

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019 Annual Status Report

Learn more about how the Ontario Public Service continues to remove barriers to accessibility.

Background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>) was designed to benefit all Ontarians by establishing standards that improve accessibility for people with disabilities. These standards help identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessible goods, services, facilities, employment and other areas of daily work and life. Accessibility standards have been created for five areas: customer service, information and communications, transportation, the design of public spaces and employment. These standards are described in the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191>).

Under this regulation, organizations in Ontario must develop multi-year accessibility plans that outline how they will meet their obligations under the legislation and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

The 2017-2021 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-2021-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>) is a roadmap that shows how the Ontario Public Service is responding to and going beyond its legislative obligations. It focuses on identifying, removing and preventing accessibility barriers through the province's policies, programs, services and targeted initiatives.

This five-year plan was developed with input from ministries' accessibility stakeholders and employees, including those with disabilities; it includes 60 commitments based on the Act's five accessibility standards (customer service, information and communications, transportation, the design of public spaces and employment).

The 2019 Annual Status Report highlights some of the progress the Ontario Public Service has made in 2019 to deliver on its commitments in the plan, including steps taken to comply with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

Year three at a glance

Cumulatively, 70% of the 60 commitments in the 2017-2021 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-2021-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>) were completed by the end of year three (2019). Twenty per cent of the commitments were completed by year one (2017), and 50% by the end of year two (2018).

Progress to date

MYAP section	% complete in 2017	% complete in 2018	% complete in 2019
Customer service	43	57	71
Information and communications	14	43	57
Employment	27	53	73
Transportation	0	20	40
Procurement	25	50	75
Design of public spaces	10	60	90
Governance, policies and legislation	29	71	71

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan achievements translate into improved accessibility in public services, products and facilities for Ontarians and public service employees. A more accessible and inclusive province benefits people of all abilities.

Customer service

Key outcome: people with disabilities receive goods and services in a timely manner.

71% complete: 5 out of 7 customer service commitments achieved.

Spotlight on the Ministry of the Attorney General's accessible court services

The Ministry of the Attorney General has robust systems in place to make access to the court system in Ontario accessible. All courthouses in Ontario have an assigned designated Accessibility Coordinator who ensures that people with disabilities can use and benefit from court services or programs equitably and free from discrimination. This improves access to services by providing a contact person for clients who need accommodation and reducing delays in receiving assistance.

Regional Accessibility Coordinator Leads meet quarterly and work together to resolve accessibility issues such as potential barriers in courthouses. Best practices are shared among courthouses in regions across the province.

Accessibility Coordinators also receive specialized accessibility training on human rights obligations for accommodating persons with disabilities, Ministry of the Attorney General protocols, and best practices. Toronto Region Accessibility Coordinators have completed the following training:

- Accommodation Needs of People Hard of Hearing
- Information on Emergency Evacuation and Staff Safety
- Serving People with Mental Health Disabilities

A comprehensive list of accessibility features, services and contact information for each courthouse is available on the Ontario Court of Justice website (https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/commitment_to_accessibility.php#:~:text=Our Commitment&text=Equal opportunity for people with,are necessary for equal opportunity) . In 2018-19, 78% of clients with a disability who accessed court services, and who asked for assistance with disability-related needs, were satisfied with the help they received.

The Ministry of the Attorney General continues to audit, review and address courthouse public spaces for barriers to clients with accessibility needs. In 2019, a variety of improvements were made to court locations (e.g., power door operators, security signage that incorporates Braille

and high contrast lettering, portable ramps, etc.).

In 2019, the ministry worked on providing designated waiting areas, as well as the availability of evacuation assistance, for people with disabilities who cannot evacuate during an emergency. The public can now consistently identify these designated waiting areas in government-owned courthouse locations across the province.

Information and communications

Key outcome: accessible information and communication supports are delivered to all Ontario Public Service employees and clients.

57% complete: 4 out of 7 information and communications commitments achieved.

Spotlight on moving more government services online

The government is enhancing some of ServiceOntario's key transactions to shift them online over the next five years. Examples from the Ministry of Transportation include:

- licence plate sticker renewals
- driver's licence renewals
- driver & vehicle address changes
- driver's records
- used vehicle information packages
- vehicle ownership transfers
- vehicle permit replacements
- vehicle registrations

These accessible digital solutions provide easier access to driver services for all Ontarians, including customers with disabilities.

In addition, the Ministry of Transportation launched a free and enhanced Driver's Licence Check service (<https://www.dlc.rus.mto.gov.on.ca/dlc/>) . The 20-year-old service has been transformed to provide individuals and businesses with a simpler and more accessible way to instantly check the validity of a driver's licence online at no cost.

The final phase of the new Environmental Registry of Ontario (<https://ero.ontario.ca/page/welcome>) (ERO) was launched in June 2019 by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. The Government of Ontario uses the registry to let people know about environmental matters in the province. As well, this website enables Ontarians to consult and take part in provincial government decision-making that might affect the environment.

The new site is accessible and is compatible with mobile phones, tablets, desktops and laptops. Nearly 4,000 public notices have been posted on the registry since it launched and there are over 21,000 registered users.

Employment

Key outcome: More people with disabilities are employed, engaged and advancing in the Ontario Public Service.

73% complete: 11 out of 15 employment commitments achieved.

