

**Annual Accessibility Plan**  
**for the**  
**Halton District School Board**  
**September 2003 - August 2004**

***Submitted to***

D. Papke, Director of Education

30 September 2003

***Prepared by***

Halton District School Board  
Accessibility Working Group

*This publication is available on the Halton DSB's website*

[www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca)

*and in accessible formats upon request*

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the ODA requires each school board to prepare an annual accessibility plan, to consult with people with disabilities in the preparation of this plan and to make the plan public.

This is the first annual plan (2003 - 2004) prepared by the Accessibility Working Group of the Halton District School Board. The plan describes: (1) the measures that the Halton District School Board has taken in the past, and (2) the measures that the Halton District School Board will take during the year (2003 - 2004) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

This year, the Halton District School Board committed to the continual improvement of access to school board facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community with disabilities. It is our intent to expand our focus by including more avenues for collaboration with people with disabilities in the review of our annual plan.

The Accessibility Working Group identified a number of barriers for people with disabilities. Over the next several years, the Accessibility Working Group recommends focusing on a number of different barriers. This year, the Working Group recommends identifying, removing and preventing some barriers in the areas of attitudinal, technological, policy/practice, information and communication.

The *Ontarians with Disability Act* allows organizations the flexibility to determine their own priorities. The ODA expects organizations to develop and implement accessibility plans within existing planning processes and using existing resources.

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Note: The *Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001* uses the term “persons with disabilities”; however, the Accessibility Directorate uses the term “people with disabilities” for general or common use when speaking or referring to persons with disabilities. Any time the Act is directly quoted, the term “persons with disabilities” is used. For all other references, “people with disabilities” is used.

## 1. Aim

This plan describes the measures that the Halton District School Board has taken in the past and measures that will be taken during the next year (2003 - 2004) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities who work in, use or attend school board facilities and services.

## 2. Objectives

This plan:

1. Describes the *process* by which the Halton District School Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities
2. Reviews efforts at the Halton District School Board to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities during the *past year(s)*
3. Lists the policies, procedures, programs, practices and services that the Halton District School Board will review in the *coming year* to identify barriers for people with disabilities
4. Describes the *measures* the Halton District School Board will take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities
5. Describes how the Halton District School Board will make this accessibility plan *available to the public*

## 3. Commitment to Accessibility Planning

The Annual Accessibility Plan of the Halton District School Board will be approved by Administrative Council and shared with Trustees and SEAC for information in line with the Halton District School Board's governance policy prior to being posted on the board website.

The Halton District School Board is committed to:

- Establishing an Accessibility Working Group
- Consulting with board employee groups and people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans
- Ensuring school board policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility
- Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community

The Director of Education has authorized the Accessibility Working Group to prepare an accessibility plan that will enable the Halton District School Board to meet these commitments.

#### **4. Description of the Halton District School Board**

The Halton District School Board is a regional school board serving approximately 45,000 public school students in the municipalities of Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville in southern Ontario. All four municipalities form the Regional Municipality of Halton.

Regular curriculum includes a wide range of topics including – but not limited to – core French, technology, vocational, music and arts programs. Other programs offered within the Halton District School Board include French Immersion, English-as-a-Second-Language, adult and continuing education programs. Special education programs are also provided by the Halton District School Board for students with special needs.

With total budget revenues of \$310,531,401 the Halton District School Board operates 71 elementary schools and 17 secondary schools. A team of 79 principals and 71 vice-principals, ten superintendents, one executive officer, as well as more than 2,500 teaching staff, and 1,000 support/non-teaching staff make the Halton District School Board one of the region's largest employers.

Public school supporters in the Region of Halton elect a board of 11 trustees, who establish policies and direction of the Halton District School Board. Two student trustees have been appointed for 2003-2004. Committee-of-the-Whole meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month, with Board meetings on the third Wednesday of each month. Public session for all meetings begins at 8 pm. All meetings take place in the boardroom of the J.W. Singleton Centre, 2050 Guelph Line in Burlington.

The Halton District School Board believes that public education has been one of the major cornerstones of a prosperous and democratic Canada. Its essential and critical role must continue through commitment to our mission and guiding principles.

#### **Mission Statement:**

The Halton District School Board is committed to providing the highest quality education which prepares our students for success as responsible, participating citizens of the global community.

## Guiding Principles

We are committed to....

