

**MINISTRY OF
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL,
ONTARIO NATIVE AFFAIRS
SECRETARIAT &
DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL
SECRETARIAT**

*2003-2004
Accessibility Plan*



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Introduction

In 2001, there were an estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario with self-disclosed disabilities. This number is expected to increase as the population ages.

In December 2001, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was passed into law. Its purpose is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

One of the requirements under the ODA is that Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities, and public transportation organizations develop annual accessibility plans to make programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. The plans must be made available to the public.

In the Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 20, 2003, the Ontario Government confirmed its commitment to working with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

This document is the first annual accessibility plan for the Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat and Democratic Renewal Secretariat. The plan describes improvements to accessibility that the ministry has made to date and its commitments for the balance of the 2003-2004 fiscal year.

Report on Achievements

While there have been strides towards increasing the accessibility of ministry/secretariat services, the greatest emphasis has been on improving the accessibility of buildings and facilities, especially courthouses.

With more than two hundred and fifty locations across the province, the Ministry of the Attorney General has been continually updating and improving existing facilities to remove barriers, and has developed architectural guidelines for court house planning to ensure that new construction is barrier-free.

Buildings Structures and Premises

- ❑ In 2003, the Law Library, located at the head office of the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG), was constructed to Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) barrier-free guidelines, including a ramp in the front lobby, with full consultation with people with disabilities.
- ❑ MAG Emergency Evacuation Procedures include procedures for employees who need special assistance. Procedures are posted on the ministry intranet site.

Goods and Services

- ❑ In the 2002-03 Business Plan, all business areas were informed about accessibility requirements. All proposals were assessed for accessibility/disability impacts, and inclusion of accommodation information.
- ❑ Senior ministry/secretariat management and all other relevant staff have been advised of the need to consider accessibility issues in the acquisition of all goods and services.
- ❑ TTY service for persons who are hearing impaired or deaf is provided through a dedicated central line.
- ❑ Providing information to various community groups has increased community awareness of the rights of persons who are blind to bring guide dogs into establishments under *Blind Persons' Rights Act*.
- ❑ The identification card issued under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* was improved by including braille telephone numbers to call if a guide dog is not allowed to enter an establishment.

Internet Sites and Publications

- ❑ Ministry/secretariat Internet sites have been updated to make them accessible to people with disabilities as required under section 6 of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. The sites comply with the internationally recognized Priority One and Two accessibility standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and their Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). The websites were completely recoded and modifications were made to incorporate compatibility with text reader technology, ease of navigation for people who rely on alternative pointing devices, graphics supported by alternate text, high contrast colours and colour schemes to accommodate persons who are visually impaired or colour blind and a fully-proportional site that allows users to enlarge or shrink font sizes.
- ❑ All court forms are available in accessible format on the Ministry of the Attorney General website (www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca).
- ❑ Procedures are in place to provide ministry publications in accessible formats, upon request.

Employees

- ❑ Procedures are in place to ensure that employees and job applicants receive accommodation as required.
- ❑ Accommodation has been provided for a number of employees through the government's Employment Accommodation Fund for People with Disabilities. These include workstation modifications to address mobility issues, IT equipment and technical aids for employees with visual and hearing impairments, building modifications to address dexterity/mobility limitations, job coaching and the provision of attendant care.
- ❑ Ergonomic assessments are provided to staff upon request from managers. Information is maintained on the intranet site outlining the availability of this service.
- ❑ One hundred and seventy five managers have completed training to increase their understanding of the Government's obligations to accommodate the accessibility needs of its employees and job applicants who have disabilities.
- ❑ Human Resources Consultants, Employee Relations Consultants, and managers of the HR Branch participated in workshops on employee accommodation.

Government-Funded Capital Programs

- ❑ The ministry incorporated ORC barrier-free guidelines into its *Province of Ontario Architectural Design Standards for Court Houses* in 1999.
- ❑ The ministry addresses the need for accessibility expertise at the onset of planning for capital construction.
- ❑ The ORC, as the ministry's mandated service provider, addresses accessibility issues at all major courthouse construction projects, to ensure compliance with the Ontario Building Code and the ORC barrier-free guidelines (e.g. the planned Brockville Courthouse meets current barrier-free design guidelines).
- ❑ Consolidated courthouse construction projects undertaken in recent years (e.g. Owen Sound, Chatham, Windsor, Brampton courthouses) have complied with the Ontario Building Code and the ORC barrier-free guidelines. The construction of a dedicated fully accessible courtroom in the Hamilton Courthouse exceeded existing regulations and guidelines.
- ❑ Major court house renovation and relocation projects such as Newmarket and 2201 Finch Avenue West in Toronto also complied with the barrier-free design guidelines.
- ❑ Minor capital projects of substantial size for office space, special project space (i.e. Victim/Witness Assistance Program) and courthouses, have addressed accessibility issues including wheelchair ramps, and accessible washrooms.
- ❑ The ministry incorporates accessibility as a component of its annual Capital Plan.

