

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs 2015 Accessibility Plan

How the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs identified and removed barriers in the Ontario Public Service in 2015 and future accessibility commitments for 2016.

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Executive summary

Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*, ministries are required to produce, and make available to the public, annual plans that identify how ministries will identify and remove barriers to accessibility.

Like all ministries, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (MAA) complies with the [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) and the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#). These regulations establish phased-in requirements in the following accessibility standards - Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, and Design of Public Spaces.

In 2012, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) released its first multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) entitled [Accessibility in the Ontario Public Service: Leading the Way Forward](#).

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' (MAA) 2015 ODA Plan celebrates the tenth anniversary of the AODA, and how the measures taken in 2015 and proposed for 2016 support the key outcomes and deliverables of the [OPS MYAP](#) as we continue on our path to an accessible Ontario in 2025.

The ministry remains committed to ensuring that information and services are provided in a manner that presents no barriers to Ontarians with disabilities, including employees.

In 2015, making our websites and web content accessible was a high priority. The ministry has a centralized model to managing our public facing web applications (Ontario.ca) and content. This has served the ministry well in our ability to have strong oversight, as well as build capacity within our Communication Services Branch (CSB) to ensure all content posted is accessible in accordance with applicable standards. Building this internal staff capacity has also resulted in financial savings to the ministry in that documents did not have to go out to third party vendors to remediate. In addition, [CSB](#) can support staff across the ministry to ensure accessibility is embedded at source on an ongoing basis.

During this time, [MAA](#) leveraged our corporate relationship with the Ministry of Natural Resource and Forestry (MNRF) and their expertise developed through their Digital

Accessibility Initiative (DAI). The project’s core team members provided ongoing support and resources to [MAA](#), including sharing cartography best practices for developing maps. Since both ministries rely on maps to convey important information to the public, our partners and stakeholders, we have been working collaboratively within the and the Ontario Public Service (OPS) to resolve accessibility challenges. [MNRF](#) has also extended an invitation to MAA staff to participate in accessible document training for Microsoft Suite products like Word and PowerPoint.

[MAA](#) is committed to demonstrating ongoing leadership in inclusion and accessibility. In August 2015, the ministry unveiled its “Gathering Rooms”. These rooms are the first of their kind within government corporate office space. The rooms are located at [MAA](#) headquarters at 160 Bloor St. East and are designed to facilitate inclusion and support improved relationships with our Indigenous partners. Through the design and implementation, all aspects of the rooms comply with regulatory requirements and Infrastructure Ontario’s Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. This includes all entry ways, accessible routes and signage contained within the Gathering Rooms, to ensure full inclusion and participation.

In addition, the ministry has developed an Indigenous Inclusion Lens that will be launched to the broader Ontario Public Service in 2016. This web-based inclusion tool promotes early and consistent consideration of potential Aboriginal rights and interests in the everyday work of the Ontario Public Service. It includes addressing barriers that may be faced by indigenous people with disabilities.

Section one: report on measures taken by the ministry in 2015

Customer service

Ontario Public Service [MYAP](#) key outcome

People with disabilities who are Ontario Public Service customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

Measures taken by [MAA](#) in 2015

[MAA](#) continues to be committed to providing accessible customer services to its staff and the public we serve.

[MAA](#) continued to implement the [Ontario Public Service Accessible Customer Service Policy](#) and associated practices and procedures, in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation.

As an example, if Ontarians need any of our information in an alternate format, we are ready to respond by email, by telephone, including a toll free and [TTY](#) service (in partnership with [MNRF](#)’s Natural Resources Information Centre). In addition, notices of temporary service disruptions from Colliers International (building management) are shared with ministry staff.

Information and communications

[MYAP](#) key outcome

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all Ontario Public Service staff and customers.

Measures taken by [MAA](#) in 2015

Accessibility is a powerful concept – it improves our communication, it brings more people

together, and it increases our competitive advantage. MAA is committed to providing accessible communications and information products to staff and the public we serve. Our websites are a key way for customers, partners and stakeholders to get information and services from us. Making sure they're accessible to all Ontarians is essential for us to serve them effectively, and to meet our legislative requirements and mandate. It's just good business.

