

MINISTRY OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

*2007-2008
Accessibility Plan*



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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 for the accessible built environment standard and the employment accessibility 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 These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.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 Research and Innovation since it was founded in June 2005. 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.

A Message from the Premier of Ontario and Minister of Research and Innovation

My colleagues and I firmly believe that every Ontarian deserves the opportunity to learn, work and play to his or her full potential. That is why I am delighted to see the publication of the Ministry of Research and Innovation's second annual *Accessibility Plan* — a document that sets out the ministry's achievements in: accessibility improvement, measures taken to prevent new barriers, and barriers to be addressed.

This plan represents an important component of our government's commitment to building an inclusive and accessible society, one in which persons with disabilities are able to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of our province. As Premier, and as Minister of Research and Innovation (MRI), I am proud that MRI has built on the work of its initial 2006-07 plan and continues to take action to bring about improvements to accessibility in the areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, the built environment, acts and regulations and other areas that pose barriers to persons with disabilities.

Several recent developments indicate that we are moving in the right direction to improve accessibility in some key areas. The accessible customer service regulations were approved by the Lieutenant-Governor in August 2007 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 and was posted for public review between June 27 and September 28, 2007. The committees developing the accessible built environment and accessible employment standards have been selected and will begin meeting in the fall of 2007.

As we mark the second anniversary of the passage of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, we are not only reminded of the strides we are making in ensuring that businesses, government services and communities are fully accessible to all Ontarians, but also that we must continue our efforts to break down barriers for persons with disabilities. MRI's *Accessibility Plan*, and indeed all such plans implemented by public sector organizations within the province, represents an important element of those efforts.

I look forward to realizing our goal of making Ontario accessible to all by 2025. By achieving that objective, we will make our province a more prosperous, vibrant and inclusive place for everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dalton McGuinty', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dalton McGuinty
Premier and Minister of Research and Innovation

Report on Achievements

2006 - 2007 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

This section provides a status report regarding the Ministry of Research and Innovation's achievements relating to its planned commitments stated in the 2006 – 2007 Accessibility Plan. These commitments will be broken down into several categories: (1) customer service; (2) employment; (3) communications and information; (4) built environment; (5) acts and regulations; and (6) other barriers.

Customer Service

Commitment: MRI will ensure that public-facing staff are knowledgeable and trained in assisting clients with disabilities.

Status: Complete

Action: Training for management and staff will continue through three programs. The first program is "ODA: Maximizing the Contribution of Employees with Disabilities (e-learning)". The second program is "May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities (e-learning)". And the third program is "Lunch and Learn". Each course or program educates management and staff on the Ontario Disabilities Act (ODA) and the details surrounding the Act.

Commitment: Continued review and provision of alternate formats (e. g. Braille).

Status: Complete

Action: The Ministry will work with Publications Ontario in providing ministry publications in alternate formats. (eg. font type and compatibility with users' readers).

Commitment:	Continued consultation by the Accessibility Planning Team with all program areas in developing new ideas and initiatives regarding accessibility.
Status:	In progress
Action:	Creation of the Accessibility Planning Team.
Timeframe:	Second Quarter 2007/2008
Rationale:	The Ministry is in the process of appointing a team lead and subsequent committee members.
Commitment:	Awareness raised regarding accessibility issues by attending Branch meetings.
Status:	In progress
Action:	Creation of the Accessibility Planning Team.
Timeframe:	Second Quarter 2007/2008
Rationale:	The Ministry is in the process of appointing a team lead and subsequent committee members.

EMPLOYMENT

Commitment:	Ensured compliance and application of accommodation procedures through continued assessment of its employment policies and practices.
Status:	Complete
Action:	Assessments are ongoing.

Commitment: Continued review of accommodation and ergonomic practices with new and existing employees

Status: Complete

Action: Reviews are ongoing

Commitment: Ensure that applicants can e-mail or fax their applications directly to the Human Resources Branch where they are placed in the appropriate competition file.

Status: Complete

Action: Job advertisements include a fax number and an e-mail address.

Commitment: The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to have input from Human Resources Practitioners for Identification and prevention of employment barriers.

Status: In progress

Action: Creation of the Accessibility Planning Team.

Timeframe: Second Quarter 2007/2008

Rationale: The Ministry is in the process of appointing a team lead and subsequent committee members.

Commitment: Future Manager Procurement Training/learning programs will include information about barrier-free accessibility in procurement activities.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Training/learning programs will continue to include information about barrier-free accessibility and procurement activities.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Commitment: Continue to ensure that all Ministry websites are fully accessible.

