

**The Ontario Public Service**

**CORRESPONDENCE  
STYLE GUIDE**

**Correspondence Council of Ontario  
Fourth Edition, 2012**



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The Correspondence Council of Ontario wishes to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Wayne Berry to updating and redesigning this guide. The council is indebted to Wayne for his dedication and hard work in completing this project, while continuing to carry out his responsibilities as Senior Writer, Correspondence, Writing Services Unit, Cabinet Office. This revamped and revised edition of the style guide is an indispensable resource for anyone involved in correspondence in the OPS and across the broader public sector.

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**Produced by the Correspondence Council of Ontario  
c/o 99 Wellesley Street West, Room 4620, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1A1.**

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# 1 Introduction

## Overview

This is the fourth edition of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) *Correspondence Style Guide*. Though updated, the guide's goal remains the same: to provide a preferred standard for the clear and consistent writing of correspondence in the OPS. Ultimately, the guide should make your life easier as a writer, editor or proofreader of Ontario government correspondence. Of equal importance is the guide's role in helping you to convey a positive image of government correspondence and to achieve effective communication with your intended audience.

As the *Correspondence Style Guide* is designed specifically for the OPS correspondence community, it is not intended to answer every style question or to re-create existing style guides. In addition, you may have in-house requirements that compel you to deviate from its recommendations. It should be used, therefore, in conjunction with authoritative sources such as the *OPS Communications Style Guide*, *The Canadian Press Stylebook*, *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and *The Canadian Style*. Other recognized style guides, such as *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *Editing Canadian English*, may also prove useful in filling any perceived gaps in this guide or in other sources you may consult.

When composing correspondence, your goal should be to strive for clarity and consistency — and to avoid the impression of carelessness or casualness. When using a style, ensure that you apply it uniformly to all writing, editing and proofreading of letters and emails.

As advice may change from edition to edition, ensure that you are using the latest version of any style guide you deem a suitable complement to this one. With many recognized style guides now available online, it is possible to perform quick and comprehensive searches for terms — without being limited to a hard-copy index.

### Preferred authorities

This guide has a number of standards, among them *The Canadian Press Stylebook*, the [\*Guide to Canadian English Usage\*](#), the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and the *OPS Communications Style Guide* — the latter to ensure that correspondence style is in harmony with the OPS-wide communications style.

### Using this guide

Mindful of the mandate of the OPS Green Office to help the Ontario government reduce its environmental footprint, we have prepared this edition as a searchable and bookmarked PDF. In other words, we hope that this document will *not* be printed, but used as a digital resource only. In keeping with e-book conventions, this document does not contain blank pages separating chapters.

### Links to resources

As you have already seen, this guide contains embedded hyperlinks to cited resources. If the resource is available publicly, the hyperlink will take you directly to it. If it is a priced publication or fee-based online resource, the hyperlink will take you to the appropriate page for more information. Some chapters may also contain a “More about” section listing resources intended to enhance your knowledge of a style issue. **Please note that any resource listed in the “More about” section which falls outside Ontario government guidelines is not intended to be prescriptive or to set rules — but rather to provide an opportunity for learning and comparison.**

As hyperlinks can become broken, please contact Wayne Berry at [wayne.berry@ontario.ca](mailto:wayne.berry@ontario.ca) to report such issues.

Any style guide, this one included, is a work in progress. As new questions arise and as language and usage change, this guide will also change. We welcome input from users on how to make it more useful.

This style guide is available on the [Cabinet Office Communications](#) wiki page and the [Correspondence and Issues page](#) of the Cabinet Office Communications intranet.

### **Accessible edition**

We have made this PDF document accessible using Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro and the guidance provided by the [Adobe Accessibility Resource Center](#).

### **Acknowledgements**

Anthony Gullone, Team Lead, Correspondence, Writing Services Unit (WSU), Cabinet Office, supervised the reworking of the current edition. Wayne Berry, Senior Writer, Correspondence, WSU, updated and redesigned the guide.

