

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

2011-2012 Accessibility Plan



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Introduction

Each year, the Government of Ontario sets a course to prevent, find and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Every ministry participates through its annual accessibility plans, as required under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA).

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is Ontario's roadmap to becoming barrier-free by 2025. It includes accessibility standards in:

- customer service
- information and communications
- employment
- transportation
- built environment.

This year, the accessibility plans will help guide planning requirements under the new Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) brought in last summer under the AODA. The IASR requires the Government of Ontario to develop a multi-year plan to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. For a list of Ontario Public Service (OPS) government-wide accessibility projects, please refer to the OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan which will be published in December 2011.

Our annual Ministry of Government Services (MGS) accessibility plan outlines the specific steps the ministry is taking to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Building on last year's plan, our 2011-12 accessibility plan will continue moving MGS towards the goal of an accessible province for all.

To view other ministries' accessibility plans, visit Ontario.ca.
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Accessibility Leadership in the OPS

The IASR came into effect on July 1, 2011. This regulation sets accessibility standards in three key areas: information and communications, employment and transportation. The IASR also simplified a number of common areas of accessibility that apply to all regulations under the ODA. One of the requirements of this regulation is for the government to develop a multi-year accessibility plan. MGS, on behalf of the OPS, has had a multi-year accessibility plan in place for a few years, showing our leadership and commitment to accessibility. The plan gives information on a number of accessibility projects throughout the OPS, also referred to as being “enterprise-wide” OPS. Here are some of the projects that are part of this multi-year plan:

- OPS accessibility guidelines
- accessible communications
- information and information technology infrastructure
- accessibility training – online courses
- alternate formats
- accessible Web content
- accessible recruitment
- workplace policies
- OPS wellness strategy
- partnerships and internships
- universal interview centre
- OPS careers Internet site
- standards for built environment
- promoting accessibility awareness
- Showcase Ontario
- overall accessibility training
- procurement
- review of legislation.

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OPS Diversity Office

The OPS Diversity Office is coordinating the efforts to ensure the OPS meets its obligations under the AODA. This office also works to inspire leadership in inclusion throughout the OPS by:

- hosting an accessibility forum of accessibility co-ordinators from each ministry
- helping with consultations in and outside the government
- supporting and promoting OPS accessibility tools and guides
- supporting or co-ordinating many other initiatives, as shown throughout this document.

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Legend

Status Indicators:

New – means an initiative that is newly introduced in this plan

Ongoing – means the initiative is part of our operations and service delivery

Continuing – means the commitment is an initiative that is not yet complete

Other Headings:

Commitment – indicates a general statement of what accessibility initiative is being undertaken, whether a project or operation, to find, remove or prevent barriers to accessibility

Action – indicates what action was undertaken during the last planning period

Ongoing – indicates what general actions will be undertaken for the next planning period

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Accessible Customer Service

In 2010-11, the government continued to follow the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation and to put in place initiatives that improve accessibility in areas like employment, information and communication, transportation, the built environment and procurement.

Commitment: Customer Service Regulation

MGS continues to lead in accessibility by maintaining the compliance it reached in 2009. Compliance is monitored through:

- onsite spot checks
- reporting compliance through annual accessibility planning
- checking for customer service compliance when beginning other accessibility or integrated initiatives, like emergency preparedness
- strengthening accessible customer service standards through other means under development, like ongoing accessibility training, orientation, integration with emergency preparedness and accessibility toolkits.

In August 2011, all program areas reported that they were continuing the accessible customer service practices, procedures and policies that were set in 2009. They include:

- ensuring new employees have had, or receive, accessibility training
- promoting the accessibility principles of independence, dignity, integration and equity
- allowing support persons always to be present
- allowing service animals on the premises, unless forbidden by law
- posting notices informing customers about accessible services
- posting notices if services are temporarily disrupted
- identifying alternate service delivery options and anticipated time of return to operations
- making available key documents related to the regulation
- seeking and answering feedback on accessible customer service.

Status: Continuous

Action:

MGS maintains its strong commitment to accessible customer service through a strategy that blends the Accessible Customer Service Regulation activities with the requirements of the new IASR. These two regulations will mean more and more opportunities to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility as we continue on the journey to becoming a fully accessible province by 2025.

