

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SECRETARIAT

*2005–2006
Accessibility Plan*



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Introduction

The recent passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, marks a new era of accessibility in Ontario. This legislation will make Ontario one of the world leaders in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

While the government is moving forward to implement the new legislation, there will be a transition period during which government and parts of the broader public sector will continue to have planning and other obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.

Under the ODA, Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. These plans must be made available to the public. Accessibility planning efforts to date have developed a strong foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will ensure real and effective change.

This document is the second annual accessibility plan developed by the Democratic Renewal Secretariat. It highlights achievements of the 2004–05 plan and outlines commitments for 2005–06 so that no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

This Secretariat intends to build on its achievements by implementing initiatives that support the government's efforts and commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province, where people of all abilities have a chance to fully participate and achieve their potential.

Message from the Minister



It is my pleasure to share the many successes the Democratic Renewal Secretariat has celebrated this past year in working towards the government's goal for an inclusive and accessible Ontario. Our staff has embraced the challenge of ensuring that all Ontarians have equal opportunity to live, work, and participate in the diverse activities available in our communities.

In this, our second accessibility plan, we will outline our efforts to accommodate people with disabilities in the workplace, and illustrate how we are contributing to the ongoing process of removing obstacles that hinder people with disabilities from participating fully in our society. This year's plan highlights achievements of the 2004-05 plan and outlines commitments for 2005-06.

As the former Minister for Citizenship, I had the privilege of being involved in passage of the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The historic act delivers on the McGuinty government's commitment to real, positive change that will afford Ontarians of all abilities a high quality of life. I have heard first-hand how full accessibility truly benefits us all as Ontarians.

This Secretariat intends to build on past achievements by implementing initiatives that support the government's ongoing efforts and commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province, where people of all abilities have a chance to fully participate in our society and achieve their potential.

The Honourable Dr. Marie Bountrogianni
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal

Report on Achievements of 2004–2005 Planning Commitments

The Democratic Renewal Secretariat is pleased to report on the progress it has made to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities since its creation in October 2003. The Secretariat's first accessibility plan was in 2004-05 and was integrated into that of the Ministry of the Attorney General. As a result, the Ministry of the Attorney General's report on 2004–2005 commitments also includes the Secretariat's achievements.

Commitment:

The secretariat will communicate revisions to the Ontario Realty Corporation's

accessibility guidelines to its staff.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

The revised Ontario Realty Corporation accessibility guidelines were communicated to employees involved in procurement.

Commitment:

The secretariat's program managers and supervisors will be given guidance on accessibility in all procurement activities, as required under Section 5 of the ODA.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

The secretariat considered accessibility issues in all its procurement activities.

Rationale: N/A

Commitment:

All new material posted to the secretariat's website will be accessible by people with disabilities, as required under Section 6 of the ODA.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

In 2004–05, the secretariat created its own website at www.democraticrenewal.gov.on.ca and ensured that it was in compliance with accessibility standards for government websites.

Commitment:

The secretariat will work with Publications Ontario to respond to requests by or on behalf of a person with a disability for the secretariat's publications in alternate formats in a timely manner, unless it is not technically feasible to do so.

Status:

Not applicable

Rationale:

The secretariat did not produce any publications during its first year of operation.

Commitment:

The secretariat will accommodate the accessibility needs of its employees, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code, to the extent that the needs relate to their employment.

Status:

Completed.

Note:

The secretariat did not receive any request for employment accommodation in 2004–2005.

Rationale: N/A

Commitment:

The secretariat will accommodate people with disabilities who apply for a position as a government employee and who have been invited to participate in the selection process for employment, to the extent that the needs relate to the selection process.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

Procedures were put in place to ensure that job applicants receive accommodation as required during the selection process for employment.

Rationale: N/A

Commitment:

The secretariat will ensure that new managers and supervisors receive training on fulfilling obligations under Section 8 of the ODA.

Status:

In progress.

Action and Timeframe:

Online training *The Ontarians with Disabilities Act – maximizing the contribution of employees with disabilities* is available to all new managers and supervisors. The module includes key information about the ODA and employment accommodation, interactive case studies, practical tips, fundamental principles and stages of employment accommodation and links to resources.

Rationale:

This is an ongoing commitment.

Commitment:

An accessibility plan will be prepared and posted as part of the secretariat's annual planning process.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

The secretariat worked with the Ministry of the Attorney General's Accessibility Planning Working Group to integrate its commitments into that ministry's 2004–05 accessibility plan. The ministry's plan was posted on the secretariat's website.

Commitment:

The secretariat's 2005–06 human resources plan will be consistent with the requirements of the ODA.

Status:

In progress.

Action and Timeframe:

Human resource planning instructions and guidelines for ministries are under development by the Centre for Leadership and Human Resources Management.

Rationale:

The Human Resources Plan will be reviewed for accessibility issues and barrier removal once the guidelines are released.

