment and the built environment. This section re-focuses Ontarians with Disabilities Act ODA planning on readiness and preparation for these new standards currently under development.

For an introduction to the Ministry of Government Services, please click this link:

English: http://www.gov.on.ca/mgs/en/AbtMin/STEL01_045772.html

French: http://www.gov.on.ca/MGS/fr/Home/STEL01_039111.html

An executive summary of all Government of Ontario Ministry Accessibility Plans is available at http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/mcscs/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/ministries_accplans09.htm.



Report on Status of Customer Service Requirements

2008-2009 Commitment:

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Services Regulation (ASCSR) requires that all organizations that deliver goods and services, develop a policy to ensure that they are accessible to customers with disabilities.

Status: Due for completion December 31, 2008.

Action:

The Ontario Public Service Diversity Office (OPSDO) in MGS has started work on a policy for accessible customer service standards. This policy is being developed in collaboration with Human Resources, Corporate Policy, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) and the Chief Administrative Officers Council. The policy is part of other key OPS initiatives such as the new service directive and guideline, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and other existing governance pieces. Once completed, the policy will be distributed to all OPS program areas. This policy will become the framework within which all MGS program areas will develop their procedures and practices to serve customers with disabilities.

2008-2009 Commitment:

The ministry will establish procedures and practices to provide goods or services to people with disabilities. We will ensure that those procedures and practices outline how we will help people with disabilities and how we will aid them to ensure their service animal can accompany them in areas open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a law excludes a service animal, other measures will be taken to accommodate the person with a disability. Additionally, we will establish procedures and practices to help people with disabilities bring their support person with them.

Status: Due for completion by March 31, 2009.

Action:

MGS will create "common templates" (formats, style guides and wording) to develop accessible customer service procedures and practices (operating policies) and distribute them to ministry program areas by March 31, 2009. These templates will cover the procedures and practices for: posting notices addressing customer service concerns; how customers with disabilities can provide customer feedback; ensuring customers with disabilities and their support person or animal are allowed at any service location.

2008-2009 Commitment:

The ASCSR has several requirements for notices to inform customers with disabilities of the provisions in place to ensure a positive service experience. One example includes the requirement to provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

Status: Due for completion March 31, 2009.

Action:

The ministry will create common templates for notices to be posted that inform customers with disabilities to: provide customer feedback; have service animals and/or support people on site; know about anticipated service disruptions. The notices will also tell people how to obtain information in alternate formats. The documentation includes copies of the regulation and outlines of the procedures and practices to serve customers with disabilities.

2008-2009 Commitment:

The ministry will ensure that all program areas understand the policy and are committed to translating it into

practical service procedures and practices.

Status: Due for completion December 31, 2009.

Action:

All MGS program areas will modify the procedures and practices to reflect business specifics and will use them to ensure their operations are accessible to people with disabilities. In this way, the ministry will comply with the ASCSR by January 1, 2010. While this is happening, program areas will be encouraged to go beyond the requirements of the regulation and show, leadership in removing and preventing barriers, and creating an accessible organization based on the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality and opportunity.

2008-2009 Commitment:

MGS is committed to providing goods and services to customers with disabilities and adhering to the ASCSR principles of independence, dignity, integration, equality and opportunity.

Status: Due for completion March 31, 2009.

Action:

Corporate Services Division will ensure that all supporting products developed (common templates and guides) specifically promote the principles of independence, dignity, integration, equality and opportunity. It will instruct all programs areas to ensure these principles are included in any operating policies and written procedures and practices.

2008-2009 Commitment:

MGS will ensure that all ministry program areas know about the core principles of independence, dignity, integration, equality and opportunity when serving customers or preparing these services.

Status: Due for completion by March 31, 2009.

Action:

The ministry will communicate accessibility principles to all employees. It will make every effort to promote these principles while making special events accessible to staff and visitors including Showcase Ontario, ministry recognition awards and the Public Sector Quality Fair.

2008-2009 Commitment:

The ministry will refine its policies to allow people to use their own personal assistive devices to access the ministry's goods or use our services. We will also require all ministry service providers to be able to use assistive devices to serve customers with disabilities.

Status: Due for completion March 31, 2009.

Action:

MGS, ADO and OPSDO will establish common procedures and practices for assistive devices, used by customers with disabilities and service providers. These procedures will be sent to all ministry program areas and will be a prominent topic in ministry accessibility training.

2008-2009 Commitment:

The ministry is committed to communicating with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

Status: Due for completion March 31, 2009.