The ministry continued to support and implement the Ontario Public Service' Accessibility@Source information campaign, communicating to all [MAA](#) staff on the requirements for:

- Including accessibility considerations in procurement practices
- Creating accessible documents, upon request
- Ontario Public Service policies for accessible employment (Ontario Public Service Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy)

[MAA](#) delivers several of its large province-wide transfer payment programs, including Aboriginal Economic Development Fund, New Relationship Fund and Remote Electrification Readiness Program, through Grants Ontario, a transfer payment management system which is managed by the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration, and International Trade (represented by the community service cluster). Grants Ontario is AODA compliant for both internal MAA users and external transfer payment recipients. [MAA](#) continued to use accessible formats and templates based on the Ontario Public Service' I&IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence best practices for communication materials and documents.

The Communications Services Branch (CSB) continued to ensure all key data products, including 133 First Nation Community Profiles, were available in accessible formats. Each division within the ministry provides [CSB](#) with accessible documents for our intranet for all Ontario Public Service staff to access.

The Strategic Policy and Planning Division (SPPD) ensured that all data visualization products, five in total, have been made accessible. These products are designed to help people understand the significance of data by placing it in a visual context or a more accessible form. Patterns, trends and correlations that may not be identified in text-based data can be identified through data visualization.

Accessible feedback

The ministry continued to provide feedback mechanisms for the public to provide feedback through a range of communication channels, including:

- Electronic contact through the [ministry internet site](#)
- Telephone contact, including a toll free and [TTY](#) service (in partnership with [MNRF's](#) Natural Resources Information Centre)
- Contact by correspondence facsimile, and
- [CSB](#) encouraged feedback from clients and participants of consultation sessions and workshops

Active offer

The ministry is committed to providing an “active offer” of assistance to ensure that persons with disabilities know what additional options may be available to help them access information and services. The [Accessible Customer Service policy](#), including “active offer” can be found on Ontario.ca webpages under [accessibility](#).

Partnering with the [MNRF Digital Accessibility Initiative \(DAI\)](#), a ministry-wide “active offer” process is being designed to support staff and program areas in responding to public and internal requests for alternate formats and communication supports. [MAA](#) will look to leverage any new processes and/or protocols that result from that project.

Websites and web content

Supporting Ontario’s goal to become barrier-free by 2025, [MAA](#) ensures digital communications compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the Act.

Ontario.ca is the public’s one window destination for online information and services delivered by all provincial ministries. [MAA](#) has established a centralized model to managing our public facing web content through [Ontario.ca](#). Adopting this model has resulted in the ministry’s ability to ensure key information and services relating to Aboriginal people and issues can be accessed free of barriers, including being available in alternate formats.

To support ministry staff in building awareness and capacity, [CSB](#) updated the accessibility resources section on the internal website to include new information, guidelines and tools as they became available. The website will continue to be reviewed and updated.

Employment

[MYAP](#) key outcome

Ontario Public Service employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures taken by [MAA](#) in 2015

[MAA](#) is committed to providing a work environment where staff of all abilities have the opportunity to participate and contribute to their full potential by understanding their needs and removing barriers.

Some of the best practices in place include:

- Embedding accessibility in the recruitment process and orientation materials
- Employee accommodation and supports; (e.g., provided standing desks to staff)
- Accommodation, where needed, for employees returning to work after an extended medical leave
- Supporting employees who receive employment accommodation, relative to performance management and career development (e.g., Performance & Learning Plans)
- Increased management awareness of employment accommodation for employees with disabilities through promoting the Ontario Public Service “Healthy Workplace Healthy Mind” program within the ministry, and hosting webcasts on site

Built environment

[MYAP](#) key outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around Ontario Public Service facilities and public spaces.

Measures taken by [MAA](#) in 2015

[MAA](#) is committed to greater accessibility in, out of and around the buildings for both the

public and staff.

All planned office renovations, as well as any new office construction in 2015, were designed and implemented in compliance with all regulatory requirements and Infrastructure Ontario's Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities (e.g., Boardrooms, gathering rooms).

In August 2015, MAA unveiled the first of their kind “Gathering Rooms” within their corporate headquarters at 160 Bloor St E. These two rooms are designed to facilitate inclusion and support improved relationships with our Indigenous partners. In designing and implementing these special purpose spaces for the ministry, all aspects of the rooms were designed to meet the Ontario Building Code and in accordance with [AODA](#) – Design for Public Spaces Standard as well as the Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. This includes all entry ways, accessible routes and signage contained within the Gathering Rooms, to ensure full inclusion and participation.

