

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2021 Annual Status Report

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

Background

In Ontario, accessibility barriers continue to impact persons with disabilities accessing goods, services, facilities, employment and other areas of daily work and life. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>) is intended to reduce and remove barriers for people with disabilities so that Ontario can become more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Under the Act's *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191>), the Ontario Public Service (OPS) and other organizations subject to the requirements of the IASR must publish a multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) and update their plans at least every five years.

The multi-year accessibility plan outlines how the OPS aims to meet its obligations under the IASR and go above and beyond its obligations to identify, prevent, and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Each year, the OPS must report to the public on its progress (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility>) in implementing its multi-year accessibility plan.

The 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Annual Status Report highlights achievements made in the final year of the 2017-2021 OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-2021-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>).

Year five at a glance

In the final year of the 2017-2021 OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-2021-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>), the OPS continued to make products, facilities and services more accessible for employees and the public.

Progress

MYAP section	% complete in 2021	% complete in 2020	% complete in 2019	% complete in 2018	% complete in 2017
Customer service	86	71	71	57	43
Information and communications	86	71	57	43	14
Employment	100	93	73	53	27
Transportation	50	40	40	20	0
Procurement	88	88	75	50	25
Design of public spaces	100	100	90	60	10
Governance, policies and legislation	86	71	71	71	29

By the end of year five (2021), an average of 88% of the 60 commitments were fulfilled from this 2017-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

As the OPS remains committed to advancing accessibility across the organization, the Accessible by Design: 2022–2025 OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-design-2022-2025-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan) builds upon the foundational work of the previous multi-year accessibility plan, and addresses critical gaps within a refocused framework that better reflects current circumstances.

Customer Service

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

Spotlight on the Ministry of the Attorney General's enhanced court technology and processes

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of the Attorney General endeavoured to implement remote provincial court proceedings, hearings, and services, with some courts adopting a hybrid of in-person and remote appearances. This created opportunities for some court participants to attend certain court proceedings virtually.

A benefit of this approach is that it enables people who may have difficulty attending in-person for various reasons, including having a mobility disability, to access court proceedings remotely without having to attend at the courthouse in person. Supportive services such as real-time captioning for individuals who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing were provided remotely. In addition, audio uplift technology was installed in several courtrooms across the province. These audio uplift enhancements are an essential improvement that result in enhanced audibility and user experience for Ontarians who are hard of hearing and others to be able to fully participate in justice services.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has embraced this transformation and, under its Justice Accelerated Strategy (<https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/60642/ontarios-justice-accelerated-strategy>) , committed to invest \$65 million over five years to ensure more courtrooms across the province are equipped with technology to enable people to access hearings through video or audio.

This funding will ensure a more accessible, responsive and resilient court system by:

- installing audio-visual technology
- purchasing and upgrading computers and other hardware
- training and support for the judiciary and court staff
- internet bandwidth upgrades and ongoing maintenance

As the strategy progresses, it provides an opportunity for the ministry to continuously improve accessibility of the technology and services for court users with various disabilities to access court services and participate in proceedings.

The ministry continues to provide the accessibility coordinator service to support accessible

services and disability-related accommodation requests. The accessibility coordinator service is available to improve access to justice, accessibility and accommodations for Ontarians with disabilities when visiting court in-person or online.

Spotlight on new online service delivery

The Ontario Photo Card (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-photo-card>) is a wallet sized card that provides government-issued identification to Ontarians who do not have a driver's licence, making it easier to engage in processes such as opening a bank account or other activities that require official identification. The Ministry of Transportation now offers online renewals (when a photo is not required), as an alternative to renewing cards in-person through ServiceOntario locations. This means that cardholders can choose the option that is most accessible to them.

Information and communications

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

Spotlight on the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services funds services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities through the Developmental Services (DS) program. The ministry recently launched a plan to reform Developmental Services, and as part of this, it has improved the way it engages with people with developmental disabilities by making materials more accessible.

