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**Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship
2007-2008 Accessibility Plan****Table of Contents**

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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.

Five key areas have been identified for the first accessibility standards: customer service, transportation, information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

The accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor and will come into force on January 1, 2008.

An initial proposed standard on accessible transportation has been developed by the

Transportation Standards Development Committee. It was posted for public review on June 27, 2007 and will be available for public comment until September 28, 2007.

The Standards Development Committee that will draft the proposed information and communications standard was established and began meeting in April, 2007. The committees developing the accessible built environment and accessible employment standards have been selected and will begin meeting in the fall of 2007.

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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 second annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. It highlights the achievements of the 2006-07 plan and outlines the commitments for 2007-08 so that no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

This ministry 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

Since the formation of the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship on May 23, 2006, I have worked diligently with ministry staff in support of small businesses and entrepreneurs across Ontario. During this brief time period, my ministry has launched a series of initiatives to assist small and medium enterprises grow and to help ensure their success.



One such initiative, the Paper Burden Reduction Initiative, fulfils a 2005 Throne Speech commitment to reduce the paper work and regulatory burden small businesses face when they interact with government. The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, the Small Business Agency of Ontario (SBAO), and the Ministry of Government Services have worked to fulfill this commitment. Over the past year, 24 per cent of business forms in seven key ministries have been determined to be unnecessary and have been eliminated; and, more than double the number of business forms have been made available electronically on the government's central forms repository. The remaining business forms in these seven ministries have also been updated for compliance with Ontario Public Service (OPS) standards and guidelines including the Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005.

This year marks the second anniversary of the landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA) – legislation that will require the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

My ministry is committed to improving accessibility by identifying, removing and preventing barriers, working together within our ministry, across government and in our relationships with our stakeholders.

We look forward to finding new ways of assisting people with disabilities and including these in our daily activities in support of small and medium enterprises.

The Honourable Harinder S. Takhar

Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Report on Achievements 2006 - 2007

It should be noted the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade provides corporate and communication services to the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Therefore, a number of the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship commitments or initiatives described below were entered into jointly with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Specifically, those identified as belonging to Human Resources, Service Management & Facilities, Business Planning and Finance, and Communications and Public Affairs, as well as those belonging to the Accessibility Planning Team itself. These groups are all part of a common infrastructure.

Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship was successful in achieving and, in some cases, surpassing commitments outlined in its 2006-2007 accessibility plan. This section provides a status report on both the commitments made to prevent *new* barriers and those made to address *existing* barriers.

Prevention of New Barriers:

Customer Service

Commitment:

Government business forms being revised and/or streamlined as part of an initiative to reduce the regulatory and paper burden on small business will be reviewed for compliance with Ontario Public Service (OPS) standards and guidelines including the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005. Ministry staff will work with the Ministry of Government Services and other ministries to ensure that accessibility considerations are included in the revision/development of business forms and related design/systems changes.

Status:

Ongoing

Action:

As part of a three-phase paper burden reduction initiative, the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship is working with the Small Business Agency of Ontario, the Ministry of Government Services and other ministries to ensure that business forms being posted on the government's central forms repository are compliant with OPS standards and guidelines including accessibility considerations. Phase One of the project involving business forms from seven key ministries is complete. As the project proceeds with Phase Two in 2007-08, business forms from an additional eight ministries will be reviewed to ensure that they meet OPS accessibility standards before being posted. Phase Three, beginning in Spring 2008, will involve a review of business forms in all remaining ministries to ensure that they meet OPS accessibility standards before being posted.

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to support the Canadian Radio-Television Commission account decision that required Bell Canada to deploy high-speed Internet to many un-served areas of rural and remote Ontario. The availability of high-speed Internet can make some services and information accessible electronically to some persons with disabilities. It also

provides funds to improve telecommunication services for persons with disabilities.

Status:

ongoing.

Action:

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship is continuing to follow the Canadian Radio-Television Commission deferral account ruling, now before the courts, which would require Bell Canada to deploy high-speed Internet to many un-served areas of rural and remote Ontario. The deferral account ruling would also provide funds for Bell Canada to improve telecommunications services for persons with disabilities.