Spotlight on training managers

The government continues to build awareness about accommodating Ontario Public Service employees with disabilities through manager and executive training:

- The Disability Accommodation e-course is a resource for managers with information about how to identify and respond to the needs of employees with an illness, injury and/or disability
- The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Employment Standards e-course helps managers and employees learn more about employment accommodation issues and obligations under the IASR and the Human Rights Code
- An Accessibility, Accommodation and Leadership course for OPS executives was piloted in 2019 to increase accessibility literacy and help senior leaders foster more inclusive environments

These learning resources are important tools for OPS leaders to enhance their understanding and support of critical issues faced by employees with disabilities.

Transportation

Key outcome: the Ontario Public Service continues to support the development of transportation services that are barrier-free.

40% complete: 2 out of 5 transportation commitments achieved.

Spotlight on provincial transit

Accessible transportation services are vital to people with disabilities so that they can live, work and participate in their communities.

Many of the government's transportation commitments involve construction projects such as new ferries, docks, ramps or walkways. Some of these longer-term projects are on track to be completed in 2022, others in 2023.

All transit vehicles purchased with provincial funding must be accessible. This is a requirement of all provincial transit funding programs. As a result, 99.7% of conventional transit buses across the province are accessible.

Procurement

Key outcome: a procurement program that considers the needs of people with disabilities to help ensure that goods and services at government facilities are accessible.

75% complete: 6 out of 8 procurement commitments achieved.

As one of Ontario's largest purchasers, the Ontario Public Service makes it a priority to integrate accessibility considerations into the procurement process. This is an important way to ensure that Ontarians have access to accessible goods, services and facilities.

Spotlight on vendor outreach

The government continues to communicate with prospective bidders, during vendor outreach sessions, about their obligations to meet the accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

Prospective bidders are also supported. For example, when the government launched a new Vendor of Record arrangement for digital document remediation in 2019, accessibility training resources were offered to vendors. As well, Request for Bid information in a text format was

available upon request for vendors who were not able to access the information on Ontario's electronic tendering system.

Design of public spaces

Key outcome: greater accessibility into, out of and around Ontario Public Service facilities and public spaces.

90% complete: 9 out of 10 design of public spaces commitments achieved.

Accessible public spaces include specific features that make it easier for everyone, including people with disabilities, to use them.

Spotlight on improved accessibility in Ontario parks

The government continued to improve accessibility in many provincial parks in 2019, so that all Ontarians with disabilities can enjoy better access to recreational areas. Examples of new accessibility features include:

- Balsam Lake Provincial Park – New barrier-free pathway
 - Rideau River Park – New decks and ramps installed to access cabins and site parking
 - Rene Brunelle Park – New accessible swing installed in the playground
 - Ferris Park – New accessible pathway to the playground
 - Bon Echo park – New ramp and accessible dock railing system for tour boats, canoes and kayaks
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Governance, policies and legislation

Key outcome: clear roles, accountability and barrier-free legislation.

71% complete: 5 out of 7 governance, policies and legislation commitments achieved.

Spotlight on ensuring accessibility in legislation

An accessibility review tool and accompanying training guide were developed to help ministries review existing legislation and embed accessibility into all proposed new legislation. In 2019, the OPS Accessibility Office, in partnership with the Ministry of the Attorney General, provided training on the accessibility review tool and guide to legal counsel and policy and program staff. The training helps the government avoid barriers to accessibility when drafting proposed new legislation.

Beyond the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Accessibility innovation in the Ontario Public Service is not limited to the commitments in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. For example, the Government proposed amendments to the *Education Act* to enable the establishment of a new policy directive and guidelines for service animals in schools. This will allow for a more uniform set of guidelines for school boards to support students with special needs better and improve the process to request service animals in schools. Families will benefit from clearer and more transparent processes when requesting service animals accompany their children to school, no matter where they live in Ontario.

Improving the diversification of the public service and access to government jobs for youth is another area where advances have been made. For example, the Office of the Public Service Commission recognizes that postsecondary graduates with disabilities face barriers to meaningful employment. To help reduce barriers, the Ontario Internship Program now allows candidates with disabilities to apply five years after graduation. This represents an additional three-year window for graduates with disabilities to take advantage of this paid developmental opportunity for a career in the public service.

Looking to the future

The Ontario Public Service has a unique role and responsibility as a public service organization. We have taken a leadership role in accessibility, working to build an accessible organization that better serves all Ontarians. Our role goes beyond complying with the law – we also have a responsibility to model compliance and lead by example. As stated in the organizational commitment to accessibility (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility>) :

“The OPS endeavours to demonstrate leadership for accessibility in Ontario. Our goal is to ensure accessibility for our employees and the public we serve in our services, products and facilities.”

In three years, we have completed approximately 70% of the 60 commitments in the 2017-2021 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. We know that we have more work to do to remove barriers and make the Ontario Public Service a more accessible and inclusive organization. We will build upon our strengths as an accessibility leader and continue our efforts to successfully complete the current five-year Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Building on accomplishments to date and respecting the considerable challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario Public Service has already started planning the next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Our commitment to accessibility will only grow in the years to come.

Related

Ontario Public Service accessibility commitments (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility>)

2017-2021 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-2021-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>)

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2018 Annual Status Report (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-service-multi-year-accessibility-plan-2018-annual-status-report>)

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2017 Annual Status Report (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-service-multi-year-accessibility-plan-2017-annual-status-report>)

Read previous versions. (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility>)

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