Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2013 Annual Status Report

Ontario

The Ontario Public Service commitment to persons with disabilities

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

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Making Accessibility a Reality in the Ontario Public Service

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2013 Annual Status Report demonstrates the progress made by the Ontario Public Service (OPS) to ensure an accessible Ontario.

Our focus on leading by example has helped us make significant changes – which I am proud to say speak to the heart of our commitment to accessibility.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its regulations set out standards for accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises – with the aim of creating an accessible Ontario by 2025. Under the guidance of the Diversity Office, the OPS has aimed high: not merely to meet these standards, but to exceed them.

Leading by example, the OPS serves as a model for other large organizations in how we strive to remove barriers to access – as an employer, a policy maker and as a provider of programs and services to the people of Ontario.

And while our commitment to accessibility is ongoing, I am happy to be able to report that we realized some strong achievements in 2013. For example:

- Our award-winning Accessibility@Source initiative is helping us build accessibility considerations into programs, policies, and services at the design stage (i.e., "at source").

- Our new training courses on the AODA standards help employees to understand our obligations under the act and embed awareness and commitment across the organization.

- Great strides were made in preparing for the 2014 launch of the new OPS Assistive Technology Support Service, which simplifies the process for acquiring and supporting assistive technology to help OPS employees with disabilities perform their work, barrier-free.

- We are well underway in transitioning all Ontario Government web content to the new Ontario.ca, which offers leading-edge accessibility features.

- And finally, we have launched the video remote interpretation (VRI) pilot under ServiceOntario for customers who use American Sign Language to communicate. The program allows hearing people who do not sign to communicate with sign language by relying on interpreters over webcams.

We lead by example because we share a passionate commitment and a sense that being an accessible employer and service provider is the right thing to do to best serve all the people of Ontario.

Yvonne Defoe, Acting Chief Officer
Diversity and Accessibility, OPS

The Ontario Public Service Commitment to Persons with Disabilities

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) commitment to persons with disabilities was published in January 2012 and reflects our vision to become an accessible organization:

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

Accessibility in the OPS

Our goal is to make OPS workplaces and facilities accessible and welcoming environments – places where both employees and customers are accommodated according to their needs.

Our vision of an accessible OPS is one where:

- Persons with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

- Persons with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully as OPS employees in service delivery and employment.

- Information and communications are available in accessible formats to all OPS employees, clients and customers.

- OPS employees are able to identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis.

- There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

We are proud of, and encouraged by, the work that has been done in 2013. Our strategies go beyond merely complying with accessibility laws and regulations — we're taking responsibility for modelling compliance and leading by example.

We are mindful that there is much more we can accomplish to create an accessible OPS by 2025. We are committed to implementing the requirements established under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its regulations, and to providing an example for other organizations. With the continued support and involvement of our leaders, stakeholders and partners, we are confident that we will achieve our goal.

"Ontario is a global leader in advancing accessibility. This is not due to good fortune. Instead, the Government of Ontario built and implemented the policy framework enabling this progress. As a result, the Ontario Public Service and Ontario's Broader Public Sector organizations are now among the most accessible anywhere."

Bryan Evans, PhD, Associate Professor, Ryerson University

About This Report

On January 1, 2012, the OPS began complying with the requirement of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) to create and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines its strategies to prevent and remove barriers, while meeting the other requirements set out in the regulation.

The OPS multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP), Leading the Way Forward, provides a roadmap of key milestones planned and underway across the organization to demonstrate leadership in accessibility and to achieve our goal of an accessible OPS by 2025.

The IASR also requires the OPS to produce an annual status report highlighting the progress made to:

- implement the multi-year accessibility strategy, and
- comply with the requirements of the IASR.

In 2013, we released our first status report highlighting progress made in 2012 on advancing the MYAP strategy and in meeting the requirements of the IASR.

Consistent with that initial report, this year's MYAP Annual Status Report highlights progress made in 2013. It describes some key ways the OPS, as a whole, is achieving organizational change: modelling compliance by going beyond the minimum requirements of the IASR and embedding accessibility into daily business practices.

Each ministry is also doing its part to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. The 2013-14 Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) accessibility plans prepared by ministries complement the MYAP 2013 Annual Status Report and provide ministry-specific examples of how the OPS is identifying and removing barriers for persons with disabilities.