Customer Service

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to ensure front line staff is knowledgeable and trained in assisting clients with disabilities.

Status:

Completed.

Action:

The Ministry continues to encourage front line staff to complete the Centre for Leadership and Learning's *Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Maximizing the Contribution of Employees with Disabilities* e-learning course, as part of their orientation and/or ongoing professional development.

Commitment:

As a part of communication of controllership updates to all staff, the Ministry will provide information about accessibility and procurement practices.

Status:

Deferred.

Action:

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's Business Planning & Finance branch determined information about *Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001* requirements should be delivered directly to Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship staff through procurement training, rather than via e-mail. This would give the Controller and the procurement staff an opportunity to reach a more targeted audience, stimulate more discussion on accessibility, and allow staff to ask more questions.

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to review and provide alternate formats where requested (e.g. Braille).

Status:

Ongoing

Action:

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's Communications & Public Affairs Branch has continued its review of publication formats, and worked closely with clients and/or the public to ensure accessible formats were provided whenever requested.

Commitment:

The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to consult with all program areas in developing new ideas and initiatives regarding accessibility.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Accessibility Planning Team consulted with various branches throughout the year - including Communications and Public Affairs, Human Resources, and Service Management & Facilities - to look at new ways of delivering services and designing and/or equipping our space to ensure full accessibility for staff and clients. It also helped identify some areas for improvement, such as the need for increased awareness and better education across the Ministry on how to plan an accessible event.

Commitment:

In the coming year the Accessibility Planning Team will raise staff awareness regarding accessibility issues by attending Branch meetings.

Status:

Deferred.

Action:

The Accessibility Planning Team elected to defer Branch presentations to 2007-08. Instead, Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship staff was invited to attend an Accessibility Awareness Lunch and Learn in November 2006. Additionally, front line staff and managers were encouraged to avail themselves of various training opportunities throughout the year, including the Centre for Leadership and Learning's e-learning course on the *Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001*, and the procurement training offered by the

Ministry of Economic Development & Trade's Business Planning & Finance Branch.

Commitment:

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade are active members of the Customer Service – Standards Development Committee (CS-SDC). This broad stakeholder committee's role is to define service delivery, as well as the requisite measures, policies, classes and timetables to ensure an equitable and realistic staged implementation. The two ministries bring broad economic development and business perspectives to the committee discussions and provide advice on issues and queries.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade participated on the CS-SDC and assisted in the successful development of the new Customer Service Standards. The ministries will continue to have a role in the development of the other standards - excluding Transportation – and will continue to ensure clients and stakeholders are also invited to participate in the process.

Employment

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to assess its employment policies and practices to ensure compliance and accommodation procedures are applied.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Accessibility Planning Team has two Human Resource Professionals among its members. These two individuals are responsible for the ongoing evaluation of the Ministry's employment policies and practices and for ensuring compliance and accommodation.

Commitment:

We will continue to review our accommodation and ergonomic practices with new and existing employees.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Frontline managers worked closely with the Human Resources and Service Management & Facilities branches to develop and implement workplace accommodations, including: ergonomic assessment, workstation adjustment, and the purchase and installation of ergonomic devices.

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to ensure that applicants can e-mail or fax their applications directly to the Human Resources Branch, where they will be placed in the appropriate competition file.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Human Resources will continue to offer applicants the option to hand-deliver, mail, fax or e-mail their resumes to the Ministry. These options are clearly indicated in all job postings.

Commitment:

The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to have input from the Ministry's Human Resources Practitioners on the identification and prevention of employment barriers.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Two Human Resource Professionals are on the Accessibility Planning Team and are tasked with identifying potential employment barriers, and reviewing and recommending prevention and mitigation strategies.

Commitment:

Future manager procurement training and/or learning programs will include information about barrier-free accessibility in procurement activities.

Status:

Completed.

