

**Speaking notes for
The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services**

**Region of Peel International Day of Persons with Disabilities event
December 2, 2009 3:15 pm**

Good afternoon.

Merci / thank you for that kind introduction.

C'est un réel plaisir pour moi d'être avec vous aujourd'hui pour célébrer cet anniversaire. Et je tiens à remercier chacun d'entre vous pour votre présence.

I want to thank the staff at Peel Region and your accessibility advisory committee for taking the initiative to host today's fifth annual event.

And thank you all for participating!

I hope today's enriching agenda has provided each of you with new tools and ideas to make your community more welcoming for everyone.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is a significant occasion on a global stage...

Today, we join communities around the world to celebrate the importance of accessibility.

And there is much to celebrate...

In Ontario, we have come a long way in a global movement to ensure that *everyone* – regardless of their ability – has access to the same opportunities.

At the turn of the last century, people with disabilities were treated more as patients, rather than citizens...

As burdens, instead of people.

People with disabilities did not have the same access to schools, to employment or to other opportunities.

We have overcome so many obstacles that prevented people with disabilities from having equal opportunities.

In fact, this has been an especially monumental year in Ontario's history.

On March 31st, we closed the doors to Ontario's last three institutions for people with a developmental disability...

With the closure of these institutions, we also closed the doors to segregation, seclusion and stereotyping.

Et grâce au soutien et au travail admirable de nos partenaires communautaires, nous pouvons être assurés que tous et toutes sont intégrés et trouvent leur place dans nos collectivités.

Les personnes qui ont un handicap ont maintenant plus de choix, vivent de façon plus autonome et peuvent aspirer à une vie meilleure.

C'est ainsi que nous construisons un Ontario plus fort et plus engagé envers ses citoyens.

But there are still obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in everything this province has to offer.

We have a vision to break down these barriers and make Ontario accessible for everyone by 2025.

And the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act is the roadmap that is taking us there.

Under this groundbreaking legislation, we are developing accessibility standards for key areas of everyday life:

- Customer service
- Transportation
- Information and communications
- Employment, and
- The built environment.

Our first standard — for customer service — comes into force for the public sector on January first.

The private sector will follow in 2012.

This standard will help people with disabilities gain equal access to customer services in businesses and organizations across Ontario.

In the coming months, our remaining standards will be finalized.

Each of these standards is a building block that will lead to an accessible and inclusive province.

I know that the Region of Peel is making great strides to capture the vision of our accessibility standards and break down barriers.

Your 2-1-1 services are a great example.

And we are proud to partner with you in this initiative that is connecting people of *every* ability to vital information and activities in this community.

Through efforts like these, I envision a very different Ontario by 2025... one where everyone is valued for their abilities, rather than hindered by a disability.

Nous avons fait beaucoup de chemin depuis l'époque où les personnes qui avaient un handicap vivaient en institution, une époque où l'exclusion était l'option choisie par le gouvernement, la société et les familles.

Mais tout cela a changé avec la fermeture des derniers établissements en mars dernier.

Car nous avons choisi de mettre l'accent non pas sur les handicaps mais sur les capacités.

That, to me, will be the outcome of the work taking place in Peel and around the province.

And by continuing our work, *together*, I know we can make it happen.

Thank you all for being a part of Ontario's accessibility solution!

Merci.

FIN