

# MINISTRY OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

*2006-2007  
Accessibility Plan*



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# Introduction

In June 2005, the Ontario government took a strong stand on accessibility when it passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) into law.

The AODA lays out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of new, mandatory accessibility standards for some of the most important aspects of people's lives.

The first two standards that are currently being developed cover the areas of transportation and customer service. On June 13, the first anniversary of the passage of the AODA, the government announced the development of three new standards that will address information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

While the government is moving forward to implement the AODA, there will be a transition period where government and the broader public sector will continue to meet their obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new act.

Under the ODA, Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. These plans must be made available to the public. Accessibility planning efforts to date have developed a strong foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will mean real and effective change.

This document is the newly-created Ministry of Research and Innovation's first annual accessibility plan. The plan outlines the ministry's 2006-2007 accessibility commitments and highlights the 2005-2006 plan achievements made to ensure that barriers are identified, prevented and over time, removed. The ministry was formerly part of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) and as such, the 2005-06 achievements highlighted in this document are based on those made by MEDT.

This ministry intends to build on its achievements by implementing initiatives that support the government's commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province where people of all abilities have a chance to fully achieve their potential.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER AND MINISTER OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

I firmly believe that our greatest asset as a province is our people. All Ontarians have within them the capacity to contribute to the strength of our economy and to make Ontario a more innovative, more creative place.

As Premier and Minister of Research and Innovation, I am committed to acting on our government's pledge to build an accessible, inclusive province. This is why my team at the new Ministry of Research and Innovation (MRI) and I will explore optimal ways our policies and programs can help people with disabilities fully participate in the economic and social life of our province. We will also document our ministry's successes and achievements in this area in a full accessibility plan, which MRI will issue as part of its annual planning process.

Our government's passage of the landmark *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, marks a new era of accessibility in Ontario. My ministry and our government are very proud of this legislation. It ushers in meaningful change and fosters a society where all Ontarians have the opportunity to work, play, learn and otherwise participate to their full potential -- an opportunity they deserve.

For more information on our government's plans for a new era of accessibility in Ontario, please go to the [Accessibility Ontario](#) site of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. By working together, I am confident we can make our province a better place for present and future generations of people with disabilities.

Yours truly,



Dalton McGuinty  
Premier and Minister of Research and Innovation

# Report on Achievements

## 2005 - 2006 Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry Research and Innovation was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, planned commitments outlined in its 2005-2006 accessibility plan. This section provides a status report. Please note that all accomplishments highlighted below are from when the ministry was part of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October, 2004, when assessing and renovating all of its premises.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** MRI installed new lower drinking fountains in the 900 Bay Street location (where Corporate Services Division is located).

**Commitment:** MRI will review its Ministry Accessibility Planning Team membership to ensure the appropriate representatives from line and corporate resources are fully sensitive to the act and its requirements for clients, public and employers.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** Two new Human Resources Branch representatives were added to the 2006-2007 Accessibility Planning Team and discussions were held with line/program areas

**Commitment:** MRI will continue its best practice of providing workplace ergonomic assessments to all staff upon request. Our service provider is sensitive to the ergonomic needs of disabled employees.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** In 2005-2006, 52 employees (includes MEDT, MSBE) received a full ergonomic assessment of their workplace and appropriate remedial action was taken

**Commitment:** Upgrade Ministry telephones to have a hands-free feature.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** Over 90% of Ministry telephones (includes MEDT, MSBE) have been upgraded to have a hands-free feature.

**Timeframe:** The remaining 10% will be replaced, as required.

**Commitment:** An operational TTY telephone (telephone for persons with hearing disabilities) is maintained in the HR and Facilities Services Branch on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, and in the Communications Branch on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** Operational TTY telephones were maintained and used when necessary.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue to make workplace accessibility improvements where necessary.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** Constructed an open-concept wheelchair accessible meeting area for Ministry's use.

**Commitment:** Accessibility Planning Team to meet during 2005-2006 to discuss accessibility strategies and opportunities for the Ministry's accessibility plan.

**Status:** Complete.

**Action:** MRI's Accessibility Planning Team had regular contact to discuss accessibility issues, ideas and strategies.

*\*Note: Corporate Services Division and the Accessibility Planning Team serves the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship and Ministry of Research and Innovation.*

## Ongoing Accessibility Improvement Initiatives

The Ministry of Research and Innovation was successful in achieving, and in some cases, surpassing, its commitments described in the accessibility plans it issued before 2005 - 2006. This section provides a status report.

**Commitment:** MRI Human Resources Branch and Communications Branch reception includes permanent staffs who are trained to serve clients, staff and members of the public with disabilities.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** MRI is committed to provision of this full service through its Human Resources and Facilities Branch and Communications Branch reception.

**Commitment:** The Ministry's Human Resources Branch will maintain full reception services in the branch's reception area.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Ensure that the first point of customer contact and service to the public and employees is accessible.

**Commitment:** Employees with disabilities can obtain direct assistance from the Human Resources and Facilities Branch reception area to obtain benefits forms or counselling.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Human Resources Branch to provide direct support to employees with disability requiring assistance.

**Commitment:** Provide managers with MBS procurement guidelines, containing accessibility considerations.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Our Business Planning and Finance website has a procurement section with Ministry policy. Within the Ministry policy there is a link to the website where the procurement directives are located. References to the ODA section of the Procurement policy is specifically referenced in our Ministry financial delegation policy.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue to provide e-mail access to requests for information concerning Ministry programs and services.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Provision of Ministry information via e-mail.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue to ensure all of its websites are fully accessible.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Work with Webmaster to ensure websites are fully accessible.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue its practice of analyzing all new websites/pages to ensure accessibility in compliance with the ODA, 2001.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Review with Webmaster.

