

For Immediate Release
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ONTARIO BUSINESSES BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

*McGuinty Government Partners With Ontario Chamber Of Commerce And Visa Canada To Recognize
Leaders In Accessibility*

TORONTO – The Ontario government, in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Visa Canada, presented the first *Visa Accessibility Award* to the Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre at the 24th Annual Outstanding Business Achievement Awards reception last night.

“Businesses like the Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre recognize that improved accessibility isn’t just the right thing to do -- it’s the smart thing to do,” said Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur. “Better accessibility means more customers, a larger pool of potential employees and long-term growth for Ontario businesses.”

The new award recognizes the efforts made by Ontario businesses in improving access for people with disabilities by breaking down barriers and making it easier to obtain goods and services. Award recipients will have made significant contributions in areas such as quality customer service for people with disabilities, barrier-free environments, inclusive hiring practices, and training programs for staff.

"Greater accessibility is good for business," says Len Crispino, president & CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. "Ontario businesses that open their doors to customers and employees with disabilities, will find themselves better equipped to succeed in today's economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is pleased to be able to work with the provincial government to promote the benefits of an accessible Ontario and with the Visa Accessibility Award, the OCC is proud to recognize those who are leading the way."

This partnership is part of the Ontario government’s EnAbling Change Partnership Program, designed to help create awareness and support to businesses and sectors who will need to comply with new accessibility standards under the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

The launch of the new Visa Accessibility Award is just one of the ways the McGuinty government is working to build a province where everyone has a chance to contribute. The government is also:

- Working to implement the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, by developing and enforcing accessibility standards for the public and private sectors.
- Committing nearly \$276 million in new funding to strengthen community supports for adults with a developmental disability.
- Providing \$28.2 million to help universities and colleges provide services for students with disabilities to help them succeed.

“We recognize that in order to make Ontario accessible, we need to work very closely with our private sector and broader public sector partners,” said Meilleur. “This kind of broad reaching legislation cannot be successfully implemented by the government alone and we appreciate the support of forward-thinking organizations such as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Visa Canada in making accessibility a reality in this province.”

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