

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 Annual Status Report

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

Background

Approximately 2.6 million people in Ontario report having one or more disabilities. These Ontarians can face multiple barriers to accessing goods, services, facilities, and obtaining gainful employment. The need for accessible services will continue to grow rapidly as the population ages.

The Ontario government continues to implement the standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>) (AODA) to create an accessible and barrier-free province. The introduction of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191>) (IASR) in 2011 provided a regulatory roadmap to implementing accessibility in five critical areas of daily life, including customer service, transportation, information and communications, the design of public spaces and employment.

The 2017-2021 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-2021-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>) builds on what we have accomplished since the introduction of the first five-year plan in 2012. The current five-year plan includes 60 commitments corresponding to the accessibility standards contained in the IASR with the goal of full implementation by the end of 2021. The accomplishments highlighted in the 2020 Annual Status Report demonstrate the Ontario Public Service commitment to creating a barrier-free environment for all Ontarians.

Year four at a glance

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was a year of challenge and change. Within this context, the Ontario Public Service continued to deliver on its commitments in the Multi-Year

Accessibility Plan by demonstrating improved accessibility in products, facilities and services for Ontarians:

Progress to date

MYAP section	% complete in 2020	% complete in 2019	% complete in 2018	% complete in 2017
Customer service	71	71	57	43
Information and communications	71	57	43	14
Employment	93	73	53	27
Transportation	40	40	20	0
Procurement	88	75	50	25
Design of public spaces	100	90	60	10
Governance, policies and legislation	71	71	71	29

Approximately 81% 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 2020, which is an increase of 11% over the same reporting period the year before.

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

Government service delivery over the course of 2020 had to be innovative, nimble and responsive to the ever-changing restrictions imposed by the global pandemic. For example, many services were moved online, expiration dates on health cards and other services were extended and physical spaces at ServiceOntario centres were altered to make them safer and compliant with public health measures.

Spotlight on the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services delivers a diverse program portfolio that provides Ontarians with quality services. The Child and Parent Resource Institute (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-and-parent-resource-institute-cpri>) adopted an innovative digital approach during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue providing services to clients. The institute has transformed services to adapt and deliver trauma-informed and highly specialized services both in-person and virtually for children and youth during the pandemic. A six-month evaluation conducted at the same time as this transformation was implemented confirmed the positive impacts of providing virtual services to staff and clients.

The positive impacts of digital service delivery include eliminating barriers in accessing services – such as travel time and costs – and addressing the concerns of clients who face difficulties accessing in-person services.

Information and communications

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

71% complete: 5 out of 7 information and communications commitments achieved

The year 2020 presented several challenges as more services were moved online, making the

need for accessible websites, applications, and information more important than ever before.

Importance of accessible online service delivery

Shortly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Ontario Public Service ministries and agencies transitioned to a much greater reliance on technology both internally and externally. Employees continued working and communicating digitally to provide accessible services remotely. The Ministry of the Attorney General adopted digital communication technology to provide virtual court hearings, proceedings, and services with some courts using a hybrid model with in-person and remote appearances. Most court participants, including court staff, parties, victims, and witnesses attended court hearings virtually. Although implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, these initiatives demonstrate how the organization is modernizing its services to make them more accessible for Ontarians.

In addition, to ensure court hearings involving video or telephone communications run effectively, the Ontario Court of Justice published the Remote Court Appearances Guide (<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/covid-19/remote-hearing-guides/guidelines-re-remote-hearings-in-the-ontario-court-of-justice/>) for Participants on its webpage. The guide provides answers to the most common questions and guidelines for participating in virtual hearings. When a request for an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter or Real-Time Captioning services is made, whenever possible, special scheduling accommodations are arranged to allow ASL interpreters, captionists and court participants to appear remotely. The court documentation and disclosure are provided electronically and in accessible formats as needed. The introduction of virtual court proceedings through digital technology, including software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, is benefitting all Ontarians, including people with disabilities, by saving them time and money as they attend these proceedings.

