

# Ontario Energy Board Accessibility Plan, 2013

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in 2012-13

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## Introduction

Each year, the Government of Ontario sets a course to prevent, identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Every agency, board and commission participates through its annual accessibility plans, as required under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is Ontario's roadmap to become barrier-free by 2025. It includes accessibility standards in:

- customer service
- information and communications
- employment
- transportation
- the built environment
- procurement

### Customer Service Accessibility Policy

In December 2009 the Ontario Energy Board's Management Committee approved the Customer Service Accessibility Policy. The Policy applies to all employees and appointees.

#### *Purpose of the Policy*

*The Board is committed to providing its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The Board is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access the Board's services and benefit from the Board's services in the same place and in a similar manner as other stakeholders or members of the public.*

The Policy established the following standards:

- Board members and employees will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account the person's disability.
- The Board will allow people with disabilities to use assistive devices on the Board's premises.
- If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, that person may bring their guide dog or other service animal with them into any area of the Board that is open to the public or third parties.
- If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, that person may bring their support person with them into any area of the Board that is open to the public or third parties.
- In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities, the Board will provide stakeholders and other members of the public with notice of the planned or unexpected disruption.
- The OEB will train employees and Board members on the AODA and the Customer Service Accessibility Policy.
- The Board welcomes feedback regarding the manner in which the Board provides its services to people with disabilities. The OEB's internet outlines the feedback process and options.

## **2013 Accessibility Plan**

In 2013 the accessibility plan will help to inform planning requirements under the new *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)* enacted in 2011 under the AODA. The IASR requires the Ontario Energy Board to develop a multi-year plan to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

Our accessibility plan outlines the specific steps the OEB is taking to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The term “customer” applies both to our employees and appointees and the services they can expect from the OEB as an employer, as well as to our external customers (includes stakeholders, consumers and general public) who are recipients of our programs and services.

## **Section One:**

### **Report on Current Measures to Identify, Remove and Prevent Barriers**

The Ontario Energy Board is working to support the Government of Ontario's goal of achieving an accessible province by 2025.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requires the OEB and other designated public sector organizations to comply with the Customer Service Standard. The OEB continues to comply with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation.

This document includes a summary of the initiatives the Ontario Energy Board has implemented to date.

#### **Customer Service**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities receive accessible services with the same high quality and timelines as others.

The Customer Service Standards guiding principles under which we interact with members of the public include:

##### *Accessibility*

- ready access to services
- services designed and implemented to promote participation for persons with disabilities considering their needs and expectations of dignity, independence and integration

## Responsiveness

- we listen to customers, and adapt and improve services to make it easier for them to get what they need, taking into account the needs of a diverse, multicultural population
- services are delivered efficiently and in a timely manner

## Reliability

- set, monitor, communicate and consistently meet customer service standards
- clear, accurate and relevant information is provided about our services

## Courtesy

- all customers are treated equitably and fairly with dignity and courtesy

## Accountability

- review, evaluate and communicate to customers how we performed
- protect the personal information provided by customers
- manage our resources effectively and efficiently
- quality customer service is a reflection of great people, strong values and a responsive organization.

As such, by 2012 the Ontario Energy Board remains in full compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation 429/07.

## **Information and Communications**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to making OEB information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. The information we provide and the ways we communicate are key to delivering our programs and services to the public. When the Customer Service Accessibility Policy was approved in 2009 we undertook the following steps:

- A memo was sent from Human Resources to all staff in December 2009 informing them of accessibility requirements, resources available to them and our accessibility commitments.
- The Accessibility section of the intranet site was established and is updated as needed to reflect any changes or additions to requirements, policies and regulations and to add new resources for staff use.
- The internet was established as the feedback mechanism regarding processes and initiatives. No feedback was received from the public about our programs or services for people with disabilities.

## **Employment**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to fair and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities. As such, the OEB has ensured that:

- all interview facilities are accessible and barrier-free. The option to have documents provided in accessible formats is also made available.