Commitment:

The secretariat's emergency evacuation procedures will include provisions for the safe evacuation of people with disabilities.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

The secretariat's emergency evacuation procedures were developed in 2004–05 and included provisions to ensure the safe evacuation of employees and visitors with disabilities, in case of an emergency.

Commitment:

The secretariat will, wherever possible, hold its public events, including engagement activities, in barrier-free venues according to the "Planning for Accessible Meetings" guidelines.

Status:

Completed.

Action and Timeframe:

Public events were held in barrier-free venues and the secretariat ensured that accessibility matters were addressed on the day of the events.

Commitments and Strategies for 2005–06

During the coming year, the secretariat will continue to ensure that people with disabilities have easy access to its information and citizen engagement activities. It will provide an accessible workplace to employees and continue to raise awareness of accessibility issues where possible.

Customer Service

Commitment:

The secretariat will continue to comply with the government ODA procurement requirements and consider accessibility in its procurement of goods and services.

Action:

Managers and employees involved in procurement activities will be reminded of the requirements to procure accessible goods and services for both the general public and government employees.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The secretariat's website will continue to be accessible by people with disabilities, as required under Section 6 of the ODA.

Action:

The secretariat's website will comply with internationally recognized accessibility standards and all new materials posted to the site will be accessible. DRS will participate on the government's GO WEB accessibility committee to explore options to further broaden accessibility.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The secretariat will continue to ensure that, where possible, activities involving members of the public are held in barrier-free venues.

Action:

The secretariat will incorporate accessibility considerations into its selection criteria for venues. It will post the accessibility of the venues in advertisements for public events and will plan its activities in accordance with the government “Planning for Accessible Meetings” guide.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The secretariat will ensure that all its employees are aware of how to provide quality services to persons with disabilities.

Action:

The secretariat will review its customer service practices to identify possible areas for improvement to quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities. All employees working directly with the public will receive training on the ODA. New employees will receive orientation on the ODA, as well as additional training to ensure that they possess a good understanding of accommodation and disability issues.

Timeframe:

Spring 2006

Commitment:

The secretariat will increase the involvement of its employees in the development and implementation of its accessibility plan for 2005–2006.

Action:

The secretariat will establish an accessibility working group. The working group will monitor the implementation of the accessibility plan and report regularly to the Secretariat's senior management team. The plan will be posted on the Secretariat's website at www.democraticrenewal.gov.on.ca.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Commitment:

The secretariat will explore how to make it easier for Ontarians with disabilities to exercise their right to vote.

Action:

The secretariat will undertake research to identify barriers faced by people with disabilities during the election process.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Commitment:

The secretariat will ensure the use of accessibility best practices in all its citizen engagement activities.

Action:

The secretariat will develop tools and resources to assist its managers and employees in the delivery of citizen engagement activities to Ontarians with disabilities. These

resources will be shared with other ministries.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Employment

Commitment:

The secretariat will continue to accommodate the accessibility needs of its employees, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Action:

Employment accommodation will be provided on an individual basis, in accordance with corporate policy and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The secretariat will accommodate people with disabilities who apply for a position as a government employee and who have been invited to participate in the selection process for employment.

Action:

The secretariat will ensure barrier-free access for employment competitions and interviews. Alternate formats for job ads will be provided upon request and the interview process will be fully accessible.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Commitment:

The secretariat will ensure that its managers properly address the accommodation needs of their employees and of job applicants.

Action:

All new managers and supervisors will complete training on the ODA. The secretariat will develop resources to assist its managers and supervisors in meeting the accommodation needs of employees and job applicants.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Communications and Information

Commitment:

The secretariat will provide its public documents in an alternate format.

Action:

The secretariat's Communications Unit will ensure that requests for written materials in alternate formats are responded to in a timely manner, in accordance with Section 7 of the ODA. When the secretariat receives a request for its documents in an alternate format, it will work with Publications Ontario to respond to such requests.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Built Environment

Commitment:

The secretariat will implement the Ontario Realty Corporation's standards for barrier-free design of Ontario government facilities and ensure that its workspace is as accessible as possible.

Action:

The secretariat will review its physical space to identify possible physical barriers to people with disabilities. If renovating its premises, it will ensure that changes meet or exceed government's accessibility standards.

Timeframe:

March 2006

Commitment:

The secretariat's emergency evacuation procedures will include processes and procedures for people with disabilities.

Action:

The secretariat will build on existing procedures to improve its emergency evacuation processes for people with disabilities.

Timeframe:

Ongoing.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The secretariat will ensure that the acts and regulations falling under its responsibility contain the appropriate use of language, with respect to barriers for people with disabilities.

Action:

A process will be put in place to ensure that existing legislation and proposals for new acts and regulations are assessed to review their impact, with respect to people with disabilities.

Timeframe:

March 2006

For More Information

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

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Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Accessibility Ontario web site at: <http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html>. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request from:

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