



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and specifically Regulation 191/11, “Integrated Accessibility Standards” (the “Regulation”), the Government of Ontario, the Legislative Assembly, and designated public sector organizations and large organizations, including the Ontario Ombudsman, are required to develop multi-year accessibility plans outlining their strategies to prevent and remove accessibility barriers, and to meet requirements under the Regulation. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.4)

The Ontario Ombudsman’s Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) sets out timeframes for action, where appropriate, and in accordance with the Regulation.

This Plan is posted on the Ontario Ombudsman’s website.

The Ontario Ombudsman has always endeavored to provide accessible service, remove barriers, and accommodate those requiring assistance. This Plan will assist the Office going forward in co-ordinating these efforts to ensure the needs of all persons with disabilities are met.

I. Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services and Facilities

The Office of the Ombudsman shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities except where it is impracticable. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.5)

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario reviews policies, practices and procedures relating to procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities to ensure accessibility criteria and features are incorporated, where they do not already exist and where practicable.

If it is impracticable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features with respect to a specific procurement or acquisition, an explanation will be recorded and provided on request.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Finance team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 2012).

II. Training

Ombudsman Ontario trains:

- employees and volunteers;
- all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization,

on the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in the Regulation and in the *Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities, as well as any changes to the Office's accessibility policies. The training includes information on the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in the Ontario Ombudsman's recruitment processes.

The training is appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 7)

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario provides training to staff on the *Human Rights Code*, accessibility, and removing barriers to access our Office. In order to ensure the Office is in full compliance with the Regulation, Ombudsman Ontario will provide additional and ongoing training to employees, volunteers and other persons as required by the Regulation and will keep a training record including training dates.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2013).

III. Information and Communications

i. Feedback

Ombudsman Ontario ensures that its process for receiving and responding to feedback is accessible to persons with disabilities. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.11)

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario regularly reviews the feedback process set out in its “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service” policy to ensure that it is accessible to persons with disabilities, and provides, or arranges for the provision of, accessible formats and communications supports upon request. The Office has nominated a staff person responsible for tracking requests and feedback. Members of the Executive Management Team review the feedback and adjust the policy as required.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario’s Communications team supported by the Operations team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2013).

ii. Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Upon request, Ombudsman Ontario provides, or arranges for the provision of, accessible formats and communications supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner that take into account the person’s accessibility needs.

Ombudsman Ontario will consult with anyone making a request to determine the appropriate format for the materials requested, and will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.12)

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario has developed a practice for providing accessible formats and communications supports upon request for persons with disabilities and ensures information about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports is posted on its website. The Office will monitor any legislative updates and implement as required.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Communications team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing.

iii. Accessible Websites and Web Content

Ombudsman Ontario's Internet and Intranet websites, including web content, conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level AA except where impracticable. (O.Reg. 191/11, s. 14)

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario ensures that its Internet and Intranet websites comply with the WCAG accessibility guidelines, as required by the Regulation.

Ombudsman Ontario ensures all new material posted to its websites conforms to WCAG accessibility guidelines as required by the Regulation. Periodically, the Office will engage a third party to audit the accessibility features of the website and will implement required changes to bring the website into compliance.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Communications team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2020).

IV. Maintenance of Accessible Elements

Ombudsman Ontario recognizes that built environment barriers are a form of discrimination and is committed to increasing the accessibility of our workspaces. The Design of Public Spaces Standard under the Regulation requires that newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces are accessible. The Regulation also requires procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in the public spaces, and procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order. (O. Reg. 191/11 s. 80.44)

Action:

The Ontario Ombudsman complied with the Design of Public Spaces Standards when designing new office space in 2019-2020. In addition, Ombudsman Ontario is compliant with the barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code and strives to achieve a high level of accessibility in all Ontario Ombudsman workspaces.

Ombudsman Ontario will continue to maintain accessible elements in public spaces through monitoring and regularly planned preventative maintenance of accessible elements.

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to the Ontario Ombudsman's facilities or services that are usually used by persons with disabilities, the Ontario Ombudsman will provide notice of disruption to the public, including the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services that may be available. Notice of such disruption will normally be posted on the Office's website and may also be posted on the physical premises, where appropriate in the circumstances.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Facilities team with assistance from Communications team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing.

V. Employment**i. Recruitment Process**

Ombudsman Ontario ensures its employees and the public are notified about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment processes. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.22)

Ombudsman Ontario will notify job applicants, when they are selected to participate in an assessment or selection process, that accommodations are available upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used. (O.Reg.191/11, s.23(1))

Ombudsman Ontario will consult with applicants requesting accommodation, and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation that takes into account the applicant's accessibility needs. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.23(2))

When making offers of employment, Ombudsman Ontario shall notify the successful applicant about its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.24)

Action:

Information about available accommodations is set out in internal and external communications relating to recruitment.

Ombudsman Ontario advises job applicants about the availability of accommodations when they are selected to participate in an assessment or selection process. Applicants requesting accommodation are consulted about their needs so that appropriate accommodation can be provided.