- The AODA Regulation also requires that as part of the training all employees must be familiar with the Customer Service Accessibility Policy.

## **Built Environment**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to greater accessibility in, out of and around the facilities we use. As such, the OEB has:

- ensured that accessibility design guidelines were applied to all facility projects and ongoing maintenance; common areas were kept free of obstacles and ergonomic furniture was procured. These matters were addressed as requests for accommodations were made.
- included accessible work environment best practices to ensure individual needs were respected and wise investment in facility assets and equipment were made.
- Ensured that it will continue the timely investigation of disruptions within the OEB premises and to ensure notices are posted to alert the public how they may access the disrupted service and any alternatives that may exist.

## **Procurement**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to integrating accessibility considerations into our procurement processes. As such, in 2012 the OEB has:

- developed the “Accessibility & Procurement at the OEB” guidelines outlining the Board’s obligation, including examples of “accessible procurement”.



- the “Purchase Requisition” and “Request for RFX Initiation” forms have been updated to include the accessibility obligation (RFX includes Request for Proposal, Request for Interest / Expression of Interest, Request for Information, Request for Quote)
- The RFP template and standard contracts have been updated to reflect the accessibility obligation.
- The Procurement staff manual has been updated to reflect the accessibility obligation. Procurement staff have been trained on the obligation and the new requirements in the process.

### **Other**

The Ontario Energy Board performed inspections of offices and common areas, as part of Occupational Health and Safety Act requirements, to identify and address any impediments to the health and safety of employees, with consideration to the needs of people with disabilities.

The Ontario Energy Board considered and addressed the needs of people with disabilities when required.

## **Section Two:**

### **Measures Planned for 2013 and Beyond**

This year, the Ontario Energy Board's accessibility plan focuses on five areas. These initiatives will support compliance with the existing Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. They will also help us enhance accessibility in other areas:

- Customer Service
- Employment
- Information & Communications
- The Built Environment
- Procurement

#### **Customer Service**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities receive accessible goods and services with the same high quality and timelines as others. As such, the Ontario Energy Board plans to focus on the following areas.

The Ontario Energy Board will review any feedback received on accessibility related issues to ensure the OEB delivers programs and services to the public in a manner that takes their disability into consideration. The OEB's internet site will continue to offer the public multiple avenues to provide feedback, such as email, mail, phone and TTY.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

All feedback provided will be collected and analysed to identify trends. These will be reviewed to ensure appropriate action is taken and to make improvements for the future. The OEB has not received any feedback to date.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

## Employment

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to fair and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities. As such, the Ontario Energy Board plans to focus on the following areas.

The Ontario Energy Board will continue to enhance managers' awareness of ODA/AODA to improve their ability to accommodate staff with disabilities, the overall manager responsibilities and ensuring an accessible work environment.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will continue to promote training courses for all staff. These courses are mandatory for all new staff members.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The OEB will continue to apply the training requirements in the Customer Service Accessibility Policy:

4.1 The Board will train Board Members and employees on:

- (a) the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07);
- (b) how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities, including how to interact with people who are accompanied by a guide dog, other service animal, and/or support person;
- (c) how to use equipment or devices available at the Board's premises that may help with the provision of service to a person with a disability;
- (d) what to do if the person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Board's services; and
- (e) the requirements of this Policy.

4.2 Board members and employees will also be trained on an ongoing basis as required (e.g., whenever changes are made to this Policy).

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board provides limited direct service to the public. The OEB's primary application of the AODA is focused on ensuring that employees have healthy, safe and accessible work places.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will continue to notify its employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment processes including that accommodations are available upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used and the OEB shall consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's accessibility needs due to disability. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 22, 23, 26)

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will when making offers of employment, notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 24.)