### **For more information**

For more information about this guide, please contact Anthony Gullone, Team Lead, Correspondence, WSU, at 416-325-3758 or at [anthony.gullone@ontario.ca](mailto:anthony.gullone@ontario.ca).



## 2 The Elements of a Letter

In this chapter, we provide guidelines on crafting a polished and professional letter — from how to use honorifics correctly to the proper way of styling ministers. Please refer to the sample letter below for guidance on how to present specific elements of a letter. Clickable links within the sample letter will take you to the appropriate section.

May 21, 2012

Mr. John Ontarian  
Director  
ABC Company  
40–123 Anywhere Street North  
Sudbury, Ontario  
P3P 3P3

Dear Mr. Ontarian:

Thank you for your recent letter and for the copy of the article from *The Sudbury Star*. I appreciate your bringing this news about your company's recent achievement to my attention.

As your correspondence would also interest my colleague the Honourable Simon Shield, Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, I have provided him with a copy for his information.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

Eva Lake  
Minister

Enclosure

c: The Honourable Simon Shield

**Annotations:**

- [honorific: p. 9](#) points to "Mr."
- [organizational title: p. 6](#) points to "Director"
- [organization name: p. 13](#) points to "ABC Company"
- [inside address block: p. 5](#) points to the entire recipient address block
- [office and street: p. 5](#) points to "40–123 Anywhere Street North"
- [one space](#) points to the space between "P3P" and "3P3"
- [one space](#) points to the space between "Dear" and "Mr."
- [italics: p. 41](#) points to "*The Sudbury Star*"
- [ministerial title: p. 14](#) points to "Honourable"
- [one space](#) points to the space between "Thank you again" and "for"
- [one space](#) points to the space between "Minister" and "Eva Lake"
- [one space](#) points to the space between "Enclosure" and "c:"
- [enclosures: p. 16](#) points to "Enclosure"
- [copies: p. 16](#) points to "c:"

## 2.1 The inside address block – Canada

Appearing at the top of the letter and below the date, the inside address block consists of the name of the recipient, title (if applicable), company (if applicable) and address of the correspondent.

### Suite or office number

The suite or office number precedes the street number and is separated from it by an en (–) dash or hyphen.

Mr. John Ontarian  
Director  
ABC Company  
40–123 Anywhere Street North  
Anytown, Ontario  
M1M 1M1

### Floor number

The ordinal floor number precedes the street number. Note that ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.) less than 10 should be spelled out.

Ms. Martha Ontarian  
Production Manager  
XYZ Company  
Second Floor, 123 Anywhere Avenue  
Anytown, Ontario  
M1M 1M1

### Building name

In logical sequence, building name follows section and/or wing.

James Citizen, PhD  
Professor  
Language Studies Department  
Section A, North Wing  
Central Campus Building  
Trillium University  
1010 Canadian Shield Street  
Anytown, Ontario  
X1X 1X1

## Organizational titles

On the line following the name in the inside address block, spell out titles such as *President*, *Executive Director* and *Chief Executive Officer*.

When addressing correspondence to two people, write the name and title of each person. We recommend that when correspondents exceed two, the letter be addressed to the first sender, with the words *and Colleagues*, *and Associates*, *and Friends* or *and Family* added as required.

Ms. Maria Rossi  
President  
Mr. Gilles Leclair  
Chief Executive Officer  
Oration (Ontario) Ltd.  
Address

Mr. Paramjit Singh and Colleagues  
Endeavour Solutions Inc.  
Address

For more information on multiple correspondents, refer to section [2.8](#).

## Professionals, academics and post-nominal letters

Do not mix professional or academic degrees with post-nominal letters in the inside address block.