The combined regulations mean we will be improving accessibility in the ministry's key operations, including:

- recruitment
- websites
- information in the form of Web content, documents and multimedia
- communication passed on through the Internet, brochures, presentations and events
- employee health and wellness
- physical security and emergency preparedness for employees and visitors
- meeting green objectives in an accessible way.

Our websites will continue to be more accessible in the way they function, their content and their applications by meeting the requirements of both regulations. Specifically, information will be readily available in alternate formats, will be written in more accessible ways, will use plain language and will have more refined navigation techniques.

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Commitment: Accessibility Training

Accessibility training is now an integral part of our operations. We will continue to offer updated accessibility training whenever there are changes to accessibility policies, legislation, training materials or programs.

Status: Continuous

Ongoing:

We will continue to offer accessibility training in many forms, depending on the content. Here are some examples of how MGS delivers training:

- communication plans that inform staff of changes in the accessibility mandate

- working groups that inform program areas about accessibility activities by giving updates and asking for reports and status updates on accessibility initiatives
- workshops and events: from the local branch level, such as training sessions, to the whole OPS, such as Showcase Ontario, which is the largest annual public/private sector technology tradeshow in Canada
- the annual Accessibility Expo, which gives OPS employees many learning opportunities
- articles in the OPS online newsletter, *Topical*
- training seminars and workshops given by the ministry's accessibility co-ordinator in partnership with many program areas
- online accessibility training modules that are revised whenever there are changes to Ontario's accessibility mandate.

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Commitment: Family-Friendly Hours

ServiceOntario is making services more accessible to communities by introducing family-friendly hours.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

The hours of operation in 116 ServiceOntario centres were extended to better meet customer needs and expectations. These centres are now open on Saturday mornings and till 8 p.m. on Thursday evenings.

Ongoing:

ServiceOntario's decision to extend hours of operation at specific locations was made according to each community. ServiceOntario continues to monitor each community's needs to best serve its clients. It is also carefully assessing extended operational hours at these centres so that they give the right mix of accessibility and efficiency.

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Commitment: Signature Guide

ServiceOntario partnered with the Canadian Institute for the Blind and used creative employee ideas to produce guides that help clients who have vision loss or other difficulties signing their name. The guides, distributed to ServiceOntario public centres, help ServiceOntario be more inclusive and responsive.

Status: Completed

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Accessible Information and Communication

The IASR sets out, in part, accessibility standards in information and communications. MGS and the OPS have observed international standards for accessibility in their websites for many years. This commitment will continue to be in harmony with the standards set by the IASR.

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Commitment: Accessible Websites and Online Information

MGS is committed to giving accessible information on its websites to help its employees and offer excellent customer service. This past year was devoted to preparations for the IASR.

Status: Continuous

Action:

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the main international standards organization for the World Wide Web. It sets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAGs) that make Web content and applications accessible, mostly for users with disabilities, but also for other users (universal design). WCAGs make content accessible to persons with a wide range of disabilities, including vision and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. These guidelines will also often make Web content more user friendly generally.

WCAGs are the accessibility standards used in the IASR.

Ongoing:

MGS leads the government-wide provision of information and information technology to the OPS. MGS will continue to ensure that all new website information and applications are accessible, in accordance with the WCAGs and accessibility standards of the IASR. Within the ministry, this will be done in consultation with its information and information technology specialists and through committees that oversee website development. The

ministry's accessibility co-ordinator will continue to participate on these committees to give training and advice.

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Commitment: Accessibility Updates

MGS is committed to making its program areas aware of accessibility principles, legal obligations and best practices through training, communication initiatives and online resources. An example is the guides provided last year to make information and communications accessible.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

MGS has made updates to its training and guidance materials to reflect IASR requirements.

Ongoing:

MGS will continue to help all its program areas by updating online accessibility information, such as training, guides and templates, to reflect government direction on putting the IASR in place as these directions are made known.

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Commitment: Accessible Communications

MGS will provide support and tools, both within the ministry and throughout the OPS, to help make communications accessible. This will be done by creating internal documents, like guides and instruction sheets, to help employees create accessible documents, presentations and e-mail messages.

Status: Continuous

Action:

ServiceOntario has led in information and communication accessibility by creating accessibility tips for inclusive communication, a refresh of the visual identity document template, and an accessible Internet website. ServiceOntario teamed up with the

accessibility leads at MGS to deliver accessibility guides to help ServiceOntario remain a leader in accessible service delivery and operations.