- Promoting high expectations for students, staff and trustees
- Providing learning opportunities which enable individual growth and encourage students to become critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and achieve their personal best
- Promoting a dedication to life-long learning, physical well-being and a sense of self worth
- Promoting and providing ongoing professional growth for all staff
- Optimizing the use of our resources
- Providing a caring and safe environment that also recognizes the rights and dignity of all
- Recognizing and fostering the contributions of individuals and groups
- Developing purposeful relationships and cooperative partnerships among students, staff, trustees, parents, volunteers, school councils, community, other school boards, business and government
- Promoting core values of honesty, integrity, responsibility, caring, equity, dedication and respect for self, others and the environment
- Providing equitable opportunity for all students to access services and programs within available resources.

## 5. The Accessibility Working Group Members

The accessibility working group was formally constituted in May 2003 and consists of the following members:

<b><i>Working Group member</i></b>	<b><i>Department</i></b>	<b><i>Contact information</i></b>
Chair: Jacki Oxley	Community Relations School & Community Liaison	(905) 335-3663 x3208
Ruth Peden, Superintendent of Education	School Operations	(905) 335-3663 x3319
TBA	Administration & Finance	
Dean Barnes	Secondary Administrators	(905) 845-5200
Carol Davin		(905) 878-0575
Toni Marlowe	Elementary Administrator	(905) 632-1690
Kim Tennant	Elementary Teacher	(905) 335-2542

<b>Working Group member</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Contact information</b>
Sheila Gore, Manager of Human Resources	Human Resources	(905) 335-3663 x 3284
TBA	Information Technology	
Bill Wotherspoon, Manager of Capital Projects	Facility Services	(905) 335-3663 x 3265
Alice Strachan, Stewarttown PS. School Council Co-Chair	School Councils	<a href="mailto:Astrachan1@cogeco.ca">Astrachan1@cogeco.ca</a>
Joanne Arnold,  Vice Chair, SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee	<a href="mailto:arnoldj@idirect.com">arnoldj@idirect.com</a>  (905)631-6636
Brenda Hood, Co-ordinator (west)	Student Services	(905) 335-3663 x 3226
Suzanne Muir, Diversity Coordinator	Community Relations	(905) 335-3663 ext 3257

## 6. Recent Barrier-removal Initiatives

During the last several years, there have been a number of initiatives in the Halton District School Board to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. See Appendices A and B for details.

The Halton District School Board, through its Special Education Plan 2002-2003, has addressed access for students with disabilities through modifications and accommodations of programs and services. The Special Education Plan is available on the board website at [www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca).

Since 1998, the Halton District School Board has run an integrated Track and Field Meet where students with physical and/or intellectual disabilities participate alongside their peers. Each year over 100 students with disabilities participate in the event.

We are partnering with Community Living Oakville and the Halton Catholic District School Board to establish a Job Training Site where students with intellectual disabilities can have their vocational skills assessed, and be provided with training to enable them to gain employment after leaving high school.

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Halton District School Board has undertaken the making of a video of the information contained in "Working Together" (the parent guide to special education). This will enable those parents who prefer to receive information in visual/auditory format, to have access.

Many of our schools have been renovated to improve accessibility with the inclusion of automatic door openers on school interior and exterior doorways, elevators in most secondary schools with multiple stories, ramps for school front and rear access points, accessible washrooms, parking spaces designated for people with disabilities and renovations to some schools to accommodate track lifting for students with physical disabilities, to name a few.

Since 1991, the designs of new schools have architectural features that incorporate the principles of universal design meeting government accessibility requirements. Current renovations to existing buildings have accessibility for people with disabilities addressed in the plans, as resources permit.

Attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities are being addressed through staff and student in-service about diversity, rewriting diversity policy/procedures and examining other policies and procedures for impediments to accessibility.

Communicating in a variety of formats has been accomplished on a limited basis and this area will be addressed in the 2003-2004 plans and future plans.