Status: Complete

Action: The Ministry's public website was re-launched in May 2007 with required accessibility features. On an ongoing basis, all areas will work with Webmaster to ensure websites are fully accessible.

Commitment: Review all new websites to ensure accessibility in compliance with ODA, 2001

Status: Complete

Action: Work with Webmaster to ensure websites are fully accessible.

Commitment: The Ministry will work with Publications Ontario in providing ministry publications in alternate formats when requested by ministry clients and the general public.

Status: Ongoing

Action: On request Ministry publications are available in alternate formats.

Commitment: Provide staff with a self-directed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training tutorial on the Ministry Intranet site.

Status: In progress

Action: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) manual will be available on the new staff intranet

Timeframe: By end of fiscal 2007/2008

Rationale: The Ministry is in the process of appointing a team lead and subsequent committee members. Once that is complete, the appropriate manual will be available to all staff.

Built Environment

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

Status: Complete

Action: Ontario Building Code (OBC) standards are applied as they are released and become available

Acts and Regulations

Commitment: The Ministry will ensure that acts or regulations currently under review or going forward have issues of accessibility and barrier removal in the review process.

Status: Complete

Action: The Ministry will continue to review any acts or regulations.

Other Barriers

Commitment: The Ministry will continue to review its Ministry Accessibility Planning Team membership to ensure the appropriate representatives from line and corporate resources are fully sensitive to the Act and its requirements for clients, public and employers.

Status: In progress

Action: Team Lead and membership training

Timeframe: Second Quarter 2007/2008

Rationale: The Ministry is in the process of appointing a team lead and subsequent committee members.

Commitment: The Ministry will continue its best practice of providing workplace ergonomic assessments to all staff upon request. Our service provider is sensitive to the ergonomic needs of disabled employees.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Ministry employees receive full ergonomic assessment of their workplace upon being hired, at which time appropriate action is taken.

Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Research and Innovation was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, its commitments described in the accessibility plans it issued before 2005 - 2006. This section provides a status report.

Commitment: The Human Resources Branch and Communications Branch reception includes permanent staff, who are trained to serve clients, staff and members of the public with disabilities.

Status: Ongoing

Action: The Ministry is committed to provision of this full service through its Human Resources Branch, Service Management and Facilities Branch and Communications Branch reception.

Commitment: The Ministry's Human Resources Branch will maintain full reception services in the branch's reception area.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Ensure that the first point of customer contact and service to the public and employees is accessible.

Commitment: Employees with disabilities can obtain direct assistance from the Human Resources Branch reception area to obtain benefits forms or counselling.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Human Resources Branch to provide direct support to employees with disability.

- Commitment:** Provide managers with Management Board of Cabinet (MBC) procurement guidelines, containing accessibility considerations.
- Status:** Ongoing
- Action:** Our Business Planning and Finance website has a procurement section with Ministry policy. Within the Ministry policy there is a link to the website where the procurement directives are located. References to the ODA section of the Procurement policy is specifically referenced in our Ministry financial delegation policy.
- Commitment:** The Ministry will continue to provide e-mail access to requests for information concerning Ministry programs and services.
- Status:** Ongoing
- Action:** Provision of Ministry information via e-mail.
- Commitment:** The Ministry will continue to ensure all of its websites are fully accessible.
- Status:** Ongoing
- Action:** Work with Webmaster to ensure websites are fully accessible.
- Commitment:** The Ministry will continue its practice of analyzing all new websites/pages to ensure accessibility in compliance with the ODA, 2001.
- Status:** Ongoing
- Action:** Review with Webmaster.

Commitment: The Ministry will maintain and expand, as appropriate, its TTY (telephone for people with hearing disabilities) communications including awareness for clients and training of operators.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Regular review and promotion of TTY communications, and training component.

Commitment: The Ministry will continue its practice of working with Publications Ontario to provide all Ministry publications in a wide variety of alternate formats when requested by Ministry clients and the general public.

Status: Ongoing

Action: To provide Ministry publications in alternate formats when requested.

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 all of its premises.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Ontario Building Code standards are applied as they are released and become available.

Commitment: The Ministry will continue its Ontario Public Service (OPS) best practice of providing workplace ergonomic assessments to all staff upon request. Our service provider is sensitive to the ergonomic need of employees with disabilities.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Assessments are ongoing.