### USE

Warren Brant, MD  
Division of Pediatric Neurology  
The Children's Hospital  
Address

Dear Dr. Brant:

### USE

Elisabeth Kluge, PhD  
Chair  
Department of Physics  
Eastern White Pine University  
Address

Dear Dr. Kluge:

### DO NOT USE

Dr. Warren Brant, MD

### DO NOT USE

Dr. Elisabeth Kluge, PhD

## Long organization names

If the length of an organization's name is such that it does not present well visually on a single line, we advise carrying part of the name to the next line, then indenting to the third space.

Mr. Anthony Russo  
Chair  
Centre for Policy Development on Good Governance and  
Leadership Excellence  
Address

## 2.2 The envelope address block – Canada

The formatting of the Canadian address block for envelopes — which differs from the inside address block — must adhere to Canada Post addressing standards. On the envelope, the postal code appears on the same line as the abbreviated province, with two spaces separating the province and the postal code.

Ms. Helena Ontario  
40–123 Anywhere Street  
Toronto ON M1M 1M1

For more information on formatting Canadian address blocks — both in letters and on envelopes — please consult [Canada Post's addressing guidelines](#).

## 2.3 The inside address block – USA

The American inside address block differs from the Canadian one in how information is formatted.

Below is an example of an American inside address block. Two spaces separate the state name and the zip code. The country name (*USA*) is used without periods and appears alone on the last line of the address block.

Ms. Joan Reed  
Director  
ABC Company  
40–123 Anywhere Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60620  
USA

For more information on the American address block, consult Canada Post’s addressing guidelines.

## 2.4 The international address block

As expected, many international address blocks differ from the Canadian address block. If an international correspondent provides an address, then follow the format used in the incoming letter.

For more information on international address blocks, please consult Canada Post’s addressing guidelines. In addition, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) offers a number of useful tools to ensure that international addresses are presented correctly, including [guides to postal addressing systems](#) in the UPU’s member countries.

## 2.5 Street names

Do not abbreviate street names or other address elements, including highway, expressway, crescent, place, square, block and building. Write them in full in both the address block and in the body of the letter.

Algonquin Avenue	Langevin Block
Essa Road	Frost Building South
Highway 588	Wellington Square
Third Street	Colonel By Drive

## Rural route and postal box

For rural routes and postal boxes, write PO Box and RR respectively — with no punctuation and no numerical sign.

Ms. Padma Rao  
PO Box 25  
RR 2  
Anytown, Ontario  
X1X 1X1

## 2.6 Honorifics and post-nominal letters

### Honorifics

Use the following abbreviations for the honorifics commonly used with personal names:

Ms.      Mrs.      Mr.

Dr., strictly speaking, is an abbreviation for a doctor of medicine, dentistry or chiropractic, or a doctor of veterinarian medicine. However, correspondents with doctorates (PhDs) may indicate that they wish to be addressed as Dr. If so, then personal preference should be acknowledged and the Dr. honorific used.

## Post-nominal letters

Post-nominal letters, which are placed after the name of a person, are abbreviations indicating university degree, professional designation, military decoration, an honour, an award or a membership.

According to *The Canadian Style*, there is a continuing trend toward the omission of periods in abbreviations. The authors of the 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* concur, as do other sources, including the *University of Oxford Style Guide* and *Editing Canadian English*. The *OPS Correspondence Style Guide* embraces this trend, recommending that all post-nominal letters *not* be punctuated.

## Examples of post-nominal letters

### Appointments

QC (Queen's Counsel)

PC (Privy Councillor)

### Fellowships and Memberships

FRSC (Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada)

OAA (Member of the Ontario Association of Architects)

### Honours

CC (Companion of the Order of Canada)

OC (Officer of the Order of Canada)

CM (Member of the Order of Canada)

OOnt (Order of Ontario)

### Legislators

MP

MPP

### University degrees

DDS

LLB

PhD

## Order of post-nominal abbreviations

It is not uncommon for people to garner a variety of degrees and honours. In such cases, we recommend following the order prescribed by *Editing Canadian English*:

- i. honours, orders, decorations and medals
- ii. degrees, diplomas and licentiates
- iii. academic and professional associations and affiliations

Rachel Thomas, OOnt [Order of Ontario], PhD, LLB [academic degrees],  
FRSC [affiliation]

In addition, only the highest academic degree earned in a given subject area need be displayed.

