Ontario

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation 2016 Accessibility Report

How the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation identified and removed barriers in the Ontario Public Service in 2016.

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Executive summary

Like all ministries, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) complies with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)* (http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_110191_e.htm#BK3) . This regulation established phased-in requirements in the following accessibility standards:

- customer service
- information and communications
- employment
- transportation
- design of public spaces

The general requirements are:

- procurement
- training

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 (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-public-service-leading-way-forward) .

MIRR's 2016 Accessibility Report demonstrates the ministry's ongoing commitment to being an accessibility leader and how the measures taken in 2016 support the key outcomes and deliverables of the 2012-2016 OPS MYAP as we continue on our path to an accessible Ontario in 2025.

As a values-based organization, accessibility, diversity and inclusion are critical core values that enables our ministry to deliver on our mandate. We are committed to being an accessible business leader by embracing our responsibility to model compliance and more importantly lead by example. This includes building a culture within the ministry where accessibility is embedded at source.

The ministry remains committed to ensuring that information and services are provided to Ontarians with disabilities barrier free, including our employees.

In 2016, making our websites and web content accessible continued to be a high priority. The ministry has a centralized model to managing our public facing web applications (Ontario.ca (https://www.ontario.ca/)), internal facing applications (InsideOPS) and content. This has served the ministry well in our ability to have strong oversight, as well as build capacity within our Communications Services Branch (CSB) to ensure all content posted is accessible. Building the internal capacity has been a good business model. Leveraging the internal capacity of CSB continues to support staff across the ministry to ensure accessibility is embedded at source on an ongoing basis. In 2016, we also identified accessibility champions in each division to further embed capacity across the ministry.

MIRR continues to leverage our corporate relationship with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and their expertise developed through their Digital Accessibility Initiative (DAI). The project's core team members provide ongoing support and resources to MIRR. Under this initiative, which will be completed in 2017, resources were created to assist staff across the ministry in making and keeping web content accessible.

In addition, MIRR developed and launched an Indigenous Inclusion Lens to the broader OPS. This web-based inclusion tool promotes early and consistent consideration of potential Indigenous rights and interests in the everyday work of the OPS. It includes addressing barriers that may be faced by Indigenous people with disabilities.

Our ministry's accessibility efforts were also demonstrated in the design of public spaces. MIRR has embedded the principles of universal design at every touch point of the process from planning, detailed design, tendering/construction initiation to completion. Accessibility needs and accommodations were a focal point of a move within MIRR from the ninth floor to the fourth floor and created opportunities to raise awareness among staff and management of (new) accommodations and needs.

MIRR could not meet its mandate without skilled and dedicated employees:

- the ministry's Inclusion Council, which has representatives from across the ministry, continued to work to enable, inspire and promote an accessible and inclusive workplace
- we support individuals with disabilities through the hiring process as well as those who develop a disability or have new accommodation needs while working for the ministry.
- we are committed to ensure our recruitment process is as inclusive as possible by identifying potential barriers and further building on our awareness of diversity, accessibility and inclusive practices.
- in addition, all staff receive the necessary training to better understand their rights and obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (*AODA*) and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Section one: report on measures taken by the ministry in 2016

Customer service

MYAP key outcome

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

Measures taken by MIRR in 2016

Policies

MIRR continued to implement the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-customer-service-policy) and associated practices and procedures, in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation. This includes ensuring that:

- goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities
- goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities with the same attention to quality and timeliness that are provided to others
- goods and services to persons with disabilities are integrated with regular services, unless an alternate measure is necessary, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the services
- customers with disabilities are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from government goods and services

Information and communications

MYAP key outcome

Information and communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

Measures taken by MIRR in 2016

Information is shared in many different formats, including print, digital, audio, etc. and it is important to think about accessibility and the different needs of people, including individuals with disabilities, every time we create, provide or receive information.

To do this, we have to apply best practices in the area of accessibility when developing, implementing and maintaining our information and communications.

Alternate formats and communication supports

If Ontarians need any information in an alternate format or need to communicate using alternate methods, the ministry is ready to respond.

As an example, MIRR partners with the Natural Resources Information Centre (NRIC). This centre is ready to respond by email, by phone toll free, or by teletypewriter (TTY). The centre ensures notices are in place when services are disrupted at the call centre and the automated interactive voice response system.