<b>Type of Barrier</b>	<b>Strategy for Barrier Removal</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Physical	Student Services identifies a priority list of physical barriers to be addressed on an annual basis with a focus on students with disabilities' need for accessibility	Annual budget from Facilities Service addresses identified project needs. This process is managed by collaboration between Student Services and Facility Services See appendices A & B
Physical	Identified need for additional parking spaces designated for people with disabilities at Board Office All schools reviewed for parking spaces designated for people with disabilities	Increased number of parking spaces designated for people with disabilities at Board Office; All schools have parking spaces designated for people with disabilities
Physical	ISA level 1 grant application/claims	Sound systems placed in specified classrooms for students who are deaf/hard of hearing
Physical	Transporting students with disabilities in strollers	Buses retrofitted with Q strait
Communication	Facilitating communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing	Parents/guardians who are deaf are provided with a sign language interpreter for parent teacher interviews;
Communication	Facilitating communication for people whose first language is other than English or French	Parents/guardians whose first language is not English or French are provided with translators for parent/teacher interviews

<b>Type of Barrier</b>	<b>Strategy for Barrier Removal</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Communication	ISA level 1 funding claim for Braille computers and printers	Braille computers and printers purchased for students with blind/low vision disability
Information	Accessibility of board and school documents is limited primarily to print or electronic copy	Investigate translation of Student Code of Conduct and Volunteer brochure in other languages; exploring other information accessibility strategies
Attitudinal	Professional development re content of resources for classrooms focussing on inclusiveness	Diversity Co-ordinator provides multicultural/multifaith resources, inservice for both teachers and students
Attitudinal	Harassment procedures	Harassment brochures produced for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employees by Non-Employees</li> <li>2. Employee to Employee</li> <li>3. Student to Student</li> </ol>
Technological	Communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing	TTY in place; Consultation with purchasing dept re accessible equipment for new purchases  Hearing Assist system in place in the Board Room for people who are deaf or hard of hearing attending Board meetings.
Architectural	New schools feature lever style door handles, motion detectors for sinks in washrooms and corridor design for washrooms which improves ventilation and ease of access;  Developing the Halton DSB Building Manual;  Drawings reviewed for accessibility prior to tender	See Halton DSB Building Manual for specific details – document is continuously evolving;  Review of construction drawings reduces after approval costs as a result of accessibility designs  SEAC reviews the drawings prior to construction; a checklist for students and teachers/employees is evolving to use to review the

		drawings See CMHC Modification checklist and City of Burlington Barrier-free Design Performance Checklist; Accessibility Plan progress
Policy/Practice	Accommodations, both short and long term, are provided for employees with disabilities	Human Resources identifies accommodations needed for employees with disabilities on a case by case basis

## 7. Measures in Place: Preventing new barriers

The guiding principles of inclusionary practice inform school board programs, policies, practices and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We strive to create an environment that is accessible through the annual accessibility planning process to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

## 8. Barrier-identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Working Group is using the following barrier-identification methodologies:

<b><i>Methodology</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>
Presentation to Senior Administration	Opportunity for input and feedback	ongoing
Presentation to Trustees	For information	October, 2003
Presentation to SEAC	For information	October, 2003
Letter to Stakeholders	Describe the working group composition and initiatives for the coming year	October 2003
Presentations to Employee Groups	For information	During 2003-2004
Focus groups	Hold focus groups with staff, students and community groups representing people with disabilities to determine barriers to be addressed	During 2003-2004 focus groups will be held
Communication with Public	Plan posted on board website	October 2003
Accessibility Working Group	Review, plan, and make recommendations for year 2 plan; report progress about Year 1 plan	Monthly meetings

## **9. Barriers to be Addressed in 2003 - 2004**

The Accessibility Working Group will address six barrier groupings during the coming year. Our focus this year is raising awareness about the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the Board Accessibility Plan.

It is our intent to expand our focus by including more avenues to collaborate with people with disabilities in the review of our annual accessibility plan.

This plan will address at least one area in each of communication, information, attitude, policies/practices, technology and architecture.

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Means to remove or prevent barriers</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Portray people with disabilities participating in our schools and communities in an inclusionary manner</p>	<p>Ensure board and school-based media coverage reflects inclusionary practice</p>	<p>Vet media coverage, school &amp; board websites, <i>Education Matters</i> and school-based publications for inclusionary practice</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>Board and school-based staff</p>
<p><b>Information</b></p> <p>Accessibility of school forms is limited</p>	<p>Investigate which forms and records may be made available in a variety of accessible formats</p>	<p>Strive to produce forms and records in a variety of accessible formats</p>	<p>Beginning October 2003 and ongoing</p>	<p>Student Services Information Technology Community Relations</p>
<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <p>Staff need knowledge of proper terminology when referring to people with disabilities</p>	<p>Provide staff with appropriate terminology when referring to people with disabilities</p> <p>Increase staff awareness about disability etiquette, interacting with people with disabilities and using words with dignity</p>	<p>Accessibility Awareness professional development sessions</p>	<p>Throughout 2003-2004</p>	<p>Community Relations Human Resources Student Services</p>
<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <p>Staff and students lack knowledge about people with disabilities</p>	<p>Sensitize persons in the board, staff and students, to accessibility issues for people with disabilities</p>	<p>Accessibility information brochure developed for board-wide distribution</p>	<p>Professional development sessions to be offered in 2003-04 for</p>	<p>Community Relations Human Resources</p>