Commitment: Issue cell phones with 2-way radio capabilities to the Chief Fire Warden, OPP Staff Sergeant and any persons requiring emergency evacuation assistance.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Employees with disabilities have these with them at all times and in addition have a wallet sized “fan-out” card describing emergency procedures.

Commitment: The Ministry will continue to ensure all signage in ministry premises complies with the letter and intent of the ODA, 2001.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Signage to be improved/upgraded where necessary.

Commitment: Using Human Resources Branch reception as a best practice “barrier-free benchmark,” the Ministry will continue to review and renovate any Ministry reception counters to ensure barrier-free services to disabled clients and members of the public.

Status: Ongoing

Action: Revised counter heights where necessary.

Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers

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

Customer Service

- Ministry program managers and supervisors will be given guidance on accessibility in all procurement activities, as required under Section 5 of the ODA

Employment

- Provide all possible opportunities for persons with disabilities to succeed in the hiring process.

Communications and information

- Appointment of an Accessibility Planning Team Lead and Committee
- The Ministry Intranet website to be used as a central repository on information on accessibility – including frequently asked questions and contact names and telephone numbers
- MRI ensures that all MRI maintained Internet and Intranet websites comply with ODA, 2001 (Section 6) requirements.
- MRI will work with Publications Ontario in providing ministry publications in alternate formats.
- MRI will provide staff with accessibility reference materials on the MRI Intranet site.
- MRI will provide on-going subject matter expertise, quality assurance measures and consultation to ministry staff on ODA issues associated with Information and Information Technology (I&IT).

Built environment

- Ensure that any construction related to a ministry expansion to the 18th floor, 56 Wellesley St W meets or exceeds Ontario Building Code requirements.

Acts and regulations

- Ensure that all acts and regulations currently under review or going forward include a review of accessibility issues
- In assessing its emergency evacuation plans the ministry will:
 - Take into account the varied needs of people with disabilities at all levels of their planning and response activities, and actively involve members of this community in planning efforts.
 - Raise the awareness of people with disabilities of what they can do to prepare for their own safety and survival during times of evacuation.

Commitments — Barriers to be Addressed

Employment accommodation

Barrier: Proper Hiring Practices

Commitment: Provide all possible opportunities for persons with disabilities to succeed in the hiring process.

Responsibility: Human Resources Branch in partnership with Research and Commercialization Division

Timeline: End of fiscal 2007/2008

Barrier: Currently, divisional conferences and annual training events do not have a mandated accessibility learning component.

Commitment: In order to enhance accessibility for people with disabilities through information sharing and skill development of Ministry employees, the Ministry will:

- Include a learning component regarding accessibility for all divisional conferences and annual training events; and
- Incorporate accessibility awareness into staff orientation

Responsibility: Management

Timeline: End of fiscal 2007/2008

Communications and information

Barrier: Accessibility Team not in place due to the Ministry being new and lacking resources.

Commitment: To appoint a project lead who in turn will organize a committee

Responsibility: Assistant Deputy Minister/Chief Operating Officer to appoint a ministry-lead. Lead will create a team

Timeline: September 30, 2007.

Barrier: Communications to staff regarding accessibility planning

Commitment: Annual accessibility Plan is posted on the Ministry website. Also, the Accessibility Team will work closely with the Webmaster to organize the intranet site containing useful information, frequently asked questions, and a contact name and telephone number.

Responsibility: Team Lead and Webmaster work jointly to accomplish commitments.

Timeline: End of fiscal 2007/2008.

Built environment

Barrier: To allow for any persons with disabilities to work in the Outreach Promotion and Business Development Branch.

Commitment: Ensuring that Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier – free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” are applied when expanding to the 18th floor.

Responsibility: Facilities Manager to ensure floor plans, office equipment meets or exceeds requirements

Timeline: End of fiscal 2007/2008

Hiring practices

Barrier: Proper hiring practices

Commitment: Provide all possible opportunities for persons with disabilities to succeed in the hiring process.

Responsibility: Human Resources Branch in partnership with Research and Commercialization Division.

Timeline: End of fiscal 2007/08

Acts and regulations

Barrier: Continuous review of acts and regulations

Commitment: The Ministry will ensure that acts or regulations currently under review or going forward have issues of accessibility and barrier removal in the review process.

Responsibility: Form a partnership with Human Resources Branch to properly review any outstanding issues.

Timeframe: End of fiscal 2007/08

For More Information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (416) 325-5181

TTY number: 1-800-387-5559

1-800 number: 1-866-446-5216

E-mail: info@mri.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.ontario.ca/innovation

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web portal at: 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 free upon request from:

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