ServiceOntario has also shown leadership by providing convenient telephone access. With nine contact centres, ServiceOntario helps Ontarians with a wide range of services. With changing demographics, our phone services now offer multilingual services, making them more accessible to more clients.

Ongoing:

ServiceOntario continues to apply accessibility commitments and legal requirements. It is committed to improving accessibility by reporting on compliance, removing barriers (e.g., with automatic doors), and passing on essential accessibility information and processes.

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Commitment: Ontario Photo Card

ServiceOntario now offers the Ontario photo card. This card gives government-issued identification to eligible Ontarians who do not hold an Ontario driver's licence, such as seniors, the visually impaired and others with disabilities. The card can be used to help get government, financial or business services.

Status: Ongoing

Ongoing:

MGS will continue to work with stakeholders like Elections Ontario to ensure the card is accepted as proof of identity.

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Commitment: Online Application Forms

ServiceOntario is committed to being a leader in making its websites and Web-based application forms comply with the AODA. An upgrade to its online application forms will bring ServiceOntario into line with the IASR under the AODA. The upgrade will give easier access to ServiceOntario's online electronic forms for birth, death and marriage certificates. It will also make clients more satisfied, as they will receive better online service through an accessible application that meets the needs of Ontarians.

Status: Continuing

Ongoing:

The upgrade project will also assess all current ServiceOntario applications to see if they comply, and serve as a how-to guide for making online forms that use Web applications accessible.

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Accessible Employment

The IASR also sets out some accessibility standards in employment. MGS has long provided accessibility in employment practices. The IASR gives even more momentum to increasing accessibility in all aspects of employment, including:

- job advertising
- recruitment
- orientation
- training
- health and wellness.

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Commitment: Orientation

MGS is committed to considering accessibility when developing and delivering ministry orientation programs.

Status: New

Ongoing:

The ministry's accessibility co-ordinator will participate in developing orientation programs at the ministry and local program levels. This will include giving advice that is particular to the program delivery of work units and making sure all orientation programs include the latest information on legal requirements.

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Commitment: Health and Wellness

Accessibility is important in all OPS programs and initiatives. MGS is committed to considering accessibility when developing ministry programs and change initiatives. For example, MGS will continue to support accessibility in human resource programs, both to comply with the new IASR and to fulfil its commitment to leadership in accessibility.

Status: New

Ongoing:

As the specifics of the IASR are determined, the ministry's accessibility co-ordinator will work closely with program areas and accessibility groups to review and revise any human resource policies and procedures that are affected.

The accessibility co-ordinator will also advise on how things like employee accommodation, ergonomics and safety requirements are designed and reviewed.

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Accessible Built Environment

Commitment: Integration with Physical Security

MGS is committed to the safety and security of people and real estate. The ministry has developed a program to conduct threat risk assessments (TRAs) in all MGS-led buildings and operational locations. This program has been expanded to include accessibility considerations for buildings and locations.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

This is an ongoing accessibility development in MGS. When the specialized employees who conduct TRAs are onsite, they also identify barriers to accessibility that should be removed. Through training and field experience, these employees are now including specific accessibility recommendations in their TRA recommendations, rather than having the accessibility co-ordinator review, analyze and provide recommendations.

Last year, MGS conducted 16 TRAs. From these assessments, 59 recommendations were made to improve accessibility at the locations assessed. These improvements ranged from operational practices, like ensuring accessible entrances were never blocked with office materials, to ensuring employees took accessibility training when doing physical security training.

Ongoing:

MGS conducts an average of 20 TRAs per year. The resulting recommendations are reviewed by the accessibility co-ordinator to make sure the accessibility perspectives are accurate, and now also to ensure accessibility activities are meeting the IASR's standards and requirements.

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Commitment: Capital Projects

All new capital projects and construction at MGS will meet the design and construction requirements for barrier-free designs in Ontario government facilities.

Status: Continuous

Action:

MGS continues to ensure that all current accessibility standards for the built environment, such as the *Ontario Building Code* and the OPS accessibility standards for government facilities (2006), are used in the review and analysis of capital expenditure proposals.

Ongoing:

This year, MGS will also use the OPS Inclusion Lens as a tool to improve the accessibility assessments of capital proposals. The OPS Inclusion Lens has a prominent component devoted to assessing accessibility when developing and reviewing programs.

