

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SECRETARIAT

*2006-2007
Accessibility Plan*



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
Introduction	1
Message from the Minister	2
Report on Achievements	4
2005 - 2006 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives	4
Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives	11
Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers	14
Customer service	14
Employment	14
Communications and information	14
Built environment	15
Acts and regulations	15
Other barriers	15
Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed	16
Customer service	16
Employment accommodation	16
Built environment	17
For More Information	19

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, 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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 is the fourth annual accessibility plan developed by the Democratic Renewal Secretariat. It highlights the achievements of the 2005-06 plan and outlines the commitments for 2006-07 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 commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province where people of all abilities have a chance to fully achieve their potential.

Message from the Minister



It is my pleasure to present the Democratic Renewal Secretariat 2006-07 Accessibility Plan and to share the many successes we have celebrated this past year in working towards the government's goal for an inclusive and accessible Ontario.

As the former Minister for Citizenship, I had the privilege of being involved in passage of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which marks its first anniversary this year. This landmark legislation fosters the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

The first two standards that are currently being developed cover the areas of transportation and customer service. On June 13, 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.

The Democratic Renewal Secretariat (DRS) is committed to improving accessibility through identifying, removing and preventing barriers, working together within our Secretariat, across government and with our stakeholders in key areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment.

We are pleased to report that DRS has met its commitments from last year's plan. We are particularly proud of our track record on accessibility for public meetings and events.

Here at DRS, we are building on the success of our previous two plans, and continuing to look for ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities who come into contact with this secretariat, regardless of whether they are staff, members of the general public, or stakeholders.

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 Dr. Marie Bountrogianni
Minister

Report on Achievements

2005 - 2006 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Democratic Renewal Secretariat (DRS) is pleased to report on progress and continued improvement in making its programs, services and facilities more accessible to people with disabilities.

In 2005-2006, DRS ensured that people with disabilities had easy access to its information and citizen engagement activities. It provided an accessible workplace to employees and continued to raise awareness of accessibility issues where possible.

Our report on our 2005-2006 commitments includes our accomplishments and ongoing commitments.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action

Managers and employees involved in procurement activities attended the required training to procure accessible goods and services for both the general public and government employees.

Secretariat staff will continue to consider accessibility as part of the procurement process. Formal processes and training will be communicated verbally and by email to staff to ensure compliance and consistency of the requirements to procure accessible goods and services for both the general public and government employees.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action

The secretariat's website complied with internationally recognized accessibility standards and all new materials posted to the site were accessible. DRS participated on the government's GO WEB accessibility committee and explored options to broaden accessibility.

The secretariat will continue to participate as a committee member and continue to explore options to broaden/expand accessibility.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action

The secretariat incorporated accessibility considerations into its selection criteria for venues and advertisements for public events and activities in accordance with the government "Planning for Accessibility Meetings" guide and held all events and activities in barrier free venues.

The secretariat will continue to incorporate accessibility considerations into its selection criteria and will plan its activities in accordance with the government "Planning for Accessibility Meetings" guide.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Ongoing.

Action

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

Timeframe

This commitment is ongoing.

Commitment

The secretariat will ensure that all its employees are kept informed on how to provide quality services to persons with disabilities.

Status

Completed.

Action

The secretariat reviewed its customer service practices to identify possible areas for improvement to quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities. Employees were kept informed of the ODA to ensure they possess a good understanding of accommodation and disability issues.

The secretariat will continue to keep staff informed and 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

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action

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

The secretariat will continue to be proactive and review and address accessibility needs on an individual basis.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action

The secretariat ensured barrier-free access for employment competitions and the interview processes were fully accessible.

The secretariat will continue to work with Human Resources Branch to ensure all processes are ODA compliant.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action

The secretariat's Communications and Operations Unit ensures that any requests for written materials in alternate format are responded to in a timely manner, in accordance with Section 7 of the ODA.

The secretariat remains ready to work with Publications Ontario to respond to such requests.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

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.

Status

Completed.

Action

The secretariat relocated mid-year and reviewed its new physical space to identify possible physical barriers to people with disabilities to ensure that changes met or exceeded the government's accessibility standards. ODA requirements have been considered and/or addressed. A number of changes to the secretariat's present physical space had been completed by its previous tenant, the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, who removed barriers and improved accessibility. This includes the installation of lever door handles on office doors.

The secretariat will continue to incorporate accessibility as a component of its annual planning process for accommodation projects.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

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.

Status

Completed.

Action

Existing legislation and proposals for new acts and regulations were assessed to review their impact, with respect to people with disabilities. No barriers were found present.

The secretariat will continue this process with future legislation.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 and is ongoing.

Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Democratic Renewal Secretariat established an accessibility planning group in 2005. Its mandate was to identify, remove and prevent barriers within the Secretariat to people with disabilities. The working group will continue to review its commitment to accessibility on a regular basis and look for ways to refine and hone their commitment, if necessary.

The following reports on the progress and continued improvement in meeting its mandate.

Commitment

The secretariat established an accessibility working group. The working group monitored the implementation of the accessibility plan and reported regularly to the secretariat's senior management team. The plan was posted on the secretariat's website at www.democraticrenewal.gov.on.ca.

Status

Ongoing.