This report first focuses on how we are achieving organizational change in the OPS, and then moves into an explanation of how we are demonstrating leadership by modelling compliance for other organizations.
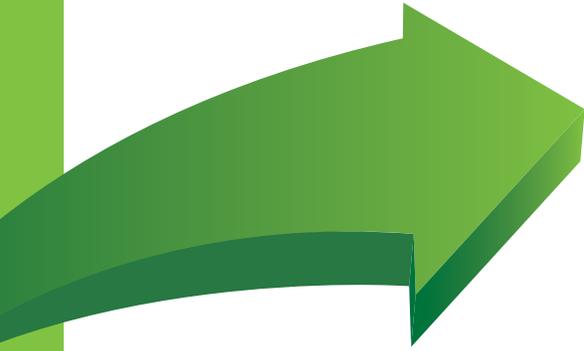
Achieving Organizational Change

The OPS has more than 60,000 employees who serve over 13 million Ontarians. Making changes in an organization of this size and scope requires leadership, perseverance and commitment before new practices become embedded in daily business.

To create an accessible organization by 2025, the OPS must continue to embed accessibility into its day-to-day activities as a provider of goods and services, as a policy maker and as an employer.

In 2013, we built on our commitment to organizational change by strengthening the four foundational elements of the MYAP:

- Informed and Committed Leadership
- Alignment and Coordination
- Strong Governance and Accountability
- Measurement, Evaluation and Reporting.

The foundational elements of MYAP also closely align with the four priorities in action for advancing inclusion in the OPS, outlined in Ontario's 2013-16 strategic plan, **Inclusion Now!:**

- Invest in the capacity of our middle managers to become inclusive leaders.
- Promote an even more inclusive workplace culture for all.
- Make inclusion a fundamental part of all OPS business and demonstrate leadership in accessibility.
- Use evidence to inform action, measure impact and report on progress.

Ontario's MYAP identifies targeted deliverables and timelines to achieve specific objectives. This section examines our progress made in advancing accessibility associated with the four foundational elements in the MYAP. It includes examples of actions ministries and enterprise partners are taking "on the ground" to realize an accessible OPS.

Informed and Committed Leadership

What is it?

An accessible OPS will be achieved only if it is demonstrably supported by its leadership; from deputy ministers, to directors, to senior managers.

OPS leadership tables such as the Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) Forum, the Accessibility Leadership Council and the Interministerial Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee provide valuable strategic guidance and support for the OPS in meeting its accessibility commitments.

ON THE GROUND

Ministry Promising Practice — Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs: Accessibility performance commitments

In 2013, MYAP stated that senior managers in the OPS would include accessibility performance commitments in their performance plans. In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs demonstrated leadership by requiring that there were accessibility performance commitments reflected in performance plans at all levels of management.

Enterprise Partner — CAO Forum/HROntario: Leadership on compliance

Chief administrative officers play a key role in ensuring that ministries are meeting their regulated requirements. In 2013, the OPS Diversity Office consulted with the CAO Forum as a valuable leadership table and source of expertise and knowledge in embedding accessibility across the enterprise.

The CAO Forum and its subcommittee gave important advice on developing a compliance assurance pilot. The results of the pilot will help strengthen the annual process that the OPS uses to attest its compliance with the AODA and AODA standards.

At HROntario, managers ensured HR advisory staff were well-informed of the IASR requirements through participation in workshops, information sessions and various courses. In turn, this contributed to the capacity of HR professionals to support managers across the OPS. In addition, IASR online training courses are mandatory for all existing and new HROntario staff and managers, as well as for all new and existing managers across the OPS.

Alignment and Coordination

What is it?

Effective organizational change involves identifying the human impacts of the change, both for staff and stakeholders, and ensuring they share a common understanding of its requirements and resources. Aligning the workforce to serve stakeholders in new ways means enabling frontline staff who deliver programs or services to work effectively and efficiently in a new environment. It also involves engaging and informing stakeholders, including people with disabilities who may access those programs/services.

To support these stakeholder engagement efforts, enterprise-wide awareness raising and training, along with clear corporate policies and directives that help promote a barrier-free environment for all OPS staff, were put in place.

The MYAP included a commitment in 2013 to increase awareness in the OPS of accessibility best-practices in customer service and the workplace.