The ministry developed an 'easy read' version of the final DS reform plan, Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion (<https://files.ontario.ca/mccss-journey-belonging-choice-inclusion-developmental-services-reform-framework-en-2022-04-08.pdf>) . 'Easy read' is an accessible communication format for those who may have difficulty reading, including some people with developmental disabilities. The format consists of easy-to-understand sentences in large font with supporting visuals.

These accessible communication enhancements enabled people with developmental disabilities to better understand the reform plan and how it might impact them.

Spotlight on the Ministry of Infrastructure

Across the province, as many as 700,000 homes and businesses do not have access to high-

speed internet. Access to high-speed internet is vital for people with disabilities who may find it challenging to access services and supports by alternate means.

To address this challenge, the Ontario Government has committed nearly \$4 billion to bring access to reliable high-speed internet to every community across the province by the end of 2025.

To date, over \$950 million has been allocated to nearly 190 high-speed internet, cellular and satellite projects. These projects will bring internet access to over 375,000 homes and businesses across the province, and significantly improve cellular connectivity throughout Eastern Ontario.

In addition, through a two-stage competitive process (<https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/Ontario-Connects/>) led by Infrastructure Ontario, the government is bringing high-speed internet access to up to 266,000 more unserved and underserved homes and businesses, in as many as 339 municipalities across the province by the end of 2025.

Expanding access to high-speed internet in every community across the province by the end of 2025 is an important step in eliminating barriers for persons with disabilities accessing online services, while also addressing the feedback the province received from clients who face difficulties accessing in-person services.

Employment

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

Spotlight on the Ministry of the Solicitor General

In February 2021, the Ministry of the Solicitor General established four new mental health collaborative tables to provide advice on how to better support the mental health and well-being of policing, fire, corrections, and emergency health services personnel across Ontario.

The tables consist of individuals from a variety of backgrounds with a range of lived experience and knowledge, including mental health service providers, researchers, frontline workers, and representatives from Indigenous and diverse communities. They continue to advise on strategies, initiatives and innovations to improve mental health supports for public safety sectors.

This initiative builds on Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/roadmap-wellness-plan-build-ontarios-mental-health-and-addictions-system>), the government's comprehensive plan to deliver high-quality care and build a modern, connected and comprehensive mental health and addictions system across Ontario.

Spotlight on improving knowledge through data

Since late 2020, OPS employees have been able and encouraged to voluntarily disclose socio-demographic information in their electronic employee record, including whether they identify with one or more disabilities and the general disability type. This builds upon previous socio-demographic data collection initiatives, such as the voluntary association of an employee's identification number with demographic information collected in certain internal surveys at the job application stage.

Collectively, this de-identified data, access to which is strictly controlled, will continue to help the OPS better quantify the diversity of the organization and understand the challenges faced by its employees and job candidates from underrepresented groups, including people with disabilities. These insights will inform action plans to identify and remove systemic employment barriers experienced by employees with disabilities and other equity-seeking groups.

Transportation

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

Spotlight on the Ministry of Transportation

The Ministry of Transportation continues to support Ontarians who do not have access to their own transportation, including seniors and persons with disabilities, through the Community Transportation Grant Program. In 2021, the Ministry announced a two-year extension of the program to provide municipalities with additional time to build up their transportation services as they recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program is providing up to \$44 million over seven years (2018-2025) to 38 municipalities to deliver 43 local and intercommunity transportation projects in areas across Ontario that are unserved or underserved by such services. Services supported through the Community Transportation Grant Program include bus service, on-demand shared rides and door-to-door transportation services, which are providing Ontarians with vital access to medical appointments, employment, education, social services and recreational activities.

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.

Spotlight on Procuring Accessible Digital Products

At the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the I&IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence developed resources for OPS employees to help ensure ready-made or customized digital products the OPS pays for are accessible. These resources include sample wording that can be incorporated into IT procurement documents, questions to include as part of the evaluation, a proposed evaluation breakdown, resources for vendors on how to incorporate accessibility into an IT project, and more. OPS staff have the tools to consider accessibility at each stage of the procurement process to ensure public dollars are not spent inadvertently creating barriers for persons with disabilities.