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Means to remove or prevent barriers</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
and types of disabilities			teaching, non-teaching staff and students	Student Services Accessibility Working Group
<b>Technical</b>  Board website not universally accessible	Board website accessible for people who are blind, visually impaired or who use screen-reading software	Research technical details and costs for revising website for accessibility	2003-2004	Information Technology
<b>Physical</b>  Identify standards related to accessibility	Create checklists for physical barrier removal from a student and teacher/employee perspectives at school level; apply school checklist to assess the accessibility needs for the Board Offices	Provide school and board offices' custodial staff with checklists to assess their plant for accessibility on an annual basis	ongoing	Accessibility Working Group Facility Services
<b>Policies/Practices</b>  Examine Board and school policies and other documents for inclusive language	Board and school policies and other documents are inclusive and address accessibility needs	Guidelines developed to vet new documents and documents under review for inclusiveness	ongoing	Accessibility Working Group
<b>Architectural</b>	Continue to update Halton DSB Building Manual to reflect best practice in accessible building design	Halton DSB Building manual is continuously updated	ongoing	Facility Services

## 10. Review and monitoring process

The Accessibility Working Group meets regularly during the planning year to review progress. Throughout the year, the effectiveness of implementing the barrier-removal and prevention strategies will be discussed in preparation for appropriate revisions for the second year of accessibility planning.

## 11. Communication of the plan

The Halton District School Board's accessibility plan will be posted on the board website at [www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca) and hard copies will be available. The plan can be made available in accessible formats, on request. The plan may be included in the school board orientation package to new staff.

Contact information for accessible format requests: 905-335-3663 ext 3208

### Definition of Disability:

The ODA adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. "Disability" is:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

### What is a barrier?

A "barrier" is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

## HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY JUNE 2003 - SECONDARY

SCHOOLS	Ramps - exterior	Washroom access and facilities	Nurses washroom access and facilities	Access for other plumbing facilities, ie. Water fountains	Support bars where required	Stay open devices for corridor doors	Delay closing devices for door closers	Elevator for multi-storey schools	Lift devices for stages or other areas containing platforms	Automatic exterior door openers	Locker facilities	Accessible millwork in special rooms	Swimming pool washrooms and ramps
Acton District HS	X	X	X										
Aldershot School	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Burlington Central School	X												
E.C. Drury HS	X	X	X	X				X		X	X		
General Brock HS	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
Georgetown District HS	X	X			X			X		X			X
Iroquois Ridge HS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
L.B. Pearson HS	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		
Lord Elgin HS	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
M.M. Robinson HS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Milton District HS			X							X			
Nelson HS	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		
Oakville Trafalgar HS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Q.E. Park School	X	X	X		X	X				X	X		
T.A. Blakelock HS	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X		
White Oaks SS	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X

# HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY JUNE 2003 – NORTH AREA ELEMENTARY

SCHOOLS	Ramps - exterior	Washroom access and facilities	Nurses washroom access and facilities	Access for other plumbing facilities, ie. Water fountains	Support bars where required	Stay open devices for corridor doors	Delay closing devices for door closers	Elevator for multi-storey schools	Lift devices for stages or other areas containing platforms	Automatic exterior door openers	Locker facilities	Accessible millwork in special rooms	Swimming pool washrooms and ramps
Brookville	X	X	X	X	X							X	
Centennial	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
E.W.Foster	X	X	X			X							
George Kennedy	X	X			X								
Glen Williams	X			X									
Harrison					X								
J.M. Denyes		X	X		X								
Joseph Gibbons	X	X		X	X					X			
Limehouse		X			X					X	X		
Martin Street	X			X									
McKenzie-Smith Bennett	X	X		X		X	X			X	X		X
Park	X	X											
Pineview		X											
Robert Baldwin			X		X								
Robert Little	X	X	X							X			
Sam Sherratt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	
Stewarttown	X	X	X		X								
W.I.Dick			X		X	X					X		

## HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### SCHOOLS ACCESSIBILITY JUNE 2003 – EAST AREA ELEMENTARY

SCHOOLS	Ramps - exterior	Washroom access and facilities	Nurses washroom access and facilities	Access for other plumbing facilities, ie. Water fountains	Support bars where required	Stay open devices for corridor doors	Delay closing devices for door closers	Elevator for multi-storey schools	Lift devices for stages or other areas containing platforms	Automatic exterior door openers	Locker facilities	Accessible millwork in special rooms	Swimming pool washrooms and ramps
Abbey Lane	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X			
Brantwood													
Brookdale		X			X						X		
Chisholm	X	X	X		X	X				X			
E.J. James	X	X	X	X	X								
Eastview				X	X						X	X	
Falgarwood	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X		
Gladys Speers	X	X	X										
Heritage Glen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Linbrook													
Lorne Skuce													
Maplegrove	X	X			X								
Montclair													
Munn's		X	X		X								
New Central													
Oakwood	X	X			X								
Pilgrim Wood	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Pinegrove													
Post's Corners	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
River Oaks	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Sheridan			X	X		X							
Sunningdale		X	X		X	X				X			
W.H. Morden	X		X	X	X	X							
West Oak	X	X	X		X	X		X					

## HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY JUNE 2003 – WEST AREA ELEMENTARY

<b>SCHOOLS</b>	Ramps - exterior	Washroom access and facilities	Nurses washroom access and facilities	Access for other plumbing facilities, ie. Water fountains	Support bars where required	Stay open devices for corridor doors	Delay closing devices for door closers	Elevator for multi-storey schools	Lift devices for stages or other areas containing platforms	Automatic exterior door openers	Locker facilities	Accessible millwork in special rooms	Swimming pool washrooms and ramps
B.T.Lindley	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X		
Brant Hills		X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	
Central													
C.H. Norton	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	X	
Clarksdale	X	X	X	X	X								
Dr. Charles Best			X	X									
Florence Meares	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X			
Frontenac	X	X			X								
Glenview		X	X							X			
John T. Tuck	X	X			X						X		
Kilbride													
King's Road	X												
Lakeshore													
Maplehurst	X	X			X								
Mohawk Gardens	X												
Paul A Fisher	X	X	X	X									
Pauline Johnson				X									
Pineland	X												
Rolling Meadows	X	X		X		X					X		
Ryerson	X	X	X	X	X								
Sir Ernest	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	
Tecumseh	X	X	X		X			X			X	X	
Tom Thomson	X	X	X		X							X	
W.E. Breckon	X	X	X							X			

**Appendix B**

**FACILITY MODIFICATIONS SUMMER 2003**

<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>MODIFICATIONS</b>
General Brock	Washroom changes to accommodate incoming student
Stewarttown	Washroom changes to accommodate incoming student Partition door Lighting Electrical outlet Install new cupboard
Chris Hadfield	Life Skills Class Electrical outlets for fridge and stove Accessible sink Double sink with hot/cold water taps
MDHS	3 door openers installed+ 2 additional door openers 2 more exit ramps adjust two lockers
Eastview	Commercial grade elevator lifts for 2 sets of stairs (to library and Life Skills class) 5 Ramps
Limehouse	JK/SK fencing
T.A. Blakelock	Washroom modifications to accommodate tracking lift system Attach swing transferred from Morden
C.H.Norton	Washroom changes to accommodate incoming student- remove existing change table, install electrical outlet for hydraulic change table Ramps at front door and kindergarten exit Electronic door openers at front entrance
Park	Magnetic lock on kindergarten exterior door Gate on kindergarten door to hallway Window in interior door of time-out room
Various	Move carpet for students who are deaf and hard of hearing
Harrison	Time out room in corner of the behaviour resource class (walls, door with window, safe-proof walls)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Contents:

1. What is the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?
2. What is the definition of disability under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?
3. Does the ODA have priority over the Ontario *Human Rights Code*?
4. What is the role of the Accessibility Advisory Council? ([section 19](#))
5. What is the role of the Accessibility Directorate? ([section 20](#))
6. What are the requirements for school boards under the ODA?
7. By what date must accessibility plans be prepared?
8. What are the requirements of the ODA with respect to school boards?
9. What must school boards include in their accessibility plans?
10. Are school boards required to submit the accessibility plans to the government?
11. How should school boards make their plans public?
12. Are school boards required to consult with people with disabilities in preparing their annual accessibility plans?
13. How can school boards identify people with disabilities within the board and within the community to assist with implementing their obligations?
14. Who will pay the costs of developing and implementing the plans?
15. Do school board accessibility plans have to look like the sample annual accessibility plan provided?
16. Can a school board prepare a plan jointly with another public organization or school board in the area?
17. Should plans be prepared as part of the operating plan process?
18. Municipalities are required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee. Are school boards required to set up a committee as well?
19. Is there a penalty for *not* completing the annual accessibility plan?
20. What is the cost for retrofitting old buildings? Who pays?
21. What buildings currently must be wheelchair accessible? How will the ODA change this?
22. Where can I get more information on the ODA?