Anne Guérin, MN

Anne Guérin, RN, MN

## Jr. and Sr.

While the 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* recommends that no comma be used before Jr. and Sr., we suggest following the preference of the author of the incoming correspondence — which may or may not include a comma.



## 2.7 Salutation

In the salutation, use *Dear*, followed by the appropriate honorific, family name and a colon.

Dear Ms. Trillium:

Thank you for your letter regarding Highway 11.

If you are unsure of the gender of the person to whom you are writing, use the full name in the address block and in the salutation.

Dear Lee Stubbs:

Thank you for your letter regarding Highway 11.

Similarly, if you are provided with an initial and family name only, use both when composing the address block and salutation.

Dear L. Stubbs:

When replying to children aged 13 and under, use the child's first name in the salutation, followed by a comma.

Dear Sofia,

Thanks for writing to tell me about what you've been doing in class.  
I really liked the story you told and the pictures you drew.

The practice of addressing children aged 13 and under by their first names should be used unless children indicate in their letters that they wish to be addressed as *Miss*, *Ms.* or *Mr.*

When using a first name — whether writing to a child or to an adult — a comma is preferable.

Dear Florian,

Thank you for your thoughtful card.

## 2.8 Multiple correspondents

Use the following table as a guide when addressing multiple correspondents.

<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Groups</i>
Messrs.	Mesdames	Colleagues
		Associates
		Friends
		Family

When writing to more than two correspondents, address the letter to the first sender, adding *and Colleagues*, *and Associates*, *and Friends* or *and Family* as required. Note that the initial letter in *Colleagues*, *Associates*, *Friends* and *Family* must be capitalized.

Ms. Maria Ontarian  
 Mr. Oscar Ontarian  
 Address

Mesdames Graham and Stubbs  
 Address

Mr. Jason Chen and Colleagues  
 Address

## 2.9 Names of organizations

### Official names

Generally speaking, write an organization's official name as it appears in the incoming letter.

Oration Corporation	Oration Local Union 56
Oration Canada Ltd.	Oration Grace Church
Oration (Ontario) Ltd.	Oration Scouts 44th Troop

## Familiar names

Many organizations, such as multinational corporations, are referred to by a familiar name. Unless referring to the organization as a legal entity, it is best to choose the familiar name.

- The minister met with Ford executives, plant workers and members of the community.
- The minister met with Ford Motor Company of Canada Limited executives, plant workers and members of the community.

## Municipal governments

The names of cities, towns, townships and other levels of municipal government are usually written in familiar form.

- Thank you for the copy of the submission prepared by the City of Guelph.
- Thank you for the copy of the submission prepared by the Corporation of the City of Guelph.

## 2.10 Ministerial titles

When referring to a Cabinet minister for the first time in a letter or email, the minister's name should be preceded by *the Honourable*.

I note that you have sent a copy of your letter regarding jury duty to the Honourable Linda Ontario, Attorney General.

However, when referring to a Cabinet minister in his or her capacity as MPP, do not use *the Honourable*. This distinction is especially important when a Cabinet minister has raised a constituency issue in his or her capacity as MPP.

Your MPP, Linda Ontario, has sent me a copy of your letter regarding school boards.

## Ministerial titles and restrictive appositives

When an appositive is restrictive — that is, when it contains essential information about the noun that it follows — it does not require punctuation.

The futurist Richard Florida spoke about the role of firms and communities in creating prosperity.

In the above example, Mr. Florida’s name (the appositive) defines the futurist we are discussing. It is not parenthetical — but essential — to the meaning of the sentence. It is therefore a restrictive appositive and does not take commas.