ON THE GROUND

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Government Services: Expo

To better inform and align the workforce, the OPS Diversity Office partnered with the Job Opportunity Information Network (JOIN) to host an expo focusing on accessibility. The event included workshops on providing accessible customer service, as well as accessible information and communication supports. The 2013 JOIN expo was the second event of its kind, building upon the success of the first expo held in 2012.

Over 125 members of the OPS, representing every ministry, attended the event. Participating in such OPS-wide events enables ministries to more effectively align and coordinate the services they provide with the accessibility requirements in place across the OPS.

Enterprise Partner — HROntario/Corporate Policy & Agency Coordination Division: Disability Support Strategy & Barrier Prevention Policy

HROntario launched a comprehensive Disability Support Strategy in 2013. This transformation initiative was informed by a broad spectrum of recommendations arising from a comprehensive audit of the OPS disability management program in 2012, including accommodation for employees with disabilities.

In June 2013, the OPS Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness (CEHSW) raised awareness of the Employment Accommodation Fund for Employees with Disabilities. CEHSW sent a reminder to managers about the fund and also shared and posted a factsheet on the OPS Wellness Portal about transferring specialized employment accommodation devices when OPS employees change positions.

A new policy on preventing barriers in employment implemented in January 2013 outlines employer responsibilities to address systemic employment barriers related to Human Rights Code grounds, including disability. It also establishes principles and requirements for identifying, removing, mitigating or preventing systemic employment barriers that may arise from HR management directives and policies or practices. The new policy aligns with the OPS' inclusive workplace policy framework, including the Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy, Employment Policy, and Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy.

Strong Governance and Accountability

What is it?

Governance and accountability are essential to realize far-reaching, enterprise-wide goals, such as creating an accessible OPS over the longer term. Leaders and staff must have the tools and resources they need to be accountable, and the structure, processes and policies to guide them. The OPS advanced its MYAP strategy in 2013 and its capacity to meet accessibility requirements by creating opportunities to further strengthen a system of governance and accountability.

For example, each ministry continues to have an Accessibility Lead, equipped with the information, tools and resources to help their respective ministries understand and meet their accessibility requirements.

The MYAP included a commitment by 2013 to have accessibility criteria built into decision-making, project management, procurement, technology, infrastructure, information and information technology (I&IT), and training. Embedding accessibility requirements at the source in all core OPS business supports the need for OPS staff to be accountable for ensuring their work is accessible.

To help meet accessibility criteria, the OPS Diversity Office created the Accessibility@Source campaign, which focuses on accessibility requirements in procurement, accessible documents and employment accommodation.

This campaign helps managers and staff understand their responsibilities, and gives them the tools to apply accessibility considerations in their everyday work. In 2013, Accessibility@Source featured two new topics: Accessible Employment and Supporting Accessible Communications. It was also used to promote the updated OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy (ACSP) and new requirements to provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request to OPS customers and employees, and to share related resources.

The innovative Accessibility@Source campaign was recognized as a best practice in the public sector in Canada in 2013, winning bronze in the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC)/Deloitte Public Sector Leadership Awards Program.

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Energy/Ministry of Infrastructure: Accessible documents

At the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Infrastructure, staff are accountable for creating accessible documents at source. These ministries require all staff to submit documents for posting to the intranet in accessible formats. Submissions with inaccessible formats are sent back to the program area with an explanation of ministry responsibilities and/or links to information on creating accessible documents.

Enterprise Partner — Cabinet Office/Central Agencies I&IT Cluster: Web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) guidance

The OPS information and information technology (I&IT) website standards include requirements to meet recognized and evolving industry web content accessibility guidelines. Staff in Cabinet Office and the Central Agencies I&IT Cluster continue to provide guidance and advice to ministries to help them meet advanced web accessibility standards. The new Ontario.ca has been designed to support accessibility for public-facing web content. Migration to this platform remains a timely strategy through which ministries are improving the accessibility of their content.

Measurement, Evaluation and Reporting

What is it?

Evaluation – together with the data collection activities that underpin it – helps us to monitor progress, assess the impact and relevance of activities, and learn from what has been done so as to better support and achieve our goals. Progress can be measured in many ways.

Each year, ministries not only produce annual Accessibility Plans, posted publicly on the government's website, but also complete a compliance attestation, indicating that they are meeting all IASR requirements that have come into effect to-date. These ministry attestations are used to develop the OPS's annual AODA Compliance Report, required under the AODA, and are submitted to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO). The attestation process is a means of measuring, evaluating and reporting on how well the OPS is doing in meeting its accessibility requirements.