All offers of employment include reference to Ombudsman Ontario's accommodation policies.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2012).

ii. Informing Employees of Supports

Ombudsman Ontario informs its employees of its policies, or changes to its policies, that support its employees with disabilities, including job accommodation policies. (O.Reg. 191/11, s. 25(1))

Ombudsman Ontario will provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable. (O.Reg. 191/11, s. 25(2))

Ombudsman Ontario will provide updated information to its employees whenever there is a change to existing policies related to the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs. (O.Reg. 191/11, s. 25(3))

In consultation with an employee requesting accommodation, Ombudsman Ontario will provide accommodation supports, including accessible formats and communication supports, needed for the employee to access information needed to perform their job and for information that is generally available to employees in the workplace. (O.Reg. 191/11, s.26)

Action:

On an ongoing basis, Ombudsman Ontario will review its existing accommodation policies and make any necessary changes to ensure full compliance with the Regulation.

Ombudsman Ontario will continue to inform employees of relevant policies and policy changes and respond to individual accommodation requests.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2012).

iii. Workplace Emergency Response Information

If Ombudsman Ontario is aware that an employee needs accommodation with respect to workplace emergencies, individualized workplace emergency response information will be provided to the employee as soon as practicable. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.27(1))

If the employee requires assistance in an emergency, with the employee's consent, Ombudsman Ontario will share the workplace emergency response information with a person designated to provide assistance to the employee. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.27(2))

Individualized workplace emergency response information will be updated when the employee moves to a different location, and when overall accommodations needs or plans or general emergency response policies are reviewed. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.27(3))

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario has workplace emergency plans for employees with disabilities requiring assistance during emergencies, and asks employees to provide notice of accommodation needs with respect to workplace emergencies.

If appropriate, and in consultation with employees needing accommodation, Ombudsman Ontario will prepare and provide employees with individualized workplace emergency response plans. This includes designating another person to assist during workplace emergencies, with the consent of the employee requiring assistance. The Office keeps a confidential record of individualized workplace emergency response requests and plans.

Ombudsman Ontario will regularly review its existing workplace emergency procedures and update them, if necessary, to ensure compliance with this Accessibility Plan and the Regulation.

Responsibility

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2012).

iv. Individual Accommodation Plans

Ombudsman Ontario has established a written process for the development and documentation of individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. (O. Reg 191/11, s.28(1))

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario has reviewed its current “Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Disabilities”, which provides for accommodation plans for employees with disabilities, to ensure it is in full compliance with the Regulation. Further information about individual accommodation plans is available in the policy.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario’s Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Completed as of June 1, 2012, with regular reviews ongoing.

v. Return to Work

Ombudsman Ontario develops, implements and documents return-to-work processes for employees who have been absent from work due to disabilities and who require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.29(1))

The return-to-work process outlines the steps the Office will take to facilitate the return to work, and includes documented individual accommodation plans as part of the process. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 29(2))

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario’s return-to-work process for employees who have been absent from work due to disability and who require disability-related accommodations to return to work is currently set out in its “Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Disabilities”.

Ombudsman Ontario has reviewed and amended its existing policy relating to employees with disabilities returning to work to ensure full compliance with this Accessibility Plan and the Regulation.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Completed as of June 1, 2012, with regular reviews ongoing.

vi. Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement, and Redeployment

Ombudsman Ontario takes into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when conducting performance management, providing career development and advancement opportunities to employees, or when engaging in employee redeployment. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.30)

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario ensures that managers are aware of their responsibility to take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when conducting performance management, providing career development and advancement opportunities to employees, or when engaging in employee redeployment.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources team.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing (as of January 1, 2012).

VI. Annual Status Reports

Ombudsman Ontario prepares annual status reports on the progress of measures taken to implement the actions set out in the Accessibility Plan. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4(3)(a))

Annual Status reports are posted on Ombudsman Ontario's website in an accessible format, and will be made available in alternative formats upon request. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.4(3)(b))

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario prepares and posts annual status reports, which are available in accessible formats on its website (and can be provided in alternative formats upon request).

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources and Communications teams.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing.

VII. Accessibility Reports

Ombudsman Ontario files Accessibility Reports annually or as otherwise required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. (Act, s. 14(1))

Ombudsman Ontario makes all Accessibility Reports public. (Act, s. 14(2))

Action:

Accessibility Reports continue to be completed as provided for under the Act, and include a signed statement by a director certifying that all the information required to be provided in the report has been provided and that the information is accurate.

Accessibility Reports are posted in an accessible format on the Ombudsman Ontario website.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Human Resources and Communications teams.

Implementation Timeframe:

Ongoing.

VIII. Review of Accessibility Plan

Ombudsman Ontario will review and update its Accessibility Plan by October 2027, in consultation with persons who have disabilities. It was reviewed in October 2022.

Action:

Ombudsman Ontario will develop and implement a consultation strategy and take consultation into account when updating its Accessibility Plan.

Responsibility:

Ombudsman Ontario's Communications and Human Resources teams.

Implementation Timeframe:

October 2027.