Design of public spaces

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

Spotlight on the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery

The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (formerly Ministry of Government and Consumer Services) operates ServiceOntario (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/serviceontario>), which delivers vital and time-critical frontline services to the public, including driver's licences, accessible parking permits, Ontario photo cards, health cards and birth certificates. ServiceOntario handles approximately 31 million interactions annually through publicly operated retail offices and call centres. All offices are equipped with automatic doors or have alternative accessibility provisions to remove barriers for clients.

Spotlight on Ontario Parks

In 2021, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks continued to modernize amenities at several Ontario Parks locations to make them barrier-free. The ministry has made parks more accessible by adding comfort stations at Sharbot Lake and Sauble Falls, created

camp cabins at Arrowhead and Pinery Provincial Park and added more yurts at MacGregor Point, Bon Echo and Charleston Lake provincial parks. A dock has been similarly built at Bass Lake Provincial Park, while constructing a park office at Finlayson Point Provincial Park allows visitors and staff to have access to the best facilities possible. On top of this, parking spaces have been added at Anstruther Lake Access Point in Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park. These are just a few examples of the upgrades Ontario Parks continues to make to meet the Design of Public Spaces Standards and make provincial parks more accessible for all Ontarians.

Governance, policies and legislation

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

Spotlight on the OPS Leadership Pledge

The OPS, as an employer, committed to implementing the OPS Leadership Pledge, an internal commitment to build an equitable workplace where all employees feel like they belong. Signed by the Secretary of the Cabinet and all deputy ministers, this pledge will take action to address root causes of racism, discrimination and harassment in the OPS. Actions of the OPS Leadership Pledge will include addressing systemic employment barriers, streamlining the employment accommodation process for employees with disabilities, and supporting underrepresented groups to advance in their careers. These enterprise-wide strategic efforts will help the OPS deliver organizational, cultural and systemic change to build an inclusive, accessible and anti-racist public service.

Spotlight on Treasury Board Secretariat

Web compliance is a key component of the AODA. The OPS is held to the highest standard as it is currently one of only two public organizations (along with the Legislative Assembly) mandated to ensure internal accessibility in their web content, websites, and web-based applications.

Under the Accessible Information and Communications Standards in the IASR, websites must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 level AA, with some exceptions.

Treasury Board Secretariat has developed a tool to help ministries better understand and accurately report on web compliance. The tool includes corporate guidelines to standardize the process of ministries self-assessing whether their websites, web applications and content are eligible for a legislative exception under section 14 of the IASR.

Spotlight on the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

Under the [AODA](#), the Ontario government has implemented five accessibility standards: Customer Service, Employment, Transportation, Information and Communications, and Design of Public Spaces. The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility continues to oversee the work of the external committees of experts who review these standards to ensure they are working as intended.

The ministry has also worked closely with standards development committees to conclude their work in proposing new standards to identify and remove barriers in the areas of education and health care. In 2021, three of these committees provided more than 400 recommendations to the Minister on proposed standards for publicly funded education (kindergarten to Grade 12 and postsecondary education) and health care (hospitals). As well, a technical sub-committee provided a report on transitions between the various levels of the education system, and between education and the community and employment.

As part of this process, the public provided input on initial versions of these the proposed standards, and the committees considered this feedback for inclusion in the final reports they submitted to the Minister. The ministry is now analyzing these recommendations for potential incorporation into regulation.

Looking to the future

The Accessible by Design: 2022–2025 [OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-design-2022-2025-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>) is now in effect.

The work of the [OPS](#) doesn't stop. Moving forward, the [OPS](#) will continue to deliver on accessibility priorities and publicly report on progress in building a better and more accessible public service for all Ontarians.

Related

Accessible by Design: 2022–2025 [OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-design-2022-2025-ops-multi-year-accessibility-plan>)

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

Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 Annual Status Report (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-service-multi-year-accessibility-plan-2020-annual-status-report>)

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>)

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