The I and IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACOE) is an OPS enterprise organization hosted by the Children, Youth and Social Services Cluster, which is part of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The ACOE continues to lead the development and implementation of accessibility training, consultation, advice, and guidance to Ontario Public Service employees. The ACOE promotes self-sufficiency in achieving accessibility through a variety of resources, including:

- Self-directed learning resources
- Digital Accessibility Toolkit
- How-to videos, including a Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, PDF, and Outlook series
- Live web and document testing training webinars
- Virtual testing drop-in sessions where staff can ask for real-time advice from subject matter experts

Public servants can utilize these services to enhance their accessibility knowledge and ensure their websites, documents and technologies are accessible for people with disabilities.

Employment

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

93% complete: 14 out of 15 employment commitments achieved

The Ontario Public Service continues to implement accessible employment standards for recruitment, onboarding, accommodation plans, accessible formats and communication supports.

Spotlight on accessibility and inclusion in public service employment

Ontario's Treasury Board Secretariat implemented new measures to identify and analyze recruitment and career development and advancement barriers in the Ontario Public Service.

In the 2019 OPS Employee Experience Survey (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-ops-employee-experience-survey-results>), participants were given the option to associate their employee number with their demographic information to support research to identify barriers.

In September 2020, the OPS began collecting socio-demographic data at the application stage to better understand potential recruitment barriers and identify obstacles in real-time.

The collection of data from these two sources has helped the ministry and the OPS better understand the challenges facing candidates from underrepresented groups, including people with disabilities, to help inform action plans to address them.

In the Summer of 2020, Treasury Board Secretariat conducted an organization-wide employee 'pulse' survey focusing on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on employees and their work. The survey allowed for cross-sectional analysis on health, safety and work environment implications across different employee groups, including people with disabilities. The pulse survey results indicated that employees with disabilities experienced significant challenges during the COVID-19 emergency period. The aggregate results of the surveys are also being used to identify and address potential systemic barriers to career development and advancement by the type of disability. This new approach to identifying barriers will help

coordinate efforts and initiatives to modernize government, increase efficiency and eliminate obstacles in the workplace.

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

The Ministry of Transportation continues work to ensure that transportation vehicles, platforms, docks, and other Ontario Public Service related buildings and structures meet the requirements under the Ontario Building Code (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/92b23>) and incorporate accessibility features.

Spotlight on improving accessibility in public transportation

In 2020, the Ministry of Transportation continued its efforts to ensure seamless delivery of accessible services to Ontarians. Part of this work included building the new Kingston area ferry vessels and terminals with a series of different accessibility built-environmental considerations. As a result, the new vessels and shore constructions will meet current AODA (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-accessibility-laws>) requirements and commitments to ensure the service is accessible to all users, including:

- separate, fully accessible pedestrian boarding ramps on vessels
- accessible seating on vessels and in buildings
- use of video display terminals in buildings to provide information normally spoken live by staff or pre-recorded announcements in a visual format like text, symbols, videos to support hard of hearing, deaf and intellectually disabled users

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.

88% complete: 7 out of 8 procurement commitments achieved

The Ontario Public Service is one of the largest purchasers of goods and services in the province. Ministries and public service agencies strive to effectively embed accessibility into procurement and funding agreements to ensure that public money does not perpetuate barriers to full inclusion.

Spotlight on accessible digital procurement best practices

To enhance procurement processes, procurement specialists engaged I and IT experts and accessibility consultants to develop specific language for key documents for the Card Production and Photo Comparison Technology programs.

By including accessibility standards in the various stages of the procurement process, such as language, evaluation and contract management, vendors are made aware of accessibility requirements early and often. This helps to improve the capacity of vendors to meet the digital accessibility requirements and ultimately results in more accessible digital products that benefit both employees and the public.

Design of public spaces

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

100% complete: 10 out of 10 commitments achieved in the design of public spaces

The Ontario Public Service strives to ensure accessible public spaces incorporate specific features that make it easier for everyone to use and benefit from Ontario's abundant outdoor public spaces, including parks, trails, beaches, sidewalks and accessible parking spaces.