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Training

To strengthen monitoring and measurement of its accessibility implementation efforts, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing evaluates its staff to identify their training requirements each year. The ministry offers customized in-house training on topics such as accessible documents and accessibility best-practice tips for inclusive presentations, as well as mandatory accessibility training for ministry web publishers. In addition, staff can take refresher training on topics such as the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy to ensure they have a full understanding of all commitments.

Enterprise Partner — Centre for Leadership and Learning: Tracking course completions

The Centre for Leadership and Learning tracks completion of IASR e-courses taken by staff through the OPS Learning and Development intranet site. This information provides a reliable and centralized measure of how well the OPS is doing in meeting the IASR training requirement.
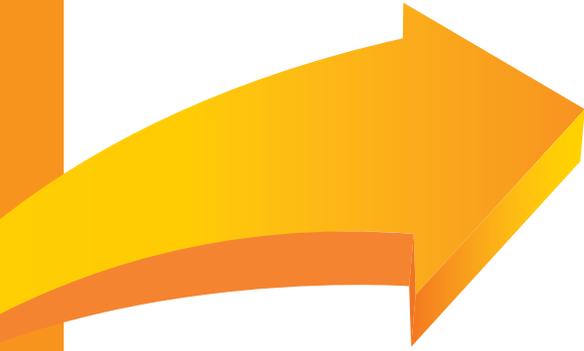
Demonstrating Leadership by Modelling Compliance

The AODA has been a catalyst for positive improvements in accessibility across Ontario, requiring that accessibility standards be developed for Ontario's businesses and organizations to make Ontario an accessible province by 2025. Staff in the OPS are working to do their part to model compliance and lead by example.

The OPS is proud to be among the first organizations in Ontario to comply with the AODA and its regulated requirements:

- **The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service** (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into law in 2008 and by January 1, 2010, every ministry in the OPS had to comply. Requirements ranged from establishing and training staff on policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities, to establishing a process for receiving and responding to feedback, to accommodating service animals and support persons, and to making public documents available in accessible formats, while informing users that such formats were available.

- **The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation** (Ontario 191/11) became law in 2011. The IASR, the second AODA regulation, incorporates standards for information and communications (Part 2), employment (Part 3), transportation (Part 4), design of public spaces (Part 4.1) and other general requirements (Part 1). In the OPS, many of these requirements came into effect as of January 2012 and 2013. The remaining compliance deadlines will be phased in over the next few years.

In 2013, all OPS ministries met or exceeded their requirements under the two AODA regulations. The following pages provide an overview of progress in 2013.

Customer Service (429/07)

In 2013, the OPS updated its Accessible Customer Service Policy, paving the way for its launch on January 1, 2014. The Accessible Customer Service Policy outlines the Ontario government's responsibilities and legal obligations for providing accessible customer service to persons with disabilities.

One of the key additions to the original policy is the requirement to provide accessible formats and communication supports to persons with disabilities upon request – at no additional cost to them. The policy also incorporates the government's responsibilities for providing accessible information through its websites, and for offering accessible feedback processes.

ON THE GROUND

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Government Services: Promoting accessible services

To further strengthen the commitment to accessible customer service, in 2013 the Ministry of Government Services changed how it provided customer service to the 54,000 adults in Ontario with developmental disabilities who require residential supports, respite and other developmental services news and updates.

Accessible features such as a new paperless application process makes it easier for users to apply for assistance, while a new common assessment tool ensures that applications are assessed in a fair and consistent manner. A centralized, web-based case management system is making it easier and simpler for citizens to locate and access services. This single system also enables province-wide planning and forecasting for developmental services, while protecting personal and sensitive information.

Enterprise Partner — ServiceOntario: Frontline service innovations

ServiceOntario launched the Ontario Photo Card in January 2013 to provide government-issued identification to more than 1.5 million Ontarians who do not drive. The Ontario Photo Card has a clipped corner to help persons with visual disabilities identify this card and distinguish it from other cards in their wallets.