In the following example, *the Honourable Linda Ontario* is the restrictive appositive as, without it, *my colleague* would be ambiguous.

- I note that you have sent a copy of your letter regarding jury duty to my colleague the Honourable Linda Ontario, Attorney General.
- I note that you have sent a copy of your letter regarding jury duty to my colleague, the Honourable Linda Ontario, Attorney General.

A simple rule: look at the introductory word or phrase, then ask, “Is there more than one?” If no, then use commas. If yes, leave out the commas. For more on restrictive appositives, consult the second edition of *Editing Canadian English*.

## Ministers with more than one portfolio

If a minister has responsibility for more than one portfolio, choose the ministry most relevant to the subject of the incoming letter.

- Thank you for your letter regarding pit and quarry operations. As this issue falls under the responsibilities of the Honourable Marie Gagnon, Minister of Natural Resources, I have passed along a copy of your correspondence to her so that she can respond to you directly.
- Thank you for your letter regarding pit and quarry operations. As this issue falls under the responsibilities of the Honourable Marie Gagnon, Minister of Natural Resources and Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, I have passed along a copy of your correspondence to her so that she can respond to you directly.

## 2.11 Copies and enclosures

### Copies

When sending copies of a letter, leave one blank line between the signature block and the copy indicator [c:]. Also leave one blank line between the copy [c:] and blind copy [bc:] indicators.

If the full title of the person being copied has been specified in the body of the letter, it need not be repeated in the copy line. In the example below, we are copying the Honourable Marie Gagnon, Minister of Natural Resources, whose full title appeared in the body of the letter, and MPP Iris Ontario, whose full title did not.

c:     The Honourable Marie Gagnon  
       Iris Ontario, MPP, Lower Lakes

To ensure that the blind copy indication is only included in the copies sent to the people whose names appear after the *bc:*, we recommend that you list the names of blind copy recipients on a separate page.

### Enclosures

When sending an enclosure, follow the format below, with one space between the signature and *Enclosure*, and one space between *Enclosure* and the copy [c:].

Name  
Enclosure  
c:     The Honourable Rudy Ontario

Note that when there are multiple attachments, *Enclosures* (plural) should be used.

## 2.12 Consistency in spelling

To ensure consistency in spelling, compile a list of your ministry's preferred spellings and frequently misspelled words. The table below draws from the *OPS Communications Style Guide*, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*.

<i>Do Not Use</i>	<i>Use</i>
ageing	<b>aging</b>
benefitted	<b>benefited</b>
centered	<b>centred</b>
cooperate	<b>co-operate</b>
coordinate	<b>co-ordinate</b>
defense	<b>defence</b>
e-mail	<b>email</b>
enquiry	<b>inquiry</b>
fulfill	<b>fulfil</b>
honourary	<b>honorary</b>
license (noun)	<b>licence</b> (noun)
licence (verb)	<b>license</b> (verb)
judgement	<b>judgment</b>
Lieutenant-Governor	<b>Lieutenant Governor</b> (without hyphen)
Medicare (US program)	<b>medicare</b> (Canadian system)
Metis	<b>Métis</b> (with diacritic)
practise (noun)	<b>practice</b> (noun)
practice (verb)	<b>practise</b> (verb)

You should also ensure that you have the correct spelling of:

- associations
- events
- First Nation communities
- non-governmental organizations
- businesses
- facilities and buildings
- municipal governments
- place names

## 3 Capitalization

In this chapter, we provide guidance on capitalization in the context of Ontario government correspondence. (A more complete treatment of capitalization can be found in *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*.) Specifically, we look at the capitalization of organization names, government terms, geographic areas and groups of people.