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Other Accessibility Activities

Commitment: Promote Accessibility

MGS will continue to promote improved accessibility improvements within the ministry and throughout the OPS.

Status: Continuous

Action:

MGS has a broad range of strategies to promote accessibility throughout the government. The OPS Diversity Office, a part of MGS, links many accessibility-based organizations and is a hub for exchanging information and raising awareness among all ministries. It is the central co-ordinator for accessibility developments. MGS also uses government-wide communication tools like its weekly online newsletter and *Topical*, its monthly online newspaper. The deputy ministers of MGS and ServiceOntario often include accessibility information, direction and inspiration in their corporate memos and blogs. As discussed below, ShowcaseOntario demonstrates, promotes and embraces accessibility in delivering its programs.

MGS has, or co-ordinates, various accessibility committees, including the intra-ministry accessibility forum, the enterprise deputy minister accessibility leadership committee and the Deputy Minister's Advisory Committee.

Ongoing:

MGS will develop a communications initiative to inform and direct actions related to the IASR. MGS will include updated information about this regulation in its Accessibility Awareness Experience program. This program uses a multidisciplinary approach to keep employees and managers aware of the latest accessibility developments. It inspires them to apply established initiatives to ensure MGS meets accessibility legislation.

Here are some examples of promotional activities:

- speeches at branch and divisional meetings
- interactive workshops
- multimedia presentations
- memos to employees

- website resource centres for information, tools and guides
- working groups
- accessibility integration in other initiatives, such as the Green Office and emergency preparedness.

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Commitment: Showcase Ontario Accessibility

Showcase Ontario is a well-known public sector conference on technology. It gives the OPS a chance to learn about the latest developments in modern business practices. The event includes a prestigious awards ceremony that recognizes excellent business initiatives. There is also an accreditation education program that inspires and supports the learning and development goals of OPS employees.

Status: Annual

Action:

Showcase Ontario organizers continue to remove barriers so that it is more accessible to people with disabilities. It does this through advice from accessibility advisers and feedback from visitors to the event.

Showcase organizers are committed to demonstrating accessibility by making the event accessible and by incorporating accessibility themes in many of the programs at the event. Here are some examples:

- The Metro Toronto Convention Centre was chosen as the location for Showcase Ontario because it exceeds current accessibility guidelines.
- There were sign language interpreters for educational sessions.
- There was closed captioning for the keynote and awards ceremonies.
- Customized government exhibits were wheelchair accessible.
- The Showcase Ontario website was accessible.
- Each year, the website is reviewed as new content and features are added and accessibility technology is improved.
- The educational sessions had reserved seating for people with disabilities.
- OPS employees were recruited and trained to offer specialized guide services to visitors with disabilities.
- Carpet and under pads on the showroom floor were removed to let wheelchairs and scooters move more easily.

- Aisles were widened to create more accessible mobility and navigation.
- Water stations were provided for service animals.
- Power scooter recharge stations were placed on all three levels of the event.
- Stage platforms were removed when wheelchair ramps could not be installed.
- Accessibility awareness sessions were offered to all government exhibitors and volunteers.

Ongoing:

Showcase Ontario organizers will maintain the event's many accessibility practices and provisions and will update educational material to reflect the IASR.

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Commitment: Procurement

MGS will ensure that the procurement process is accessible by reviewing procurement policies and practices and making changes required by new accessibility standards regulations.

Status: Continuing

Action:

The Management Board of Cabinet Procurement Directive has been updated to consider the AODA in the planning and document development stages of procurement. There are also references to AODA regulations and the ODA. There are procurement tools and templates to help ministries apply the procurement provisions of the ODA. Smart consumption tools have been created and are as accessible as current technology allows.

Ongoing:

MGS continues to ensure that accessibility is integrated into current procurement policies and procedures. Procurement tools, templates and checklists are being updated to help ministries include accessibility in their procurement processes. MGS will also fully consider opportunities to promote accessibility beyond the OPS.

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Commitment: Spot Checks

ServiceOntario carried out spot checks with staff at public counters to make sure the documents and resources needed to comply with the AODA Customer Service Standard were available. Overall, documentation was available onsite, and customer service representatives knew how to respond to inquiries on accessibility. A refreshed compliance toolkit was sent to all public centres at the end of the spot checks project.

Status: Ongoing

Ongoing:

This project is done every year targeting 15 per cent of the public centres in each region. Planning for spot checks for the Service Providers Network, to be conducted in 2012, is underway.

