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2024-2027 Accessibility plan

The Honorable Ted Arnott, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

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Introduction from the Speaker

Like all of Ontario's public sector and broader public sector organizations, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is required by law to have a multi-year accessibility plan and to make it publicly available.

The Assembly remains committed to improving accessibility by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for those who visit or work in our buildings, attend our off-site committee meetings, use our websites, view or stream our televised proceedings, use our publications, or interact with us in person, online, or over the phone.

We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities who come into contact with the Assembly, whether they be members of the general public, Members of Provincial Parliament, or staff.

If you have any comments or concerns, please send them to accessibility@ola.org.

Sincerely,

Honourable Ted Arnott

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

AODA at the Legislative Assembly

The Assembly continues to include accessibility planning in all areas of its work. Whether preparing for building enhancements, improving our work environment, designing our websites and systems, or creating new staff and visitor experiences, we look for ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Examples of some of our successes:

- A Legislative Chamber feasibility study was completed and accessibility upgrades were implemented in the Chamber and surrounding areas. Accessibility upgrades in and around our offices and food services area were also completed, such as lowering desks and tables. We continue to identify new areas and ideas for further enhancements to our historic buildings.
- New accessible spaces and processes in the Chamber, committees, and the Office of the Assembly were created for MPPs and staff.
- Work was completed on a multi-year program to upgrade our internal technology systems and applications. Additional staff resources on creating accessible information products were developed for our intranet. We continued our contract with Fable, a Canadian digital accessibility testing company, to provide ongoing feedback on our websites and systems from people with disabilities.
- The Assembly continues to deliver accessibility training for all new staff during their onboarding.

Report on Our Commitments for 2023

In the past few years, the Assembly has completed projects to enhance or improve accessibility in various areas of work.

Employment Standards

We have made enhancements to the HR career recruitment portal to accommodate staff and job applicants using the system, and suggestions for improvements can be requested at any time.

The Built Environment

We have made improvements to the Legislative Building and offices:

- We provided new interpreter / translator workstations to accommodate staff with disabilities working in committee rooms.
- An adult change table was installed in the east wing basement unisex washroom.
- We made accessibility upgrades to ramps, stairs, and platforms in the Legislative Chamber and members' guest galleries:
 - Improvements were made to existing demountable ramps at the north end of the Chamber and we constructed additional demountable ramps at the south end of the Chamber. Improvements were also made to existing stairs in the members' guest galleries.
 - We changed the refreshment tables in the Chamber lobbies to allow people who use wheelchairs to access beverages and snacks.
 - Older fire exit signs were replaced with new standard self-illuminating exit signs which consists of a green pictogram and white graphic symbol. New braille exit signage was also added.
 - We reduced seating in the members' galleries to accommodate guests and to improve mobility.
 - We added anti-slip grips to the stairs and installed brass handrails. The brass handrails have a brushed finish, rather than a polished finish, to limit reflectivity to accommodate individuals with visual impairments. Similar removable

handrails were also installed on the Speaker's dais.

- We worked with a fine furnishing company to manufacture and install a customized barrier-free MPP desk in the Chamber. An additional ramp was installed near the member's desk for seamless and direct access in the Chamber. Similar considerations were made to ensure the furnishings in the new MPP's office met appropriate heights and clearances.
- We lowered food displays and signs in the Assembly's café, as well as rearranged furniture to accommodate visitors or staff who use a wheelchair.
- We created an accessible reception area in the Legislative Research Service office area by lowering the desk to accommodate all visitors and staff.

Information and Communication

We have made improvements to our communications, websites, and systems:

- In the House, the Speaker authorized that a new MPP who uses a wheelchair could raise their hand to indicate a desire to be recognized, to vote, or to signify in any proceeding that requires members to stand in their places.
- We accommodated a new staff member who was deaf and enabled them to engage in meetings and their work with new technology tools. We also offered a T-loop or FM system.
- We launched the Parliamentary Portal, an internal website for MPP office administrative and legislative information, using tools with accessibility features built in. We tested the site for accessibility and made adjustments where needed.
- As part of the public website design project, we consulted with Fable, a Canadian accessibility testing company, and conducted accessibility tests as part of our quality assurance processes.

- We provided internal accessibility training guides to all staff on topics including creating accessible Word and PDF documents, best practices for writing alternative text and conducting accessibility testing.
- We created the mobile app Parlance, to enhance access to the parliamentary process and bring Assembly video content to people in modern formats, beyond computers and televisions. Using Parlance people can now view live video streams of the House, committees, and media studio on their phone, tablet, or media streaming device.
- We increased the number of rooms in the Legislative Building that provide broadcast coverage of committee meetings. All legislative proceedings, including the House, three committee rooms, and the media studio are now streamed live. These proceedings include simultaneous interpretation in both English and French and include closed captioning.
- All travelling committees are now broadcast live on our website and mobile app. These meetings include simultaneous interpretation in both English and French, and closed captioning.
- We have incorporated the ability for people to appear before a committee using Zoom. This gives all Ontarians the ability to present in front of a committee without the need to travel to Toronto or the committee's location. Simultaneous interpretation is also provided to these presenters over Zoom.
- All final committee documents were reviewed and remediated for accessibility.

Commitments for 2024–2027

We have focused plans to improve accessibility in the areas of information and communication, employment standards, and the built environment.

Information and Communication

Our plans include ongoing and one-time commitments to enhance our websites, video, publications, and public tours.

Ongoing Commitments

We will continue to enhance our publications and websites:

- Work is underway to make more research and resources related to Parliament, parliamentary procedure, and the Assembly's functioning publicly available and accessible.
- We will continue to work with Fable, a Canadian company which provides website accessibility advice and reviews, to test our websites with people with disabilities.
- Plans are in place to produce more accessibility staff training guides including creating accessible Excel files, as well as live training sessions on creating accessible digital documents.
- We will continue to ensure that legislative research publications are provided in a format that is compliant with accessibility standards.

One-Time Commitments for 2024-2027

We have plans to develop and improve our video management system, internal Hansard reference website, and tours:

- We are planning to add on-demand content to our mobile app. This will include approximately the last two weeks of House or committee proceedings and press conferences. The on-demand video content will include interpretation and closed captions.
- Work is continuing with a vendor to link live video streams to the Hansard written transcript of House proceedings. This will increase the accessibility and availability of the work of the Legislature and allow people ease of reference between print and video content.

- A new internal Hansard reference website is being developed and will be reviewed for accessibility requirements by staff.
- We are in the testing and development phase of a tactile tour program. Implementation of the program is well underway with new development phases planned for 2024 and beyond.

Commitments: Employment Standards, 2024-2027

We will continue to ensure that all staff take accessibility training (using the Government of Ontario's module related to the *AODA* and accessibility standards) as part of their onboarding.

Commitments: The Built Environment, 2024-2027

We have plans in place to upgrade areas of the building and ensure accessibility in any alternative Chamber sites:

- We will install power door operators on the committee room doors.
- We will upgrade washroom accessories in Chamber lobby washrooms.
- When negotiating alternative Chamber sites, we continue to ensure we use government-related facilities that are accessible.
- Plans are in place to take down two walls in the café area to increase space for better wheelchair access.
- We plan to change the café beverage fridge from a barn door to a sliding door and to add two more accessible tables to the seating area of the café.

Comments about the Legislative Assembly's accessibility plan are always welcome.

For more information, please contact us at [accessibility.ola.org](https://www.ola.org).

Website: <https://www.ola.org>

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