Action:

Corporate Services Division and the ADO/OPSDO will establish common procedures and practices to communicate with customers with disabilities. It will also be included in a training strategy to be implemented by all program areas.

2008-2009 Commitment:

MGS will train anyone who deals with the public including staff, volunteers and contractors on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

Status: Training strategy due for completion March 31, 2009.

Program implementation to be completed by December 31, 2009.

Action:

MGS will develop an accessibility training strategy to help program areas meet their ASCSR training obligations. This strategy will help the ministry meet future accessibility standards. It will include initiatives such as accessibility training for all employees and a special course for employees who serve customers with disabilities. Employees will be required to take this training by December 31, 2009. MGS will work in close partnership with the ADO and the OPSDO to develop the training strategy for the ministry, and support the corporate OPS training.

Program areas will adapt the training strategy to their customers' service needs and ensure it is completed by all employees by December 31, 2009.

2008-2009 Commitment:

MGS will train people who develop policies, practices and procedures on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

Status: Training strategy due for completion March 31, 2009.

Program implementation to be completed by December 31, 2009.

Action:

All MGS program areas will ensure this training strategy is extended to those involved with customer service programs and processes.

2008-2009 Commitment:

MGS will train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public, on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard

Status: Training strategy due for completion March 31, 2009.

Third party implementation to be completed by December 31, 2009.

Action:

Program areas will ensure that this training strategy is extended to all third-party service providers who interact with, or develop programs and processes for the public.

2008-2009 Commitment:

MGS will set up a process to provide feedback on offering goods or services to people with disabilities and how to

respond to feedback and take action on complaints. The information about the feedback process will be available to the public.

Status: Template to be developed by March 31, 2009.
Program areas to implement by December 31, 2009.

Action:

ServiceOntario is developing an accessible customer feedback process to be a model for the rest of the ministry. An accessible customer service feedback template will be developed based on this model. All MGS program areas will use this model to establish their own accessible customer feedback procedures and practices reflecting their customers and services.

Report on Other Accessibility Commitments

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will make materials and activities available to raise awareness about accessibility.

Status: Completed

Action:

MGS made significant progress in creating, researching, and sharing key accessibility information for the ministry. This information helped inspire, inform, educate and assist program areas to identify, remove and prevent accessibility barriers. A few examples of the material developed include:

- An updated MGS accessibility toolkit
- The accessibility lens guide
- A guide to accessible meetings
- An accessible printed information guide.

2007-2008 Commitment:

The ministry will continue to ensure ministry websites are accessible by developing a detailed audit to evaluate website accessibility according to current standards and guidelines.

Status: Completed

Action:

The ministry provides extensive audit guidance through its web community and collaborating with its partners. In addition, the web coordinators' accessibility working group continues to ensure audit processes are up-to-date.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Increase accessibility at Showcase Ontario, a high-profile public sector technology conference. Add wheelchair accessible workstations to the registration areas at Showcase Ontario and the Public Sector Quality Fair.

Status: Completed

Action:

These events were planned and conducted with a number of accessibility enhancements. One of the registration booths was adjusted to make it accessible for people with disabilities who were attending the show. An adjustable ramp was used to ensure people with disabilities did not face a barrier when making presentations or receiving recognition awards.

An accessible segment was incorporated into the information booths. The floor design made accessibility a priority by ensuring no design elements would pose a barrier for people with disabilities. This included ensuring all halls and pathways were kept clear of obstructions and clutter.

Building on last year's success, the show once again provided battery charging stations for visitors who use power scooters and power wheelchairs.

Organizations hosting showroom booths were encouraged to ensure they had at least one accessible counter offering their information and displays. Most met this request and contributed to building a momentum of awareness that will influence future events. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the Diversity Office co-hosted an accessibility booth on the showroom floor.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Establish a Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness by spring 2008 to support effective employment accommodation throughout the OPS. Business process reviews on employment accommodation practices will be completed by the end of September 2007.

Status: Completed

Action:

The Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness was launched on April 1, 2008.

Business process reviews based on accessibility goals, have been completed in key areas.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Continue development of the OPS careers Internet and intranet sites, by applying the accessibility standards of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to provide the public and OPS employees with fully accessible information on applying for jobs in the Ontario government.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

The current careers website contains accessible information on careers in the OPS, and provides tools and tips for candidates preparing for an interview in the Ontario government. Further accessibility improvements based on W3C standards will be made with the next version, due for completion in 2008-2009.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Continue supporting the information and communication accessibility standards regulated through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

MGS leads the Information and Communications Standards Development Committee (ICSCD). The ministry holds one of four advisory seats on a council held for members from the Ontario government. The other government seats are held by: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and

Ministry of Economic Development. An interministerial caucus group, representing the broader scope of OPS interests in the development of information and communications accessibility standards, was established to assist the four OPS representatives to represent the views of a variety of different ministries to the ICSDC. The committee met in early October 2008 to finalize and approve an Initial Proposed Standard. Public review of that proposed standard will begin in late 2008 or early 2009.