Ministry/Secretariat Accessibility Plan

- ❑ The ministry/secretariat established an Accessibility Planning Working Group to prepare the 2003-2004 Accessibility Plan. This working group will have an ongoing role in the development of Accessibility Plans in future years.
- ❑ Three members of the Accessibility Planning Working Group participated in ODA training provided by the Accessibility Directorate.

Commitments and Strategies for 2003-2004

In its commitments and strategies, the ministry/secretariats will continue to place an emphasis on providing improved accessibility in its buildings and facilities, especially courthouses. This includes an ongoing strategy of updating existing facilities to remove barriers and the establishment of practices and procedures that will ensure barrier-free construction in new facilities. As new guidelines are made available for barrier-free design, they will be incorporated into ministry/secretariat standards and practices.

Methods to be taken to prevent new barriers

The Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, and Democratic Renewal Secretariat will undertake the following activities to ensure that proposals for new acts, regulations, policies, programs and services are assessed with respect to their effect on people with disabilities:

- Conduct an assessment to address accessibility requirements within operating proposals put forward in the 2004-2005 business planning submissions.
- Update internal procurement practices to comply with accessibility requirements of new corporate procurement directives.
- Post Accessibility Plans on the ministry/secretariats Internet and intranet sites in an accessible format.
- Include *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) training as a requirement in new learning plans for ministry managers.
- Include ODA information in the employee orientation program on the ministry's intranet site.

Business areas to be reviewed

Acts and Regulations

For acts or regulations currently under review or going forward, ensure that issues of accessibility and barrier removal to people and programs are included in the review process.

Policies and Programs

Architectural Design Standards for Courthouses

Review the *Province of Ontario Architectural Design Standards for Courthouses* to ensure continued compliance with existing and new government guidelines for accessibility.

Recruitment Policies

Review processes for employment competitions to identify areas for improvement in quality of service and accommodation for people with disabilities as part of existing government accommodations requirements.

Practices and Services

Human Resources Plan

Ensure that the ministry's new Human Resources Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

Actions to be taken

Barrier Identification and Prevention

The New Lease Project Requirements survey will be updated to incorporate accessibility concerns. Therefore, each time a lease renewal/new lease is reviewed, accessibility requirements will be considered and communicated to ORC.

Minor capital repair and rehabilitation projects will include a survey in the planning process to ensure accessibility concerns are addressed.

Once received, revised ORC guidelines will be clearly communicated within the ministry.

Ministry/secretariat program managers and supervisors will be given guidance on accessibility in all procurement activities, as required under section 5 of the ODA. All staff with responsibility for procurement will receive the "Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*", once distributed by Management Board Secretariat.

The online training program for ODA will be included as a requirement in all future learning plans for ministry/secretariat managers.

Training on accommodating the accessibility needs of employees and job applicants who have disabilities will be made available to all new managers.

Improved accessibility in communications

The ministry/secretariats will research and identify appropriate training program for receptionist/public inquiry staff and others working directly with the public, so that staff understand the full scope of the definition of 'disability' and 'barriers to accessibility' as defined under the ODA.

Information on procedures for responding to requests for publications in accessible formats will be made available to ministry/secretariat staff through the intranet site.

Improved accessibility of facilities

All new construction/planning will continue to comply with the Ontario Building Code and address all ORC guidelines for accessibility.

The ministry's *Province of Ontario Architectural Design Standards for Court Houses* will be revised to include any new accessibility guidelines issued by the government.

The ministry will continue to incorporate accessibility as a component of its annual Capital Plan.

Improved accessibility in technology

All new material posted to the ministry/secretariat's Internet site will continue to be accessible by people with disabilities and conforms to Priority One and Two accessibility standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and their Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI).

Information on how to use the ministry/secretariat's TTY phone line and how the number is provided/advertised to the public will be made available to ministry/secretariat staff through the intranet site.

For more information

Questions or comments about the ministry's accessibility plan are always welcome.

Please phone:

General inquiry number: 416-326-2220

TTY number: 416-326-4012

E-mail: jus.g.mag.webmaster@jus.gov.on.ca

Ministry website address: www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship's Accessibility Ontario web portal at: www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

Alternate formats of this document are available free upon request from:

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