



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

2005-2006 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

THE SPEAKER, HON. MIKE BROWN

ISSN 1710-5625

Introduction

The recent passage of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) marks a new era of accessibility in Ontario.

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 third annual accessibility plan developed by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It highlights achievements of the second year plan and outlines commitments for 2005-06, the third year, so that no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

Year Two (2004-2005) Achievements

In 2004-05, the Assembly made special arrangements to support the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Policy during its consideration of Bill 118, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

In preparing for the Committee's hearing, the Committee Clerk consulted with the Ontario Government's Accessibility Directorate and with people with disabilities on the suitability of proposed venues for the hearings held in Toronto, Niagara Falls, London, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. Detailed surveys of accessibility were completed on the accessibility of each building being considered as a venue before sites were chosen.

At each Committee hearing there were simultaneous American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and closed captioning on screens mounted in the rooms. Two support service attendants were at each meeting to assist attendees. Large print agendas were made available.

Each Committee meeting was broadcast on the Ontario Parliamentary Channel and webcast on the internet. (Live for meetings in Toronto and taped and later aired for meetings outside of Toronto.) All broadcasts were closed captioned. The webcasts remained accessible on the Assembly website until the end of May 2005.

One hundred and sixty-seven (167) individuals and groups made presentations during the six days of the Committee's public hearings. Three hundred and fifty-eight (358) exhibits were received by the Committee. They came in a wide variety of formats, including compact discs (one contained radio announcements advertising the Committee hearings), floppy diskettes, audio cassettes, Braille documents, video cassettes, pamphlets, comic books, a novel, maps, newspapers (plus articles from newspapers), magazines, briefing binders, newsletters and information binders.

Report on Achievements of 2004-2005 Planning Commitments and Strategies

Facility Improvements

Commitment Install a family washroom in the public area of the Assembly and upgrade female/male public washroom areas.

Status Completed March 2005.

Action The female/male public washroom and family washrooms are now fully equipped and accessible.

Commitment Redesign of Chamber lobbies (Government and Opposition) to improve accessibility for those who work in them.

Status Completed Fall 2005.

Commitment Improve signage and other navigational aids to highlight paths of travel for people with disabilities to all public areas in the Legislative Building.

Status In progress.

Action Signage to be installed by March 2006.

Website Improvements

Commitment Ensure that all content developed for the Assembly's website is accessible.

Status In progress.

Action Research has been completed on the needs and preferences of people with disabilities using the Assembly's website. A redesign of the website (home page and content) and a review of available technologies is underway. Guidelines are under development for the Assembly's website taking into account best practices and completed research.

Commitment Post international symbols of accessibility on the Assembly website to indicate accessibility, and the availability of alternate formats and TTY equipment. Similar symbols should be included in notices of both on and off-site committee meetings.

Status In progress.

Action Work underway as part of website redesign.

Purchasing Procedures

Commitment Develop written guidelines for the purchase of equipment and services for the Assembly to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered when specific goods and services are purchased.

Status Completed.

Action Procedures have been developed for the purchase of goods and services to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered in purchasing.

Accessibility Training

Commitment Expand accessibility training to include supervisors and managers of the Office of the Assembly.

Status	Completed
Action	100% of the managers and supervisors in the Assembly have completed the Accessibility Directorate's online training.
Special Events	
Commitment	Provide ASL interpreters for special events in the Chamber, e.g. the Speech from the Throne, budget, special visits, etc. (This would assist those who are viewing the event via television or in the Chamber).
Status	In progress.
Action	Interpreters were made available to those attending the Legislative Assembly Committee Hearings on the AODA in 2005.
Closed Captioning	
Commitment	Install a television set with closed captioning in the Speaker's Gallery.
Status	In progress.
Action	Feasibility study has been completed.
Increase Committee Knowledge	
Commitment	Increase Accessibility Committee's knowledge of assistive technologies.
Status	Continuing.
Action	Committee members visited the Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre in October 2004. Future visits to similar sites planned.
Publicize Accessibility	
Commitment	Publicize Assembly accessibility on the Assembly's Internet site.
Status	Continuing as part of website's redesign.
Action	To be completed September 2006.
Commitment	Publicize accessibility of the Legislative Building in <i>Access Guide Canada</i> website.
Status	Completed June 2005.
Action	Available at: http://www.enablelink.org/agc/fassessment.php?pid=9&cid=1325&atype=entertainment&aid=1022
Create Awareness	
Commitment	Create awareness of Accessibility Committee by publicizing its activities within the Assembly.
Status	In progress.
Action	Assembly intranet site completed to make Assembly staff more aware of the committee and its work.
Identify Barriers	
Commitment	Identification of remaining barriers.
Status	In progress.
Action	Committee members are working with others in the Assembly to identify remaining barriers and to work to eliminate them.

Commitments and Actions for 2005-2006

Facility Improvements

Commitment	Implementation of the <i>ORC Standards for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities</i> .
Action	These standards will be met in all future capital/renovation projects in the Legislative building.
Commitment	Refitting of the platform lift behind grand staircase in Legislative building.
Action	The retrofit will improve accessibility to the north wing of the Legislative building. Design to be completed by March 2006.
Commitment	Improve accessibility signage in all public and staff areas in the Legislative Building.
Action	New signage is being designed.

Website Improvements

Commitment	Redesign of Assembly's internet website is underway. The redesign will include posting international symbols on the website to indicate accessibility, the availability of alternate formats and TTY equipment, and the use of plain language to ensure that content developed for the Assembly's website is accessible. Guidelines will be developed for both the internet and intranet sites to take into account best practices, research completed to date, and available technologies.
Action	To be completed by September 2007.

Closed Captioning

Commitment	Install a television set with closed captioning in the Speaker's Gallery.
Action	Planning is continuing.

Accessibility Training for Staff

Commitment	Widen accessibility training among Assembly staff.
Action	Training on accessibility will be incorporated into the Assembly's "Respect in the Workforce" training program that is mandatory for all new hires. In addition, all front line staff and staff in the purchasing office will be asked to complete accessibility training.

Increase Committee Knowledge

Commitment	Increase Accessibility Committee's knowledge of assistive technologies.
Action	Members of the Committee will continue to visit facilities that use assistive technologies.

Create Awareness

Commitment

Create awareness of Accessibility Committee by publicizing its activities within the Assembly.

Action

The Committee hosted a display on its activities at an Assembly-wide technology fair in September 2005.

Identify Barriers

Commitment

Identification of remaining barriers.

Status

Continuing.

Action

Committee members are working with others in the Assembly to identify remaining barriers and to work to eliminate them.

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

For more information please contact:

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Website: <http://www.ontla.on.ca>

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Accessibility Ontario Web portal at: <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/accessibility/indexf.html>. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

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