Within MGS, the Diversity Office is leading the development of an OPS Accessibility Leadership Strategy, which will provide a multi-year plan on achieving accessibility in the public service. As part of this strategy, the Diversity Office will play a key role in coordinating enterprise-wide planning across the different standards areas.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Continue promoting accessibility awareness in the OPS by facilitating a speech and information technology presentation at Showcase Ontario 2007. The theme of the presentation is "Accessibility: now and into the future," and will include an employee's first-hand account of accessibility issues and multimedia information.

Status: Completed

Action:

The accessibility lead for MGS developed a multi-media accessibility presentation that included a guest speaker who shared first-hand accounts of his experience living in a province dedicated to accessibility, a video clip highlighting the progress of accessibility, graphics promoting the true meaning of accessibility and an onsite exercise in profiling the accessibility of the presentation venue. This presentation outlined practical tips and inspirational content that attendees a deeper sense of what it is like living with a disability and what they can do to improve accessibility. This presentation was co-hosted by an employee who has cerebral palsy. He spoke about his life experiences and where he felt the province was in its journey to be fully accessible by 2025.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Design a new ServiceOntario customer contact centre, which will include the standard accessibility design features outlined in the Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. It will also feature teletypewriter equipment, speech recognition software and other features.

Status: The project is continuing and is scheduled to be completed in 2010-2011.

Action:

The Channel and Service Integration Branch has provided IT services that include accessibility components such as the ability for visually-impaired agents to use the software. Also, the application provides voice and touch-tone access, and the ability for customers having difficulty with the interactive software to go to an agent for assistance.

2007-2008 Commitment:

All new accessibility products, including guides, assessment aids and up-to-date information will be added to the MGS accessibility website.

Status: Completed

Action:

The ministry's accessibility products were reviewed, edited and updated for publication on the accessibility ministry's website in December 2008. During the review and update, relevant information and requirements of the accessibility standards for customer service regulations were also incorporated. The site now provides five

pages of informative material, and several links to a vast array of information, tools, guides, and best practices. For example, there are guides and checklists for conducting accessible meetings and events, and a reference link providing accessibility profiles for all rooms of the Queen's Park complex conference facility.

2007-2008 Commitment:

Continue developing the OPS organizational health and wellness website to provide OPS employees with up-to-date information.

Status: Completed

Action:

The OPS wellness site was launched in May 2008. It is the main portal for accessing and sharing useful information to stay healthy and safe in the workplace. It provides links to useful resources and provides current information about issues affecting employee wellness. The site includes the "Wellnessbot," a tool that allows employees to ask questions related to health, safety and wellness, including questions about accessibility in the workplace.

2007-2008 Commitment:

All new capital projects and construction for MGS will meet the design and construction requirements in the government's standards for barrier-free design of Ontario government facilities.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

There were no new capital submissions in 2008. The ministry reviewed its process for analyzing capital submissions for accessibility and improved it by ensuring additional resources were included in submission and approval reviews. The accommodation and facilities area worked with the ministry accessibility coordinator on the project.

2007-2008 Commitment:

All new legislation will continue to include consideration of accessibility as it is being drafted.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

No new legislation was drafted during the review period.

2007-2008 Commitment:

The newly-revised accessibility awareness experience training program will be provided to ministry employees who deliver front-line services to the public. Improving staff awareness of accessibility issues will increase access to these services for persons with disabilities.

Status: Completed

Action:

This was a very active year for training ministry staff who provide front-line services to the public, or who develop services. There were 14 training sessions that provided training to 600 employees. This training addressed ministry obligations under accessibility legislation and exercises to help employees understand what it is like to live with a disability. There were also two training sessions provided to ServiceOntario leadership.

2007-2008 Commitment:

An orientation document for the Modernization Project Management Office (since merged with OPSDO) will be developed to provide visitors with information about the accessibility features of the building and meeting rooms. This may be adopted as a best practice template to be used by other offices.