> *"Ontarians who are unable to drive regularly encounter situations where government-issued photo identification is a requirement for full participation in our society. With the introduction of the Ontario Photo Card, Ontario residents with vision loss have welcomed a new option to identify themselves when picking up a parcel at the post office or opening a bank account – another step toward an accessible province for all Ontarians."*
>
> – Len Baker, Executive Director & Regional Vice-President, CNIB Ontario-Nunavut

ServiceOntario also began its Active Offer Protocol, developed for ServiceOntario Centres, which requires staff to actively offer assistance to customers who appear to have a disability, whether or not they request assistance or are accompanied by a support person. This helps to ensure that customers with disabilities know what accommodations are available to them.

To ensure accessibility and to help seniors maintain their independence, in 2013 ServiceOntario began offering Ontario seniors aged 80 and above the option to renew their health card by mail. This renewal option helps seniors avoid wait times in lines to renew their health cards at a ServiceOntario centre. Seniors who prefer to renew their health cards in person can still visit a ServiceOntario centre.

In 2013, ServiceOntario launched the Video Remote Interpretation pilot at one of its centres for customers who use American Sign Language (ASL). The service enables customer service representatives who do not sign to communicate with their customers who are deaf and rely on sign language. Through the use of a webcam, a remote interpreter can be accessed over the Internet and engage in a three-way conversation between the customer, the interpreter and the customer service representative.

> *"The ServiceOntario representative was concerned, kind, and well informed when she took my call regarding the replacement of my Accessible Parking Permit to immediate action. Not only was she an exemplary representative for ServiceOntario, she went above and beyond by keeping an eye on my file by calling me at home when my Application for Replacement Permit was processed and printed. Her obvious dedication to her work and to your department should be applauded."*
>
> – A ServiceOntario customer

Procurement (IASR, Part 1, Section 5)

As a major purchaser of goods and services, the OPS works to ensure that procurement processes are accessible and all vendors are aware of accessibility requirements.

In addition to updates to the OPS Procurement Directive, resource materials were developed prior to January 2012 that assist ministries to take accessibility requirements into consideration in the procurement of goods and services. In 2013, the focus has been on helping ministries ensure those requirements are considered in all procurements of goods, services or facilities.

ON THE GROUND

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Transportation: Procurement business case

Among many steps to help staff model compliance with the accessibility requirements for procurement, the Ministry of Transportation inserted a section on accessibility requirements into its Procurement Business Case, which prompts staff to determine accessibility criteria in the early stages of the process. It is also common practice among its divisional procurement leads to verify appropriate completion of the OPS Accessibility Checklist in procurement documentation.

Enterprise Partner — Supply Chain Ontario: Innovations

The Supply Chain Ontario division develops and implements an integrated corporate procurement strategy. In 2013, it took several steps to advance accessibility in its procurement process, including:

- Updating templates for Requests for Proposal and Requests for Tender to include language pertinent to accessibility. In addition, they continued to convert legacy website documents into an accessible format for readers with disabilities.

- Issuing a Request for Proposal for an eTendering portal with improved accessibility features. The RFP included a section on proponent compliance to AODA. The successful proponent was 100 per cent compliant with the AODA requirements.

- Updating training materials used for procurement training for Ontario government staff to reflect the AODA requirements and resources available.

- Revising presentation materials used at vendor outreach events to ensure vendors who attend are aware of their obligations under AODA.

- Hosting accessibility resource tools on the intranet and external website (www.doingbusiness.mgs.gov.on.ca) that reflect updated language and links received from the Diversity Office.

- Holding the Supply Ontario Reverse Trade Show where public sector buyers and suppliers learned more about how to do business with the Ontario government, including how to address accessibility in procurement documents.

Information and Communications (IASR, Part 2, Sections 9-19)

During 2013, the OPS prepared to comply with the January 2014 deadline with section 12 of the IASR standard for information and communications — providing alternative formats and communication supports.

The OPS updated its Accessible Customer Service Policy to reflect this new requirement and educated staff about these new changes. The necessary steps were taken to improve the accessibility of internal and public-facing websites. And every contact page for the Ontario government included an active offer of alternate formats and/or communication supports for people with disabilities.

Building on internal partnerships and expertise, the OPS developed and provided tools and a testing methodology to support website accessibility for new government websites and their content. These steps help ensure that new OPS websites align to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 level AA as required by the IASR. As well, new videos, awareness and training activities were created that provide direct support to OPS staff on creating accessible documents.