### 3.1 A word about excessive capitalization

As the 2010 edition of the OPS *Communications Style Guide* puts it, “Government writing often contains excessive capitalization.” *The Canadian Press Stylebook* also recognizes the trend towards unnecessary capitalization and attempts to mitigate it through its modified down style. That is, where a reasonable choice exists, The Canadian Press recommends lowercase. This is likewise acknowledged by the Editors’ Association of Canada, which states, “In recent years, the trend on both sides of the Atlantic has been toward an increasing use of lowercase.”

We agree with our colleagues who prepared the OPS *Communications Style Guide*, The Canadian Press and the Editors’ Association of Canada — that writers should choose lowercase over uppercase where a reasonable option exists.

Bear in mind that excessive capitalization can:

- introduce an unwanted degree of formality
- disrupt the flow of a letter
- distract the reader
- hinder understanding
- suggest that a word has been previously defined as a specific term when it has not

## 3.2 Proper names – organizations

Capitalize all proper names, including those of organizations.

Ombudsman Ontario  
Belleville Chamber of Commerce  
TD Bank Financial Group  
Rotary Club of Timmins  
Sarnia Sting Hockey Club

### Informal references to organizations

Many organization names can be written in lowercase when they are used as a general or informal reference — or when using a shortened version of the organization name.

- The bank attributed its record profits to the hard work of the board.
- The Bank attributed its record profits to the hard work of the Board.

### The definite article and proper names

The definite article is usually *not* part of an organization's proper name and therefore should not be capitalized. However, if you are sure that the definite article is part of an organization's proper name, or that the organization's editorial style guide or visual identity guidelines require it, then capitalize it. If in doubt about the organization's preference, consult its website and corporate materials.

Thank you for your letter about The Hospital for Sick Children.

Many news agencies, like The Canadian Press, have had to adapt to the digital age.



### 3.3 Proper names – government terms

Capitalize the official names (that is, the proper names) of all levels of government and their departments, ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, acts, bills and the like.

Do not capitalize an official name when using its shortened version or when making an informal reference to it (that is, when using it as a common noun).

<i>Proper name</i>	<i>Common noun</i>
the Government of Ontario	the Ontario government
the Legislative Assembly of Ontario	the Ontario legislature
the Ontario Labour Relations Board	the board
the Standing Committee on Estimates	the committee
the members of Sarnia City Council	the members of city council
the Minister of Finance	the minister
the <i>Highway Traffic Act</i>	the act

Certain parliamentary procedures and legislative terms are considered proper names and are therefore capitalized.

Premier	First Reading
Cabinet	Second Reading
Executive Council	Third Reading
Royal Assent	Hansard
Speech from the Throne	Parliament

The Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act received Third Reading on April 16, 2008. Upon receiving Royal Assent, the act will require the dropping of trans fat from food and beverages sold in Ontario schools.

### 3.4 Generic short forms

To streamline writing, we often use generic short forms as synonyms for proper nouns. Such short forms do not take capitals.

<i>Proper name</i>	<i>Generic short form</i>
the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program	the program
Trent University	the university
the Durham District School Board	the board

Generic short forms are safe to use as long as the letter you are writing mentions only one program, one university, one board, etc. Otherwise, you may need to use additional descriptive information to differentiate between short forms.

### The plural of generic short forms

Do not capitalize the plural of generic short forms (including government, department, ministry and division), even when the full titles are used.

- The ministers of Education and Transportation met with the premiers of Ontario and Alberta.
- The Ministers of Education and Transportation met with the Premiers of Ontario and Alberta.
- The universities of Waterloo and Toronto will be holding a joint conference on emerging technologies.
- The Universities of Waterloo and Toronto will be holding a joint conference on emerging technologies.

### 3.5 Seasons

Do not capitalize the names of seasons.

- The spring session of the legislature ended today.
- The Spring session of the legislature ended today.

### 3.6 Geographic areas

Use capitals when referring to place names or geographic regions.