Status: Completed

Action:

An orientation document has been prepared which provides visitors with an outline of the accessible features of the premises, including how to locate the building and the location of accessible doors and washrooms. This template is being adapted for distribution to accessibility planning leads across all ministries.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will review Ontario's freedom-of-information legislation and access-request process to make sure there are no barriers for persons with disabilities.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

MGS is presently looking at the process for providing access to information for persons with disabilities to identify any barriers with the process and recommend any necessary improvements. MGS is currently redesigning the government's access to information form to make it accessible for people with vision disabilities.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will provide a dedicated teletypewriter (TTY) phone line so that people with hearing difficulties can better access consumer protection services.

Status: Please refer to the accessibility plan for the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services.

Action:

As a result of government restructuring, the Policy and Consumer Protection Services Division is now part of the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will ensure barrier-free recruitment through its new regional recruitment centres. Employee's recruitment-centre training will cover accessibility and providing services to people with disabilities.

Status: Completed

Action:

All recruitment staff attended five-day recruitment training. One of the modules was on diversity awareness and included techniques to conduct fair assessments and access candidates from diverse backgrounds, including persons with disabilities. Staff training also emphasized our government's obligation to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will review and revise its injury, illness and employment accommodation training for OPS managers to ensure it is barrier-free and aligned with the new employment accommodation and return-to-work policy.

Status: Completed

Action:

Injury, illness and employment accommodation training has been revised to reflect the return to work policy, and was launched December 2007. The revised training will be monitored on an ongoing basis, using feedback from attendees and the course instructor.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will ensure plans are in place to make learning and development programs more accessible to all OPS employees.

Status: Completed

Action:

The OPS Learning and Development Branch (LDB) has a system in place for clients to identify their special accommodation requests. All classrooms used by LDB are accessible to clients with disabilities. Upon request, course materials are provided to clients in alternative formats including large print and word formats that can be read by text readers (e.g. JAWS). When special accommodations requests are received, course instructors are notified of the requests to help provide a positive learning experience.

Over 8,000 OPS employees have completed the "ODA: Maximizing the Contribution of Employees with Disabilities" e-learning module since its inception in 2002. Over 5,000 OPS employees have completed the "May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" e-learning sessions since 2007.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will develop additional training materials and delivery options to ensure the OPS uses documents in accessible PDF formats.

Status: Completed

Action:

Adobe – the maker of PDF software – has developed training materials to ensure that PDF formats are accessible with assistive technology.

2007-2008 Commitment:

MGS will use the newly-developed accessibility audit tool to evaluate the accessibility of all ServiceOntario centres across Ontario.

Status: Completed

Action:

MGS finalized the audit tool to judge accessibility at service centres. The ministry applied the tool by conducting audits on all in-person ServiceOntario centres. The audit measured a centre's accessibility against a detailed matrix of accessibility features, such as entrance, counter heights, and lighting. The results show nine centres have a compliance rating of 50 per cent or higher and 10 centres have a compliance rating of 25 per cent or less. These results will support further development of accessibility in ServiceOntario centres.

2007-2008 Commitment:

The MGS Legal Services Branch will conduct an accessibility review of the Ontario Public Service Employee's

Union Pension Act and the Public Service Pension Act.

Status: Completed

Action:

Both acts were reviewed and no barriers to accessibility were identified.

2007-2008 Commitment:

In order to improve overall government-wide accessibility for persons with disabilities, MGS will continue supporting the ODA and AODA, and develop the OPS accessibility leadership strategy with input from other ministries and employees. The goal of the OPS accessibility leadership strategy is to provide a framework for consistent OPS practices that identify, remove and prevent workplace barriers in customer service, information and communications, employment and human resources, the built environment, and transportation. This will help persons with disabilities access common government-wide initiatives such as recruitment, customer services and employee training.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

OPSDO provided leadership to all ministries by planning and implementing for the OPS accessibility leadership strategy. OPSDO has taken on a leadership role in coordinating, guiding, and facilitating the development of tools, policies and practices for all ministries to ensure a consistently high level of accessibility across government. Work included:

- Meeting with key stakeholders to prepare an OPS-wide accessibility plan to cultivate accessibility champions throughout the organization
- Establishing the accessibility leadership committee of assistant deputy ministers and chief administrative officers to guide OPS accessibility
- Working with the accessibility planning leads for each ministry to coordinate planning with other corporate strategies and initiatives
- Launching a pilot diversity mentoring program to provide opportunities for members of specific diversity groups, including persons with disabilities, to be matched up with a deputy minister mentor
- Promoting awareness and education at an OPS accessibility expo and Showcase Ontario, focusing on the new accessibility standards for customer service.

The OPS Diversity Office will continue to develop an enterprise-wide, multi-year accessibility plan to steer all levels of government toward achieving the objectives of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and its regulations.

For More Information

Questions or comments about the ministry's accessibility plan are 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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