Spotlight on Ontario parks and recreational improvements

In 2020, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks completed work on several enhancements and renovation projects for Ontario Parks, including:

- Presqu'île Provincial Park Office – creation of an accessible office for the public and employees
- Rideau River Provincial Park – construction of new decks and ramps to provide access to

cabins and site parking

- Darlington Provincial Park and Rideau River Provincial Park – construction of an accessibility ramp that provides visitors with disabilities seamless access to the picnic shelter
- Sandbanks Provincial Park and Presqu'île Provincial Park – installation of access mats at beach walkways leading from the parking lot that allow visitors with mobility challenges and strollers to navigate the beach easily
- Rene Brunelle Provincial Park – installation of an accessible swing at the existing playground
- Bon Echo Provincial Park – completion of a canoe and kayak accessible dock and railing system allowing for greater ease of boarding and debarking at water level for visitors with disabilities

These are only a few examples of the many projects that Ontario Parks has undertaken to comply with the Design of Public Spaces Standards to provide an inclusive experience for all visitors.

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

Ministries use the Accessibility Legislative Review Tool to ensure that their statutes, regulations and policies do not directly or indirectly create barriers for people with disabilities.

Spotlight on the Advancing Accessibility in Ontario framework

In 2020, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility released a cross-government Advancing Accessibility in Ontario (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/advancing-accessibility-ontario-framework>) framework that highlights the government's work in four key areas:

1. Breaking down barriers in the built environment
2. Government leading by example
3. Increasing participation in the economy for people with disabilities
4. Improving understanding and awareness about accessibility

The first key area showcases the work with partner ministries and businesses to remove barriers to accessibility in the built environment and housing. The second highlights areas where the government demonstrates leadership in improving accessibility in its role as a policymaker, employer and service provider. The third focuses on how the government is working with partner ministries, stakeholders and businesses to make it easier for businesses to be accessible and inclusive, and helping employers to expand their talent pool with qualified and skilled employees with disabilities. The fourth area provides information about government work with stakeholders and non-governmental organizations to help raise awareness and change attitudes toward accessibility.

Beyond the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Spotlight on the Macdonald Block Reconstruction Project

The Macdonald Block Complex is identified as a heritage site in Ontario because of its history, urban design, architecture, landscape and public art. The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has been working to ensure that all accessibility-related requirements are addressed in the planning phase of the reconstruction of this critical provincial heritage property. The ministry has partnered with Infrastructure Ontario and consulted with the OPS Accessibility Office in Treasury Board Secretariat and the Disability Advisory Council (a network of employees with disabilities) to ensure that the building complex meets the highest accessibility standards to welcome and accommodate all Ontarians.

Construction work is expected to be completed by the spring of 2024. Staged occupancy will begin soon after. The reconstructed complex will meet current building, health, safety and accessibility standards and accommodate significantly more employees through more efficient use of this government-owned office space.

Accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility invested \$16 million in the Ontario Community Support Program (<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60190/ontario-community-support-program-extended-until-2022>) in partnership with the Ontario Community Support Association (<https://www.ontariocommunitysupport.ca/>) to deliver meals, groceries and other essentials to older adults and people with disabilities. The program was launched in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support approximately 40,000 low-income older adults and people with disabilities. Provincewide, more than 1.3 million deliveries of meals, food hampers,

medication and other essentials have been made through the program.

Looking to the future

The Ontario Public Service is focusing on the important task of fulfilling the rest of the 60 commitments in the 2017-2021 Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan while developing its next multi-year accessibility plan, to take effect in 2022 and run until 2025.

Progress continues to be made in the journey to remove barriers and make Ontario a more inclusive, diverse and accessible province.

Related

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

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

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019 Annual Status Report (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-service-multi-year-accessibility-plan-2019-annual-status-report>)

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>)

Updated: March 31, 2022
Published: December 16, 2021