Action:

The Ministry of Economic Development & Trade's Business Planning and Finance Branch held five training sessions in 2006/07 on Procurement. A total of 63 staff attended from the Ministry of Small Business & Entrepreneurship and a number of other ministries. In

these sessions, the requirements of the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001 were discussed and attention was given to the new Ontarians With Disabilities Act Procurement Requirements Checklist. The Ministry is in the process of updating its training binder to include additional slides on this topic and will be adding the Procurement Checklist to the appendices.

Communications and Information

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to ensure all existing websites are fully accessible.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Communications & Public Affairs continues to ensure all existing websites meet the criteria set out by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), also adopted by the Government of Ontario Web Committee.

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to review all new websites to ensure they meet accessibility in compliance with Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Communications & Public Affairs has ensured all new Ministry affiliated websites meet the criteria set out by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), also adopted by the Government of Ontario Web Committee.

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to work with Publications Ontario in providing ministry publications in alternate formats, where requested by ministry clients and/or the general public.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Communications & Public Affairs continues to work with Publications Ontario to provide alternate formats, whenever requested.

Built Environment

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and "Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities" October, 2004, when assessing and renovating its premises.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

Ontario Building Code and "Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities" October, 2004 have been applied in the assessment and renovation of Ministry of Economic Development and Trade premises.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The Ministry will ensure that acts or regulations currently under review or going forward include accessibility and barrier removal as part of the review process.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship was not responsible for any acts or regulations.

Barriers Addressed:

Customer Service

Commitment:

The Ministry will provide staff with a forum in which to increase their knowledge of accessibility and disability as well as provide an opportunity to answer questions and gain feedback.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's Service Management & Facilities Branch, in conjunction with the Industry Division, delivered an Accessibility Awareness

Lunch and Learn in November of 2006. This session was open to all Ministry of Small Business & Entrepreneurship staff.

Employment

Commitment:

The Ministry commits to removing barriers to enable individual employees to function to their potential in the workplace environment.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Ministry continues to be proactive in the removal of barriers in the workplace and to making modifications that will ensure accessibility for all employees.

Communications and Information

Commitment:

The Ministry will establish a forum for staff to provide suggestions, comments or request further information about the meaning of disability and accessibility.

Status:

Deferred.

Action:

Due to constrained resources and competing priorities, the Human Resources and Communications and Public Affairs Branches in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade elected to defer the intranet site and e-mail projects to 2007/08.

Built Environment

Commitment:

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade will modify its' Human Resources reception area to ensure it is fully accessible according to Ontarians With Disabilities, 2001 requirements.

Status:

Complete.

Action:

In 2006/07, the Human Resources reception area was modified to ensure accessibility. This involved replacing the existing single door with a knob handle, to an automated

double door with wall-mounted push plates and a levered handle on the door.

Acts and Regulations

Commitment:

The Ministry will continue to review any revised and/or new acts or regulations to ensure compliance with the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001.

Status:

Ongoing.

Action:

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship was not responsible for any acts or regulations.

Commitments for 2007/2008: Measures to Prevent New Barriers

In 2007/2008, the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship commits to assess its policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities. This section summarizes these commitments.

Again, it should be noted many of the initiatives identified for 2007-2008 will be entered into jointly with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Specifically, those initiatives belonging to Human Resources, Service Management & Facilities, Business Planning and Finance, and Communications and Public Affairs, as well as the Accessibility Planning Team itself.

Customer service

- Frontline staff will be encouraged to access the "May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" e-learning module, posted on the Centre for Leadership and Learning and Learning website, as part of their orientation/ training.
- The importance of planning accessible meetings will be actively promoted and planning resources will be posted to the Ministry's intranet site.
- The division will review its programs and services on an ongoing basis to ensure they are accessible to clients and the public.
- TTY or Text Telephone access will continue to be offered in the reception areas in Human Resources and the Communications and Public Affairs Branch; any new staff will be trained on how to operate the equipment.
- Alternate formats will continue to be offered, whenever requested.