Corporate Management Branch (CMB) is currently investigating the opportunity with building management for a single-stall, accessible washroom on the ninth floor and increased accessibility of the fourth floor washrooms. [CMB](#) has consulted with CBRE and Infrastructure Ontario Property Services (Ontario Public Service service provider), Colliers International (building management), the Ontario Public Service Diversity Office, [MAA](#) program areas and our accessibility lead.

General outcomes

[MYAP](#) key outcome

Ontario Public Service staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility, in Ontario Public Service policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures taken by [MAA](#) in 2015

The ministry is committed to being a leader in accessibility.

Procurement

Accessible procurement considers the needs of people with disabilities at all stages of the procurement or purchasing process. Goods and services that are accessible not only meet the needs of persons with disabilities, but are also highly practical for all members of the public.

Supported by the tools and templates from the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, Supply Chain Ontario, and Management Board of Cabinet's Ontario Public Service Procurement Directive, the ministry continues to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities.

Training

Investing in accessibility makes good business sense and the ministry is committed to ensuring our staff receive the right tools and resources to embed accessibility@source at all levels of the organization.

As such on an annual basis the ministry reviews and launches our mandatory training for all staff. In 2015, our mandatory training aligned to accessibility:

- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) in the OPS
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Information and Communication Standards

- May I Help You? – Supplementary: Ten Things You Need to know About Accessible Customer Service
- May I Help You? Welcoming Customers With Disabilities
- Working Together – The Ontario Human Rights Code and the [AODA](#)
- Diversity – Using the Ontario Public Service Inclusion Lens
- Managers & [HR](#) Professionals are required to take Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Employment Standards
- Managers are required to take
 - Disability Accommodation
 - Leadership 1.0
- Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Prevention for Staff
- Workplace Violence Prevention

In addition, the ministry requires that all staff include mandatory training in their annual performance and learning and development plans. Managers are to review with staff as part of the annual performance management process/cycle.

[MAA](#) is partnering with [MNRF's](#) Digital Accessibility Initiative (DAI) – leveraging key tools and resources that will be developed through that project, for example:

- The accessible document portal that will include the necessary tools and resources to support staff in learning how to create accessible content through templates, demos and guides
- Training sessions (face-to-face, webcast) on the “why” of accessibility and the “how to” create accessible documents

Section two: report on measures proposed by the ministry for 2016

Customer service

[MYAP](#) key outcome

People with disabilities who are Ontario Public Service customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

Measures proposed by [MAA](#) for 2016

[MAA](#) is committed to providing accessible customer services to its staff and the public we serve, now and into the future by continuing to:

- Implement the [Ontario Public Service Accessible Customer Service Policy](#) and associated practices and procedures, in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation (ASCS)
- Look for ways to ensure the right mechanisms are in place to respond to the diverse needs of the people we serve

Information and communications

[MYAP](#) key outcome

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all Ontario Public Service staff and customers.

Measures proposed by [MAA](#) for 2016

[MAA](#) will provide accessible communications and information products to staff and the public we serve. This means demonstrating leadership and going above and beyond just compliance. This will be accomplished by ongoing efforts to:

- Ensure the ministry's websites (external and internal), and the content sitting on those websites are compliant with all regulatory requirements and standards
- Build awareness and capacity through accessibility training to all levels of staff and use of the Ontario Public Service Inclusion Lens
- Use accessible formats and templates based on the Ontario Public Service' I&IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence best practices for communication materials and documents
- Respond to all customer feedback related to accessibility in a timely and respectful manner that meets the needs of the customer

Divisional initiatives

- Aboriginal Relations and Ministries Partnerships will review internally-developed materials for each program and determine what steps may be taken to ensure these documents are in an accessible format.
- Communication Services Branch will ensure their managers understand how to make accessible formats and communication supports available for ministry employees allowing them to fully and meaningfully participate in their work environments.
- Strategic Policy and Planning will ensure the availability of accessible accommodations, including communication supports and/or alternate formats during meetings/seminars/conferences involving internal and external Ontario Public Service clients and the general public.
- Corporate Management will ensure a key point of contact is identified to provide tools, advice and guidelines for branch staff creating accessible content at source.