In addition, the Corporate Management Branch (CMB) receives Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions from Colliers International (building management) and ensures they are forwarded to ministry staff via MIRR's "All Staff" Distribution List.

Divisional initiatives

Negotiations and Reconciliation Division (NRD)

- At The Special Showing of The Secret Path, NRD liaised with the Ministry of Education to provide American Sign Language/English Sign Language services throughout the three hour event, including signing of the panel discussions and the film itself. This allowed the event to be experienced by several members of the OPS who otherwise would not have been able to do so.

Active offer

The ministry is committed to ensure an "active offer" of assistance so that persons with disabilities know what additional options may be available to help them access information and services. For example, the active offer on our public facing website Ontario.ca (https://www.ontario.ca/feedback/contact-us?id=25825nid=59642) is "We are committed to providing accessible customer service (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-customer-service-policy) . On request, we can arrange for accessible formats and communications supports."

Websites and web content

Our website Ontario.ca (https://www.ontario.ca/feedback/contact-us?id=25825nid=59642) is a key way for customers, partners and stakeholders to get information and services from us. Making sure it is 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.

MIRR is committed to ensuring that the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 level AA commitments in the Information and Communications Standard of the IASR are met - ensuring websites are accessible for all.

Divisional initiatives

Across the ministry, staff have been developing accessible websites, web content, and digital documents.

Negotiations and Reconciliation Division (NRD)

- NRD ensures communication materials prepared for various audiences, public open houses, negotiations, etc. are in accessible formats.

Indigenous Relations and Programs Division (IRPD)

- Internal and external templates and key documents were created and made accessible by the accessibility champions who continue to support creation of accessible content for each unit.

Strategic Policy and Planning Division (SPPD)

- Effective September 1, 2016, SPPD staff were required to include "active offer messages" in their email signature blocks. Staff are also required to use the font size outlined in WCAG 2.0 level AA guidelines for email communication. SPPD remains committed to providing documents in accessible formats, upon request.
- Staff attended half-day accessibility training to upload accessible content to the intranet and how to ensure that all web content confirms with WCAG 2.0 level AA standard.

Communications Services Branch (CSB)

- CSB led the migration to the new intranet platform and ensured all published content was accessible in accordance with the information and communications standard in the IASR. The branch continues to consult with divisions on accessibility and published content on Ontario.ca and provides best advice regarding creating accessible content. CSB continues to look for ways to improve accessibility with guidance from Cabinet Office communications and the IT&T Accessibility Centre for Excellence.

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's Ontario.ca (https://www.ontario.ca/feedback/contact-us?id=26930nid=65620) internet site
- telephone contact, including a toll free and TTY service (in partnership with MNRF's NRIC)
- contact by correspondence facsimile and
- seek feedback from clients and participants of consultation sessions and workshops via methods like surveys

Employment

MYAP key outcome

OPS employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures taken by MIRR in 2016

MIRR 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 needs and removing barriers. As an employer, MIRR works to attract and retain talented employees, including those with disabilities.

Best practices in place include:

- embedding accessibility throughout the recruitment process and in orientation materials
- employee accommodation and supports (e.g., ergonomic assessments, assistive technology or workplace modifications such as standing desks, adjustable monitor stands, or text-to-speech programs)
- accommodation where needed for employees returning to work after an extended medical leave

- support for employees who receive employment accommodation, relative to performance management and career development (e.g. performance and learning plans)

Divisional initiatives

Negotiations and Reconciliation Division (NRD)

- When recruiting, NRD management holds open and open-targeted competitions wherever possible. Reaching out to Indigenous organizations, universities, and employee networks also supports recruiting First Nations, Métis and Inuit professionals and professionals with a disability.

Design of public spaces

MYAP key outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

Measures taken by MIRR in 2016

MIRR 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 2016, were designed and implemented in accordance with all regulatory requirements (e.g. Ontario Building Code, IASR) and to Infrastructure Ontario's Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities.

Accessibility needs and accommodations were a focal point of a move from the ninth floor to the fourth floor and created opportunities to raise awareness among staff and management of (new) accommodations and needs.