**1. What is the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?**

- The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was passed on December 14, 2001.
- The purpose of the ODA is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province (*section 1*).
- Several key sections were proclaimed on February 7, 2002, including the establishment of the Minister's Accessibility Advisory Council and the Accessibility Directorate.
- The majority of ODA obligations were proclaimed on September 30, 2002 and December 31, 2002.
- A document entitled *Independence and Opportunity: Ontario's Framework for Change for Persons with Disabilities* was released in November 2001 and describes the government's plan to make Ontario fully accessible for people with disabilities.

**2. What is the definition of disability under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?**

- The ODA covers the same broad range of disabilities as the Ontario *Human Rights Code*. These include physical, sensory, cognitive, developmental and mental disabilities, and brain injury.
- Section 2 of the ODA defines "disability" as:
  - (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical

- reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
  - (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
  - (d) a mental disorder, or
  - (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; ("handicap").

**3. Does the ODA have priority over the Ontario *Human Rights Code*?**

No. The Ontario Human Rights Code retains primacy over the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

**4. What is the role of the Accessibility Advisory Council? (section 19)**

The Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario reports directly to the Minister of Citizenship and advises the Minister on a range of accessibility issues, including:

- Implementation of the ODA and preparation of the regulations;
- Programs of public information that have a connection to the ODA;
- Accessibility for people with disabilities to services provided or paid for by the Government of Ontario;
- Accessibility for people with disabilities to employment opportunities in Ontario; and
- Any other matters related to the ODA where the Minister requests advice.

**5. What is the role of the Accessibility Directorate? (section 20)**

The Directorate consults with organizations that must prepare accessibility plans and policies, and may request and review those documents. It provides information, tools and resources to assist organizations in meeting their obligations under the ODA.

The Directorate provides specialized knowledge, research and support to the implementation of the ODA.

It supports public and private organizations through partnerships. For example, the Ministry of Citizenship partnered with the Canadian Standards Association to develop voluntary standards for customer service to increase the knowledge and skills of businesses when serving customers with disabilities.

The Directorate provides public education and information as well as develops educational resources, standards, and features best practices.

It supports and consults with the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario.  
The Directorate also makes recommendations to the minister on draft regulations, after studying comments it receives from the public.

**6. What are the requirements for school boards under the ODA?**

School boards are required to prepare annual accessibility plans and to make them public. The plans will address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities in the organization's by-laws (if any), and its policies, programs, practices and services (section 15 and Schedule).

In preparing plans, two or more municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities may prepare joint plans (section 17).

**7. By what date must accessibility plans be prepared?**

Plans should be prepared on an annual basis, enabling organizations to tie accessibility planning into their regular planning cycles. The initial plan must be completed by September 30, 2003.

**8. What are the requirements of the ODA with respect to school boards?**

School boards, as defined in section 1 and established under section 68 of the *Education Act*, are required to prepare an accessibility plan each year and to consult with people with disabilities and others, when preparing this plan. Accessibility plans must be made available to the public.

**9. What must school boards include in their accessibility plans?**

Plans must identify barriers to people with disabilities, ways in which to remove and prevent them in a school board's by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services. Section 15 of the ODA provides additional information about the contents of a plan.

**10. Are school boards required to submit the accessibility plans to the government?**

No, the Ministry of Citizenship's Accessibility Directorate of Ontario may, upon request, review those documents. However, these plans must be made public.

**11. How should school boards make their plans public?**

School boards may use a variety of methods for letting members of the public know about their plan, for example: posting the information on their website, putting a notice in their newsletter, posting information on bulletin boards, etc.

Also, the accessibility plan needs to be available in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities.

**12. Are school boards required to consult with people with disabilities in preparing their annual accessibility plans?**

Yes. Section 15 of the ODA requires that school boards consult with people with disabilities and others when preparing their plans.