Action taken

The working group met to monitor the plan and reported regularly to the Assistant Deputy Minister. The group will continue to meet to review existing commitments and monitor the implementation of the accessibility plan and will report regularly to its Executive Lead.

Timeframe

This is an ongoing commitment.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action taken

The secretariat incorporated accessibility considerations into its selection criteria for venues and advertisements for public events and activities in accordance with the government "Planning for Accessibility Meetings" guide and will hold all events and activities in barrier free venues. The secretariat will continue to incorporate accessibility considerations into its selection criteria and will plan its activities in accordance with the government "Planning for Accessibility Meetings" guide.

Timeframe

This commitment was completed for 2005-06 as event planning occurred and will continue to be a major consideration in future planning.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed.

Action taken

Last year, all managers and employees were reminded of the requirements to procure accessible goods and services for both the general public and government employees.

Secretariat staff will continue to consider accessibility as part of the procurement process. Formal processes and training where available will be communicated to staff to ensure compliance and consistency.

Timeframe

Completed and ongoing.

Commitment

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

Status

Completed and ongoing.

Action taken

The secretariat's website complied with internationally recognized accessibility standards and all new materials posted to the site were accessible. DRS participated on the government's GO WEB accessibility committee and explored options to broaden accessibility. All existing content on DRS's Internet site was and is designed and tested for accessibility as it was/is posted. The secretariat will continue to participate as a committee member and continue to explore options to broaden/expand accessibility.

Timeframe

All new content was designed and tested for accessibility as it was posted.

Commitment

The secretariat will continue to 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.

Status

The secretariat is reviewing its existing space and utilizing its previous tenant's Accessibility Compliance Report and will review potential remedial work that might be undertaken to meet the needs of persons with disabilities at both its locations in Toronto.

Action

The secretariat will continue to incorporate accessibility as a component of its annual planning process for accommodation projects.

Timeframe

Ongoing.

Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers

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

Customer service

- 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.
- The secretariat will partner with other ministries and agencies to ensure training sessions in customer service for people with disabilities are developed and made available to secretariat employees.

Employment

- The secretariat will continue to review the accessibility needs of its employees, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code, to the extent that the needs relate to their employment.
- The secretariat will continue to work with Human Resources Branch to review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality service and accommodation for people with disabilities.
- The secretariat will continue to 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.

Communications and information

- The secretariat has two functioning TTY lines and will continue to review alternative communication systems to facilitate access to information by clients who have a speech impairment.
- The secretariat will examine upcoming printed material and determine if it imposes barriers to people with disabilities.

Built environment

- The secretariat will complete a review of its facilities to identify areas that restrict access to people with disabilities and will continue to work with Facilities Management staff to ensure compliance with existing and new government guidelines for accessibility and, where necessary, make recommendations for revision.
- Secretariat staff will review and ensure all events are held in barrier-free venues and will review facilities to identify areas that restrict access to people with disabilities.

Acts and regulations

- 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 as part of its business process.

Other barriers

- The secretariat will involve staff by means of a questionnaire to obtain input on possible barriers in order to successfully achieve our commitments to provide accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Commitments —

Barriers to be Addressed

The Democratic Renewal Secretariat commits to continue to be proactive in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to persons with disabilities in the coming year. Certain costs may require discussion and ratification with Facilities Management and the Building Owner where property is leased while some items may be done under regular maintenance or future renovations.

This section summarizes our commitments.

Customer service

Barrier

No Braille signage is provided in elevators or in common areas.

Commitment

Meet with Facilities Management staff to explore whether this has been included in the Building Maintenance Plan. Investigate possibility of having Braille signage available.

Responsibility

DRS Manager, Finance and Administration.

Timeline

December 30, 2006.

Employment accommodation

Barrier

Copy/print area at its Mowat Block location may render this area inaccessible to people who use wheelchairs.

Commitment

Investigate and act upon conclusion.

Responsibility

DRS Manager, Finance and Administration

Timeline

September 30, 2006.

Built environment**Barrier**

Install new readily visible exit signs at a constant height in appropriate locations i.e. above exit doors.

Commitment

Work with Facilities Management to have readily visible exits signs placed at constant height at the Mowat Block location.

Responsibility

DRS Manager, Finance and Administration.

Timeline

December 2006.

Barrier

No visual alarm signals located close to exit doors at the Mowat Block location.

Commitment

Work with Facilities Management to explore whether this is in the building management's ODA Plan or should DRS proceed and complete this commitment.

Responsibility

DRS Manager, Finance and Administration.

Timeline

December 30, 2006.

Barrier

Fire safety plan diagram at 1075 Bay Street offices located in an area not often utilized and may not easily be accessible to people who use wheelchairs, scooters or other mobility devices.

Commitment

Relocate to a central area where all staff have easy viewing access.

Responsibility

DRS Manager, Finance and Administration.

Timeline

December 2006.

Barrier

Main and secondary door to offices at 1075 Bay Street location equipped with round hardware.

Commitment

Work with MIA Planning Lead and Facilities Management to replace existing door hardware with lever-handled hardware.

Responsibility

DRS Manager, Finance and Administration.

Timeline

December 2006.

For More Information

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

Please phone:

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416-314-6869

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TTY number: 416-314-7867

E-mail: Monique.Moore@drs.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.democraticrenewal.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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