Employment Accommodation

- Facilities, policies and practices will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in order to identify and remove (or prevent) barriers to employment and ensure every employee is able to achieve their full potential.
- Accommodating staff for a broad range of disabilities will continue to be a priority.

Communications and information

- Information on the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001 and related accessibility programs and services will be included in new employee orientation manuals.
- All staff – not just managers – will be encouraged to access the Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Maximizing the Contribution of Employees with Disabilities e-learning module on the Centre for Leadership and Learning and Learning website.
- The importance of using the correct terminology when communicating with or discussing persons with disabilities will be actively promoted and the “Talk About Disabilities - Use the Right Word” guide (from the Ministry of Community and Social Services) will be posted to our intranet site.
- The visibility of the Ministry’s accessibility plans will be raised through a modification of our Internet site.

Built environment

- All newly built or renovated spaces will meet or exceed Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October 2004.
- All workspaces will be designed and equipped to accommodate employees with a wide range of disabilities and/or functional limitations.

Acts and Regulations

- The impact, if any, of new or amended acts or Regulations on our facilities, policies, programs, practices and services will be tracked and reported on throughout the year.

Commitments for 2007/2008: Measures to Address Barriers

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship commits to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities in the coming year. This section summarizes these commitments.

Customer service

Barrier:

Some staff may not be aware of the importance of making meetings and events accessible, or may not understand what is required to do this.

Commitment:

To ensure all meetings and events are accessible for staff, clients and the public.

Responsibility:

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's Service Management & Facilities Branch will work together with their Communications and Public Affairs Branch to ensure our staff have access to information and resources on planning accessible meetings and understand this is an OPS priority.

Timeframe:

Ongoing for 2007/08

Employment accommodation

Barrier:

New staff and managers may not be aware of accessibility issues in the workplace.

Commitment:

To increase staff awareness about the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001 and accessibility issues in general.

Responsibility:

The Ministry of Economic Development & Trade's Service Management & Facilities Branch will work with their Communications and Public Affairs Branch to develop a new web page on their intranet site to promote accessibility awareness. Additionally, the Ministry of

Small Business and Entrepreneurship will work with their Human Resources Branch to develop an information package to be added to new employee orientation manuals.

Timeframe:

Ongoing for 2007/08.

Communications and information

Barrier:

Information on accessible procurement is discussed in key financial documents on the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's intranet site, but this information is difficult to locate and the referenced material cannot be accessed from within the main document.

Commitment:

To ensure staff is aware of Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001 requirements on accessible procurement and is using the Ontarians With Disabilities Procurement Requirements Checklist as guideline.

Responsibility:

The Ministry of Economic Development & Trade's Business Planning and Finance Branch will work with their Communications and Public Affairs Branch to ensure the guidelines and checklist have more prominence on their intranet site and that all referenced materials are "hot linked" to ensure our staff will be able to access them quickly and easily.

Timeframe:

Ongoing for 2007/08.

Built environment

Barrier:

Some of the Ministry's regional offices may not be accessible.

Commitment:

To ensure, where feasible, that all Ministry locations are accessible to staff, clients and the public.

Responsibility:

The Ministry of Economic Development & Trade's Service Management & Facilities Branch will audit Ministry's regional offices, within their jurisdiction, to determine accessibility and make recommendations.

Timeframe:

Ongoing for 2007/08.

Acts and regulations**Barrier:**

The impact of new legislative or regulatory changes on our business and employment practices may not be fully considered or understood because there is no formal process for tracking and reporting on these changes.

Commitment:

To remain current in our knowledge of accessibility-related legislation, regulations, standards, and best practices and effectively apply those to our business and employment practices.

Responsibility:

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's Legal Department will establish a method and schedule for tracking and reporting on these changes, to ensure all divisions within the two ministries remain current in their knowledge and application of accessibility-related legislation, regulations, standards and best practices.

Timeframe:

Ongoing for 2007/08

For More Information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (416) 325-6666

TTY number: (416) 325-4402

1-800 number: 1-866-668-4249

E-mail: info.sbe@ontario.ca

Ministry website address: www.sbe.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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