**13. How can school boards identify people with disabilities within the board and within the community to assist with implementing their obligations?**

Many people with disabilities are actively involved with disability organizations in their community. Some examples of these organizations include: the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; Easter Seals Association; the Ontario March of Dimes; Canadian Mental Health Association; Le Phénix; Canadian Hearing Society and Community Living Ontario, as well as consumer organizations such as independent living centres, injured workers associations and self-help groups such as the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN).

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), representing local associations, is a crucial member source of information about people with disabilities and accessibility needs.

We encourage school boards to contact these and other organizations in their community to locate individuals who have expertise and credibility in disability issues.

Employees and other individuals with disabilities who can assist with the development of the accessibility plan could be identified through advertising in newsletters, via e-mail requests or through managers or immediate supervisors.

**14. Who will pay the costs of developing and implementing the plans?**

School boards, hospitals, provincial ministries, municipalities, colleges, universities, and public transportation providers have been asked to develop accessibility plans using their existing resources. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario is available for consultation. Working tools, such as the sample annual accessibility plan, are also available.

**15. Do school board accessibility plans have to look like the sample annual accessibility plan provided?**

No. The sample plan is simply a tool to assist school boards in the planning process. The plans can take any form that a board would like to develop, as long as the requirements of the ODA are addressed.

**16. Can a school board prepare a plan jointly with another public organization or school board in the area?**

Yes. Section 17 of the ODA states that two or more organizations are allowed to prepare an accessibility plan together and make it available to the public.

If an organization prepares an accessibility plan with another organization, it does not need to prepare its own accessibility plan if the joint plan meets the ODA's individual requirements for each party.

**17. Should plans be prepared as part of the operating plan process?**

It may be useful to coordinate the development of an accessibility plan with the operating planning process. However, this may not be possible with the first plan, as the initial plan must be completed and made public by September 30, 2003.

**18. Municipalities are required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee. Are school boards required to set up a committee as well?**

No, Section 15 does not require school boards to establish an accessibility advisory committee. However, in order to carry out the accessibility planning exercise, school boards may wish to set up a working group to assist in the preparation of the annual accessibility plan. The composition of an accessibility working group, how often it meets, etc., is left to the discretion of each board. Further, as accessibility plans are required annually, a working group could provide some consistency even if the position of the Chair is rotated from board to board on an annual or biannual basis.

In addition, it might be useful to draw upon the ideas and experience of the membership of the local municipal accessibility advisory group. (The ODA requires municipalities of 10,000 or more to establish such committees, with a majority of the membership being people with disabilities.)

**19. Is there a penalty for *not* completing the annual accessibility plan?**

If the accessibility plan is not completed and made available to the public, as required under the ODA, then the school board is in contravention of the Act. The Accessibility Directorate is monitoring implementation of the ODA by all organizations that have obligations.

Section 21 of the ODA does contain a specific enforcement provision. However, Section 21 has not yet been proclaimed. The government is committed to proclaiming and implementing the Act in a reasonable manner that permits every affected organization to meet its obligations, and to be sure that systems and training are in place to support this.

**20. What is the cost for retrofitting old buildings? Who pays?**

The requirements of the ODA are not retroactive. However, organizations that are required by law to prepare accessibility plans may identify access to older buildings as a barrier.

The ODA does not prescribe measures school boards must take each year to remove barriers. It allows school boards to identify their own priorities and establish reasonable timelines and relevant approaches to barrier removal. Accessible or universal design should be embedded in the front-end of new construction, and renovations of existing spaces; accessibility should be taken into account when ordering new equipment or modifying existing equipment. Planning for accessibility at the beginning of a project will reduce costly renovations to remove barriers later.<sup>1</sup>

The cost of retrofitting would depend on what barriers and actions are identified in organizations' accessibility plans. Advance planning for accessibility at the design stage is usually much cheaper than modifying a building later to make it accessible.

The ODA allows organizations the flexibility to determine their own priorities. It is expected that organizations will develop and implement accessibility plans within existing planning processes and using existing resources.

**21. What buildings currently must be wheelchair accessible? How will the ODA change this?**

The ODA requires a number of organizations to plan for the removal of barriers through the process of accessibility planning. However, the ODA does not change

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<sup>1</sup> See also the "Business Case for Accessibility: How Accessibility Awareness Strengthens Your Company's Bottom Line." (page 18) By the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health. November 2001. Available at *Paths to Equal Opportunity*: [www.equalopportunity.on.ca](http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca)

the current requirements that school boards comply with the Ontario Building Code or the Ontario Human Rights Code.