**Commitment:** MRI will maintain and expand, as appropriate, its TTY (telephone for people with hearing disabilities) communications including awareness for clients and training of operators.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Regular review and promotion of TTY communications, and training component.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue its practice of working with Publications Ontario to provide all Ministry publications in a wide variety of alternate formats when requested by Ministry clients and the general public.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** To provide Ministry publications in alternate formats when requested.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October, 2004, when assessing and renovating all of its premises.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** OBC standards are applied as they are released and become available.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue its OPS best practice of providing workplace ergonomic assessments to all staff upon request. Our service provider is sensitive to the ergonomic need of employees with disabilities.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Assessments are ongoing.

**Commitment:** Issue cell phones with 2-way radio capabilities to the Chief Fire Warden, OPP Staff Sergeant and any persons requiring emergency evacuation assistance.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Employees with disabilities have these with them at all times and in addition have a wallet sized “fan-out” card describing emergency procedures.

**Commitment:** MRI will continue to ensure all signage in ministry premises complies with the letter and intent of the ODA, 2001.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Signage to be improved/upgraded where necessary.

**Commitment:** Using Human Resources and Facilities Branch reception as a best practice “barrier-free benchmark,” MRI will continue to review and renovate any Ministry reception counters to ensure barrier-free services to disabled clients and members of the public.

**Status:** Ongoing.

**Action:** Revised counter heights where necessary.

# **Commitments — Measures to Prevent New Barriers**

In the coming year, the Ministry commits to assess its acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities. This section summarizes these commitments.

## **Customer service**

- MRI will continue to ensure that front line staff are knowledgeable and trained in assisting clients with disabilities.
- We will continue to review and provide alternate formats (e.g. Braille).
- The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to consult with all program areas in developing new ideas and initiatives regarding accessibility.
- In the coming year the Accessibility Planning Team will raise awareness regarding accessibility issues by attending Branch meetings.

## **Employment**

- The Ministry will continue to assess its employment policies and practices to ensure compliance and accommodation procedures are applied.
- We will continue to review our accommodation and ergonomic practices with new and existing employees.
- We will continue to ensure that applicants can e-mail or fax their applications directly to the Human Resources Branch where they are placed in the appropriate competition file.
- The Accessibility Planning Team will continue to have input from Human Resources Practitioners for identification and prevention of employment barriers.
- Future Manager Procurement Training/learning programs will include information about barrier-free accessibility in procurement activities.

## **Communications and information**

- Continue to ensure all MRI websites are fully accessible.
- Review all new websites to ensure accessibility in compliance with ODA, 2001.
- MRI will work with Publications Ontario in providing ministry publications in alternate formats when requested by ministry clients and the general public.
- Provide staff with a self-directed AODA training tutorial on the MRI Intranet site

## **Built environment**

- MRI will continue to apply Ontario Building Code and “Standards for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities” October, 2004, when assessing and renovating all of its premises.

## **Acts and regulations**

- The Ministry will ensure that acts or regulations currently under review or going forward have issues of accessibility and barrier removal in the review process.

## **Other barriers**

- MRI will continue to review its Ministry Accessibility Planning Team membership to ensure the appropriate representatives from line and corporate resources are fully sensitive to the Act and its requirements for clients, public and employers.

# Commitments —Barriers to be Addressed

The Ministry of Research and Innovation commits to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities in the coming year. This section summarizes these commitments.

## Customer service

**Barrier:** Limited staff knowledge of accessibility and understanding of the meaning of disability.

**Commitment:** Provide MRI staff with a forum in which to increase their knowledge of accessibility and disability as well as provide an opportunity to answer questions and gain feedback.

**Responsibility:** Organize MRI staff “Lunch and Learn” sessions to increase accessibility awareness and share information about accessibility planning.

**Timeline:** End of fiscal 2006/2007.

## Employment accommodation

**Barrier:** New and/or existing employees with disabilities in need of accommodation.

**Commitment:** The Ministry commits to removing barriers to enable individual employees to function to their potential in the workplace environment.

**Responsibility:** The Ministry will continue to respond to individual requests for workplace accommodation for employees with disabilities, especially with regard to ergonomic assistance.

**Timeline:** Ongoing into 2006-2007.

## **Communications and information**

**Barrier:** No common resource exists where MRI staff can identify and/or inquire about accessibility barriers and information.

**Commitment:** Provide a forum for staff to provide suggestions, comments or request further information about the meaning of disability and accessibility.

**Responsibility:** Create a link on MRI's Intranet site where staff members can ask questions and provide feedback to a common e-mail account accessible by the Accessibility Planning Team and reviewed on a regular basis.

**Timeline:** End of fiscal 2006/2007..

## **Built environment**

**Barrier:** HR reception area does not meet ODA accessibility requirements.

**Commitment:** Complete HR reception area to ensure that it is fully accessible under ODA accessibility requirements.

**Responsibility:** To complete HR entrance.

**Timeline:** Fiscal 2007/2008

## **Acts and regulations**

**Barrier:** New and/or revised MRI Acts and regulations.

**Commitment:** Continue to review any new/revised Acts and regulations to ensure ODA, ODAO compliant.

**Responsibility:** While changing or creating new Acts and regulations to ensure accessibility is taken into consideration.

**Timeline:** Ongoing.

# For More Information

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

Please phone:

General inquiry number: (416) 325-6666

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E-mail: [info@edt.gov.on.ca](mailto:info@edt.gov.on.ca)

Ministry website address: [www.mri.gov.on.ca](http://www.mri.gov.on.ca)

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario web portal at: [www.mcass.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html](http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html). 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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