"The OPS Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness and the Human Resources Policy and Planning Branch has shown great commitment to listening to the issues of employees with disabilities as presented through ongoing consultations with the OPS Disability Advisory Council (DAC) and it's Employment Accommodation Working Group. We believe these strong partnerships will support greater accessibility and accommodation for employees and applicants with disabilities in the future."

– DAC Employment Accommodation Working Group Members.

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Proactive communications

To model compliance in internal and external communications, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services requires all staff to include proactive offers of accommodation in email signatures and meeting invites as follows:

- Email signatures: "If you have any accommodation needs or require communications supports or alternate formats, please let me know."

- Meeting invites: "If you have any accommodation needs in order to participate fully in any aspect of this event, please let me know."

This requirement is part of employees' 2014-15 performance plans in the ministry.

Enterprise Partner — Information Technology Services: Modernized TTY service

The OPS-wide TeleType (TTY) service allows employees who are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or speech-impaired to use the telephone by typing text messages. As a result of much hard work in 2013, in February 2014, Information Technology Services rolled out a modernized, enterprise-wide TTY service. This state-of-the-art technology is a software-based service, which means users won't need a physical TTY device. Employees who use the modernized TTY service will also have a single point of centralized contact for support: the OPS IT Service Desk.

Employment (IASR, Part 3, Sections 20-32)

The IASR Employment Standard came into effect January 1, 2013 for the Ontario government. To assist HR professionals and managers, a new e-course on the standard has been made available.

In addition, HROntario's comprehensive Disability Support Strategy launched in 2013 includes many proactive components that support compliance with the IASR Employment Standard. For example:

- Healthy Workplace, Healthy Mind initiative

- introduction of the Manager's Guide to Mental Health in the Workplace and related one-day training program for managers

- design of a new case-management model

- a new health reassignment process.

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of Community and Social Services/ Ministry of Children and Youth Services: Managers' community of practice

To help managers understand and comply with the IASR Employment Standards, the Ministry of Community and Social Services/Ministry of Children and Youth Services formed a managers' community of practice. It provides managers with the opportunity to discuss issues or ask questions regarding employment accommodation. The ministries also held quarterly teleconferences featuring topics such as return to work/employment accommodation policies, accommodating employees facing mental health challenges, and environmental sensitivities.

Enterprise Partner — Corporate Policy and Agency Coordination Division (CPACD): Policy review

To help inform HROntario's Disability Support Strategy, the CPACD initiated a review in 2013 of the Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy. Once completed, the revised policy will align with other components of the strategy to form the foundation for a new disability support program.

Transportation (IASR, Part 4, Sections 33-80)

The Ontario government remains committed to helping municipalities improve their transit systems so that they are a more accessible, affordable, convenient and safer mode of travel. The requirements in the Accessible Transportation Standard aim to help transportation providers as well as municipalities, universities, colleges, hospitals and school boards make their services and vehicles accessible to people with disabilities.

By and large these requirements apply to municipalities and other providers of public transportation services rather than to the OPS. Since 2003, however, the Province has invested more than $16.1 billion in public transit and worked to make public transportation more accessible to people with disabilities across Ontario. For example, the Province requires any transit vehicles purchased through a provincial transit funding program to be fully accessible. From 2003 to 2011, the percentage of the bus fleet in Ontario that is accessible to persons with disabilities increased to 96.42 per cent from 38.62 per cent.

In 2013, the Ministry of Natural Resources upgraded infrastructure to enable barrier-free access for persons with disabilities in 12 of its Ontario Parks facilities.

Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment) (IASR, Part 4.1, Sections 80.1-80.44)

Ensuring that Ontario government facilities are accessible to users and that new barriers are not created is a priority for the Ontario government. In order for the OPS to continue to be a leader in accessibility, best practices which can improve accessibility are always considered when undertaking capital projects.

The IASR requirements for the Design of Public Spaces Standard apply only to new construction and major changes to existing features. Many ministries are exceeding these legal requirements by building accessibility into new facilities and into those that are redesigned ahead of the January 1, 2015 compliance deadline.

For example, in 2013, the Ministry of Natural Resources upgraded infrastructure to enable barrier-free access for persons with disabilities in 12 of its Ontario Parks facilities.