New buildings and those undergoing renovation must meet the requirements of the current Ontario Building Code (OBC). The OBC provides a set of minimum requirements for public safety inside buildings.

The Human Rights Code (HRC) prevails over the Building Code and over the ODA. The HRC creates a right to accessible workplaces, housing, public transit, hospitals, schools, libraries, restaurants, etc. and places a positive obligation on businesses and public sector organizations to make their facilities accessible. If an organization or business complies only with the requirements of the OBC, they may be vulnerable to a human rights complaint to the extent that their premises continue to fall short of the requirements of the HRC.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate and relevant case law make it clear that facilities should be made accessible through inclusive design choices at the outset. Where barriers already exist, steps should be taken to remove them, unless to do so would cause undue hardship.

For more information about barrier-free design, contact the Canadian Standards Association (416-747-4044) and request the CSA Standard B651-95 Barrier Free Design booklet. It is available in both English and French.

## **22. Where can I get more information on the ODA?**

Additional information, including Backgrounders and Frequently Asked Questions, is available from:

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario  
Ministry of Citizenship  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor,  
400 University Ave.  
Toronto, ON M7A 2R9  
Tel: (voice) 416-314-7541; Toll-free 1-888-520-5828  
TTY/TDD 416-326-0148; Toll-free: 1-888-335-6611  
Fax: 416-314-7307  
E-mail: [ODA@mczcr.gov.on.ca](mailto:ODA@mczcr.gov.on.ca)  
or the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario web portal at:  
<http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/index.html>

A general guide to annual accessibility planning is available at the following link on the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario website:

<http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessibleplanningguide.htm>

The Paths to Equal Opportunity website also provides extensive information on accessibility and disability issues at: <http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca>

## Suggested Reference Material/Resources

**Note:**

In addition to the following resources, school boards are encouraged to consult the links provided on the Ministry of Citizenship's website (<http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/index.html>) and on the Paths to Equal Opportunity website ([www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng\\_g/links](http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng_g/links))

**Accessibility Planning Resources for School Boards:**

Accessibility Ontario – Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning

<http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessibleplanningguide.htm>

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*,

2001 <http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/act2001.htm>

Human Resources Development Canada, *A Way With Words*

[http://www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/sdd-dds/odi/documents/waywithwords\\_tmp/purpose.shtml](http://www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/sdd-dds/odi/documents/waywithwords_tmp/purpose.shtml)

Community Resources for Independence, *Using Words With Dignity*

<http://www.crinet.org/dignity.php>

Government of Ontario – Paths to Equal Opportunity

A-Z index – Accessibility in Educational environments

[http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng\\_g/subject/index.asp?action=search\\_4&dir\\_id=1071](http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng_g/subject/index.asp?action=search_4&dir_id=1071)

Ontario Human Rights Commission - *Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate* <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/disability-policy.shtml>

Enablelink (Canadian Abilities Foundation) Directory of Canadian Disability Links

[http://www.enablelink.org/resources/links\\_to.html](http://www.enablelink.org/resources/links_to.html)

Directory for Accessibility

<http://www.accessibilitydirectory.ca>

Adaptive Technology Resource Centre

<http://www.utoronto.ca/atrc>

Ontario Interpreter Services (OIS)

<http://www.chs.ca/services/ois.html>

Canadian Standards Association:

B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design

B480-02 – Customer Service Standard for People with Disabilities  
<http://www.csa.ca>

Playability Tool Kit: Building Accessible Playspaces  
<http://www.opassoc.on.ca/toolkit.asp>

**A Few Key Ontario Disability Organizations:**

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)  
<http://www.cnib.ca>

Canadian Hearing Society  
<http://www.chs.ca>

Canadian Mental Health Association – Ontario  
<http://www.ontario.cmha.ca>

Community Living Ontario  
<http://www.oacl.on.ca>

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada – Ontario Division  
<http://www.mssociety.ca/ontario>

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario  
<http://www.ldao.on.ca>

Little People of Ontario  
<http://www.lpo.on.ca>

Ontario Brain Injury Association  
<http://www.obia.on.ca>

Canadian Paraplegic Association – Ontario  
<http://www.canparaplegic.org/on>

Le Phénix  
<http://www.lephenix.on.ca>

Ontario March of Dimes  
<http://www.dimes.on.ca>

The Easter Seal Society – Ontario  
<http://www.easterseals.org>

AboutFace International  
<http://www.aboutfaceinternational.org>