Timeframe: January 2013 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will revisit the existing Employment Accommodation for People with Disabilities to ensure we have a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 28)

Timeframe: January 2013

The Ontario Energy Board will revisit the existing policy on Employees Returning to Work from Absence due to Illness or Injury to ensure the OEB has met its obligation for a Return to Work Process under Regulation 191/11 (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 29)

Timeframe: January 2013

The Ontario Energy Board will ensure the performance management process takes into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, in respect of employees with disabilities. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 30)

Timeframe: February 2013 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will ensure it takes into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans, when providing career development and advancement to its employees with disabilities. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 31)

Timeframe: January 2013 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will ensure that it takes into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when redeploying employees with disabilities. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 32)

Timeframe: January 2013 and Ongoing

## **Information and Communications**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to making information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. The information we provide and the ways we communicate are key to delivering our programs and services to the public. As such, the Ontario Energy Board plans to focus on the following areas.

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to making its internet website and web content conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA, and shall do so in accordance with the following schedule. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 14)

By January 1, 2014, new internet websites and web content on those sites must conform to WCAG 2.0 Level A.

By January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than,

- i. success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live), and
- ii. success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded). O. Reg. 191/11, s. 14 (4).

The Ontario Energy Board shall upon request provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities,

- (a) in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability; and
- (b) at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 12)

Timeframe: 2014 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board shall consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 12)

Timeframe: 2014 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board shall notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 12)

Timeframe: 2014 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will maintain a list of documents that have been sent for accessible formatting, and will be made available by request to the public and employees in various accessible formats, such as Braille, large font and audio.

Timeframe: 2014 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will require staff to incorporate accessibility considerations into the preparation of communication materials to ensure that communication products are accessible to everyone.

Timeframe: 2014 and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will send emails to all staff, informing them of new acts, regulations, policies and other requirements and best practices. The Ontario Energy Board will also alert staff of courses they are encouraged to take, particularly when these courses are considered mandatory. The Ontario Energy Board will promote, track and report on attendance at these courses.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

## **Built Environment**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to greater accessibility in, out of, and around the premises we use. As such, the Ontario Energy Board plans to focus on the following areas.

The Ontario Energy Board will include accessible work environment best practices into each facility initiative to ensure individual needs are respected and wise investment in facility assets and equipment are made.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

These best practices include integrating accessible office design guidelines as well as accessibility and ergonomically supportive choices in products, furniture, fitting and finishes.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will continue to work with building management and accommodation service providers to ensure that accessibility design standards are applied to the OEB premises.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board is dedicated to ensuring that accessibility design standards are applied to accommodation projects and ongoing maintenance, common areas are kept free of obstacles, ergonomic furniture is procured, and special tools/equipment are obtained to meet the needs of people with disabilities. These matters will be addressed as requests for accommodations are made.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board will continue to work with the building management, to ensure that disruption notices are posted in areas accessed by the public in a timely and accessible format.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

## **Procurement**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to integrating accessibility guidelines into its procurement processes and will continue to incorporate accessibility considerations into its procurement activities. As such:

The Ontario Energy Board will continue to consider accessibility when planning for procurement of goods and services and incorporate the requirements into the procurement process.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing



Procurement documents, where applicable, will specify the desired accessibility standards to be met and provide guidelines for the evaluation of the proposals with respect to those standards.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

Staff training will be provided as new guidelines and/or policies are updated.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

Accessibility links and information for staff reference will continue to be available on the OEB's intranet site.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

## **Other**

The Ontario Energy Board is committed to identifying every method the OEB can incorporate to be barrier-free for persons with disabilities. As such, the Ontario Energy Board also plans to focus on the following areas.

The Ontario Energy Board will perform checks of offices and common areas, as part of Occupational Health and Safety Act requirements, to identify and address any impediments to the health and safety of employees, with consideration to the needs of people with disabilities.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing

The Ontario Energy Board's Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) meets on a regular basis to discuss the safety needs and will ensure that Accessibility guidelines are a priority of the committee, paying special attention to ensuring that the workplace is kept free of physical barriers and always fully accessible. For example, by making sure that doorways are not blocked and that computer and network cables are tucked away neatly to prevent tripping.

Timeframe: Implemented and Ongoing