Waterloo Courthouse: Accessible Courtroom

ON THE GROUND

Ministry Promising Practice — Ministry of the Attorney General: Accessible courthouses

The Ministry of the Attorney General is committed to equal access to justice for all Ontarians. It is continually working to ensure that people with disabilities can use and benefit from legal services, programs and venues equally and free from discrimination. In 2013, the ministry opened two new courthouses in the regions of Waterloo and Quinte which embrace accessibility as an essential component of design.

Among the new courthouse accessibility features are:

- accessible public service counters with barrier-free positions

- barrier-free ramps, entranceways and parking areas

- wider path of travel throughout the courthouse to accommodate a wheeled mobility device

- fully accessible public, witness, juror and counsel seating within the courtroom, as well as many barrier-free judicial daises

- barrier-free lawyer/prisoner consulting cubicles, prisoner boxes and holding cells

- materials, finishes and signage to aide those with visual impairments and enable a barrier-free path of travel

- automatic door operators and infrared assistive listening devices built into the overall design of the courthouse.

Enterprise Partner — Infrastructure Ontario: Accessibility upgrade projects

Since 2006, the Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities have set the minimum accessibility requirements in the lease, new construction, and extensive renovation of Ontario government facilities. This document meets the current legislative requirements and serves as a guideline for ministries to follow when undertaking capital projects at Ontario government facilities.

All vendors who are involved in new builds and/or major renovations of Ontario government facilities must comply with the guidelines and other legislative requirements related to accessibility. The guidelines are available for public review on Infrastructure Ontario's website at: http://www.infrastructureontario.ca/What-We-Do/Buildings/Realty-Services/Accessibility/.

Four accessibility upgrade projects are currently in various stages of progress:

- Significant washroom upgrades at 99 Wellesley St. in Toronto and at the Kenora courthouse.

- A ramp replacement project and general overall accessibility upgrades at the Rockwood House (formerly Rockwood Asylum, identified by the Province of Ontario as being of cultural heritage value) and the Ontario Provincial Police facility in Kingston.

Review of Legislation

The government has taken a leadership role in accessibility by working to build a more accessible Ontario. As part of this effort, the OPS is conducting an Accessibility Legislative Review. The goal of the review is to identify and consider steps to remove any potential barriers to persons with disabilities in Ontario statutes.

As part of a phased approach, 13 ministries are reviewing 51 statutes that are considered to have a high impact on persons with disabilities.

The list of high-impact statutes includes those that:

- affect persons with disabilities directly

- provide for the delivery of services to a large group, and

- provide benefits or protections, or affect democratic or civil rights.

In 2013, the OPS made significant progress in conducting this phase of the review which is estimated to be completed by the end of 2014.
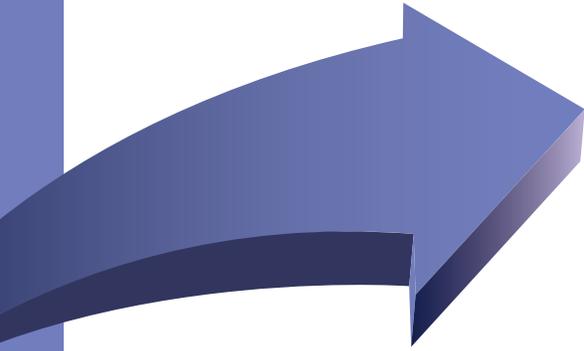
Conclusion

The OPS is committed to making accessibility throughout the organization a reality. As this status report for 2013 demonstrates, great strides have been made in realizing this commitment.

We recognize this has only been possible through the leadership of senior executives in the OPS, the concerted efforts of individual ministries and their accessibility leads, and the commitment of many individuals throughout the organization. The OPS Diversity Office thanks them for their invaluable feedback, input and dedication to this work.

We look forward to continued progress and reporting further on the accomplishments achieved in 2014 next year.

Please share your input

We are still at the early stages of our transformation journey. To support our success in meeting the needs of our customers and employees, we want to hear from you.

Let us know:

- your thoughts or feedback on what has been accomplished by the OPS so far
- ideas on how OPS plans or projects could be improved
- your own experiences accessing government programs and services.

Please contact us with your questions and ideas:

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To learn more about accessibility in the Ontario Public Service, and to access the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Leading the Way Forward, all progress reports, and annual ministry accessibility plans, visit www.ontario.ca/government/accessibility

Ontario