Employment

[MYAP](#) key outcome

Ontario Public Service employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures proposed by [MAA](#) for 2016

[MAA](#) will continue to be committed to provide a work environment where everyone can contribute to their full potential. Proposed measures for 2016 include:

- Ensure ministry staff can fully and meaningfully participate in their work environments by increasing manager and staff awareness of employment accommodation directives, policies and plans through supporting Ontario Public Service-led awareness initiatives. This includes ensuring the ministry's intranet is updated to be a one-window source for key links and information
- Continue to work with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services' Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness to assess employee wellness/accommodations, including ergonomic needs (e.g., assessments) and respond to recommendations as required
- Ensure management teams undergo training to improve the skills for managing and helping individuals facing mental health challenges
- Promote the Ontario Public Service policy on barrier-free recruitment, including

applying Ontario Public Service Inclusion Lenses (e.g., Executive Recruitment Inclusion Lens)

Built environment

MYAP key outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around Ontario Public Service facilities and public spaces.

Measures proposed by MAA for 2016

MAA will continue to be committed to greater accessibility in, out of and around facilities and public spaces.

All planned office renovations, as well as any new office construction, will be designed and implemented in compliance with Infrastructure Ontario’s Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. Proposed measures include:

- CMB will investigate the opportunity with building management to renovate the ninth floor woman’s washroom to include an automatic door
- Through Ontario Public Service Built Environment Training and Awareness, increase manager and applicable staff awareness of the design of accessible public spaces for barrier-free design of government facilities

General outcomes

MYAP key outcome

Ontario Public Service staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility in Ontario Public Service policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures proposed by MAA for 2016

MAA is committed to be a leader in accessibility. Proposed measures for 2016 include:

- Ensure accessibility is embedded at source at all levels of the ministry:
 - MAA will seek opportunities to leverage tools and resources developed and launched by MNRF’s Digital Accessibility Initiative (e.g., Accessible Document Portal, active offer)
 - Promote staff training sessions (face-to-face, webcast) on the “why” of accessibility and the “how to” create accessible documents
- Review mandatory training, identify gaps and enhance learning opportunities on an annual basis
- Continue to use the tools and templates provided by Supply Chain Ontario and Ontario Public Service Procurement Directive in support of procurement activities
- Use enhanced procurement resources to ensure accessibility is considered at all stages of the procurement process and ensure vendors produce accessible applications and content
- Complete and promote the use of the Indigenous Inclusion Lens. This inclusion tool is web-based and supports the user to focus on facilitating Indigenous inclusion in the development of government policies and programs. This includes addressing barriers that may be faced by indigenous people with disabilities
- CSB will continue to support the MAA accessibility lead to participate in Ontario Public Service accessibility forums, networks and training

Section three: addressing the identification of barriers in legislation

Introduction

In 2005, the government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, with the goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. In support of this goal, the government subsequently committed to review Ontario legislation to identify and address accessibility barriers, and undertook a coordinated review of 51 statutes considered to have a high impact on persons with disabilities. This review has now been completed.

The ministry remains committed to the goal of ensuring that Ontario legislation does not create barriers to persons with disabilities. Through our accessibility plan, we will continue to report the actions taken to identify and remove barriers in ministry acts, regulations, policies, programs and services. The findings of the coordinated review of high impact statutes will inform our ministry’s approach to carry out this work.

Measures currently in place

MAA is using the Ontario Public Service Accessibility Review Tool and the Inclusion Lens, including the Accessible Legislation Worksheet, to identify potential accessibility barriers in:

- Proposals for acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on persons with disabilities
- Existing legislation, to ensure that accessibility is considered

Upcoming plans for review

In the coming year, the ministry will continue with its scheduled review of acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services for barriers to persons with disabilities. We will commence the review the following:

- *English and Wabigoon River Systems Mercury Contamination Settlement Agreement Act*, 1986, [S.O.](#) 1986, [c.](#) 23
- *Nipissing First Nation Agreement Act* (Tax Matters), 2012, [S.O.](#) 2012, [c.](#) 8, [Sched.](#) 37

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