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Commitment: Program and Project Development

ServiceOntario is the retail arm of the OPS. It is committed to accessibility when developing or delivering services. To reach the highest possible accessibility standards, ServiceOntario has applied the OPS Inclusion Lens in developing all programs and projects. The inclusion lens has a strong accessibility component that prevents barriers to accessibility.

Status: Continuing

Action:

ServiceOntario now applies the inclusion lens in development of its programs and major projects. For example the lens has been applied to the Accessible Parking Permit project and the Contact Centre Modernization project.

Ongoing:

The inclusion lens is currently being applied to the Seniors Health Card Mail-In Renewal project. It will be used in any ServiceOntario program and policy changes.

Commitment: Review Legislation

MGS is committed to the legal requirement to review all its legislation to find and remove barriers to accessibility. This includes ensuring all its legislation and related actions, like drafting and reviewing legislation, consider accessibility.

Status: Continuous

Action:

In April 2011, MGS participated in training for multidisciplinary teams from all ministries on how to use the OPS Inclusion Lens to review laws for accessibility barriers. The OPS Diversity Office and the Ministry of the Attorney General are working towards a common approach to reviewing legislation across the government.

Ongoing:

MGS will continue to review all legislation that is introduced, drafted or relevant to the ministry for accessibility and inclusion. It will use the inclusion lens and will ensure these reviews are updated to include IASR requirements. A schedule of legislative and regulation reviews will be completed in 2012.

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Commitment: Accessible Information

MGS is committed to researching new tools and technologies that the OPS could use to make information and communication accessible to Ontarians. The Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCADU) has developed *AccessForAll* (A4A), a new technology that helps people with disabilities participate in the mobile workforce. A4A responds to a need for more personal preferences, such as formatting information and types of devices.

Status: New

Action:

In 2010, MGS and OCADU carried out the first major application of A4A in North America. The pilot was applied to e-learning and showed that the training responds automatically to individual abilities, needs, preferences, locations and technology. In July 2011, MGS and the Ministry of Research and Innovation presented this technology to an executive OPS committee. This committee approved the next step of developing a plan to promote A4A internationally, find more pilot opportunities in the OPS and create an internal report.

Ongoing:

MGS has started to co-ordinate another pilot project to give a practical application to the concept. ServiceOntario has agreed to explore pilot opportunities to implement this initiative.

Commitment: Accessibility Expo

Each year, MGS organizes the OPS Accessibility Expo. The Expo is an opportunity to learn about best practices in accessibility, about the latest technology to help persons with disabilities, and about new ways to build an accessible organization for OPS employees and other Ontarians.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

This was the fifth annual Expo and the third hosted by the OPS Diversity Office. It took place in the first week of December 2011, the same week that the UN marked the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year's theme was "Including an Accessibility Perspective." It built on one of the sub-themes suggested by the UN for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities: "Mainstreaming Disability: Including a Disability Perspective in all Development Processes." To make the Expo's theme relevant to the OPS, it was broadened to go beyond development processes to include policies, programs, services and technology,

Ongoing:

The Expo is a highly anticipated annual event to make accessibility issues and best practices better known and to remove barriers for persons with disabilities. It also highlights the contributions that persons with disabilities make to their communities. The OPS Diversity Office will host another Expo in 2012 to ensure knowledge about accessibility and a commitment to keep it growing in the OPS.

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Commitment: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

MGS is committed to accessibility in developing programs and delivering services. As such, MGS will maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to inspire and support ministries with their accessibility developments.

Status: Ongoing

Action:

MGS has had a government-wide Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in place for a few years. The plan includes a summary of the main accessibility projects underway in the OPS. The ministry co-ordinated an update of the plan to ensure it reflects the IASR. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will help the OPS comply with current and upcoming regulations under the AODA. The plan again shows that the OPS has a common approach to removing barriers to accessibility.

Ongoing:

To help the government with compliance, the OPS Diversity Office is compiling a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that will be made available to the public. The public plan will outline the OPS vision and journey to find and remove barriers in each of the regulatory areas under the AODA. The plan will highlight achievements, and outline the OPS approach to finding and removing barriers.

The public plan will be a resource that other obligated organizations can learn from and use.

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For More Information

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

General inquiry number: 416-326-8555

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Toll-free 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: AccessOn. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario barrier-free.

Other formats of this document are available free from:

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