Accessible design in action - Indigenous Relations and Programs Division (IRPD)

IRPD was affected by the move from the ninth floor to the fourth floor. Management worked to showcase this move as an opportunity to check-in with staff and raise awareness of physical or accessibility needs requiring accommodation. Staff members affected submitted requests for physical or accessibility accommodations, and new efforts and educational opportunities were undertaken to support staff and encourage peer awareness and support for these accommodations. Additional supports such as standing desks, ergonomic chairs, etc., were made available, as well as support for workplace adjustments such as cubicle location, window or wall considerations, lower/different/natural lighting for sight support, mental health and wellness.

General outcomes

MYAP key outcome

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

Measures taken by MIRR in 2016

The ministry is committed to being a leader in accessibility.

Accessibility plans

MIRR's 2016 Accessibility Report builds on and supports the *AODA*, the OPS' MYAP, and Towards Inclusion, MIRR's Inclusion Strategic Plan (2013-2016).

As part of the plan development, universal/inclusive design principles were applied, including conducting active outreach and consultations with Divisions and their program areas to ensure that everyone had a voice and share their achievements.

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 OPS 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 2016, our mandatory training aligned to accessibility:

- IASR Module 1: *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (*IASR*) in the OPS
- IASR Module 2: *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (*IASR*) Information and Communications Standards
- May I Help You? Module 1: Welcoming Customers with Disabilities
- May I Help You? Module 2: Supplementary: Ten Things You Need to Know about Accessible Customer Service
- Working Together: The Ontario Human Rights Code and the *AODA* (video)
- Respectful Workplace Policy and the Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Prevention (WDHP) Program
- Diversity – Using the OPS Inclusion Lens
- managers are required to take:

- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Employment Standards (Managers and HR Professionals)
- Disability Accommodation
- Leadership 1.0

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.

Divisional initiatives

Negotiations and Reconciliation Division (NRD)

- When scheduling events and meetings, NRD ensures the space will be accessible and inclusive for our ministry and Indigenous partners. NRD often has Elders and community members with limited mobility attending and participating in meetings; ensuring they are able to access these spaces and contribute is critical.

Indigenous Relations and Programs Division (IRPD)

- Applied accessible meeting best practices to ensure external participants of all abilities could fully participate in policy engagements.
- Accessibility Champions were selected to attend several training opportunities through LearnON (OPS learning system) and work with the Communications Services Branch Accessibility Champion on making key documents, templates and charts accessible for the branch.

Corporate Management Branch (CMB)

- When CMB receives procurement approval requests, the Corporate Controllership Section refers to the OPS Procurement Directive, December 2014 to ensure compliance. The OPS Procurement Directive outlines ministries' obligations to people with disabilities and lists the information that must be included in procurement documents.

Section two: addressing the identification of barriers in legislation and implementation frameworks

Introduction

In 2005, the government introduced the *AODA*, 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.

As a result of this review, the government made changes to 11 statutes spread across seven ministries to ensure that Ontario laws better reflect accessibility considerations. The changes to the 11 statutes were included in the government's 2016 Budget bill, which received Royal Assent on April 19, 2016.

Each ministry continues to be responsible for identifying and addressing barriers in their legislation and the policies and programs through which that legislation is implemented, and for reporting on results through its accessibility report.

Our Ministry remains committed to the goal of ensuring that Ontario legislation and implementation frameworks do not create barriers to persons with disabilities.

Measures in place in 2016

The ministry ensures that accessibility and inclusion is taken into account when developing new policies and programs or reviewing existing ones. The following measures are in place to assess our ministry's proposals for new acts, regulations, policies and programs, and services to determine their effect on persons with disabilities:

- promote the use of the OPS Inclusion Lens and other subject matter lenses like the OPS Indigenous Inclusion Lens
- analyze the OPS and MIRR Employee Engagement surveys
- provide tools and training to MIRR staff on creating accessible content at source
- continue ensuring that the feedback process in place offered through Ontario.ca (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-customer-service-policy) permits feedback in person, by telephone (including TTY service), in writing, or electronic contact. The ministry follows the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy (https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-public-service-accessible-customer-service-policy) , available to all customers upon request

Actions taken in the past year

MIRR is using the OPS Accessibility Review Tool and the OPS 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

The *Nipissing First Nations Agreement Act*, and *English and Wabigoon River Systems Mercury Contamination Settlement Agreement Act*, were reviewed in 2016 and no barriers were identified.

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Related

All 2016 ministry accessibility reports (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-plans-2016)

2012-2016 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-public-service-leading-way-forward)

A guide to accessibility directives and policies in the Ontario Public Service (https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-service-policies-make-accessibility-work)