Sault Ste. Marie	the National Capital Region
Georgian Bay	the Canadian Shield
Lanark County	the British Isles

In general, do not capitalize the names of compass points unless they have taken on a political or administrative connotation — with the exception of Northern Ontario.

eastern Canada  
southwestern Ontario

#### BUT

Northern Ontario

If in doubt about the spelling of a geographic area or place name, consult the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, [GeoNames Ontario](#) (Ontario place names only) or the [Canadian Geographical Names Data Base](#).

### 3.7 Crown land and agencies

When referring to Crown land and Crown agencies — that is, land or agencies under the administration of a provincial ministry — the initial C should always be capitalized.

The province owns and manages most of the Crown land in Ontario.

### 3.8 Groups of people

Capitalize nouns and adjectives referring to ethnicity, nationality, language and members of major religions.

Ontarians	the Chinese-Canadian community
Francophones	Franco-Ontarians
the Sikh community	Persian culture

## Aboriginal peoples

The terms *First Nation(s)* and *Aboriginal* should always be capitalized. The use of initial capital letters is not only grammatically correct in the Canadian context, but also conveys respect. The term *Aboriginal* should never be used as a proper noun, but rather as an adjective, i.e., *Aboriginal people(s)* — and never *Aboriginals*.

Please consult the [Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Style Guide](#) for more information on appropriate word usage and style issues related to Aboriginal people in Ontario.

In addition, the following resources may be helpful:

[Reaching Out: A Guide to Communicating with Aboriginal Seniors](#), Public Health Agency of Canada

[Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada](#), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

## 3.9 Titles of Cabinet ministers

It is an OPS style preference that the titles of Cabinet ministers be capitalized, whether the title precedes or follows the minister's name.

Minister of Finance Peter Pecunia announced today...

Peter Pecunia, Minister of Finance, announced today...

**BUT**, in all other cases, capitalize titles only when they directly precede the name of the person holding the office or title.

As Deputy Minister Sarah Peters explained...

As Sarah Peters, deputy minister, explained...

## 4 Abbreviations

In this chapter, we look at the four ways to shorten words and phrases: abbreviations, contractions, initialisms and acronyms. For the sake of convenience, they are grouped under the general heading of *Abbreviations*.

### 4.1 A word about abbreviations

It is a truism that short forms abound in government. While they may have their place in internal communications as brevity codes, they should be used properly and judiciously when communicating with the public. In using abbreviations, your goal should always be to aid the reader — which means restricting the use of abbreviations to situations where they enhance comprehension or make your text simpler, less cumbersome and more accessible to your reader.

### 4.2 Definitions and examples

An **abbreviation** is a truncation of a word or phrase, consisting of the first letter, sometimes a few others, but not the last letter. It is followed by a period.

O. Reg. (abbreviation of Ontario Regulation)

S.O. (abbreviation of Statutes of Ontario)

A **contraction** consists of the first and final letter of a word or phrase. In Canadian and American usage, it is followed by a period.

Dr. Mrs. Mr.

Abbreviations and contractions appear infrequently in correspondence, with the exception of those used in salutations (e.g., Mrs.). That said, you may wish to use contractions when corresponding with children aged 13 and under. Having addressed your young correspondent by their first name (see [section 2.7](#) of this guide), your writing will appear friendlier and more accessible if you use contractions. In other words, it will create the impression that you are speaking directly to your reader.

An **initialism** consists of the first letters of a string of words, but cannot be pronounced as a word itself. Otherwise put, the reader must pronounce each letter of an initialism. Initialisms are always capitalized and written without periods.

OPS (Ontario Public Service)

ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program)

FOI (Freedom of Information)

RFI (Request for Information)

Like an initialism, an **acronym** is an abbreviated term consisting of a string of initial letters. It, too, is always capitalized and written without periods. However, unlike an initialism, an acronym is read as a single word.

DART (Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment)

FRO (Family Responsibility Office)

OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program)

WIN (Workforce Information Network)

### 4.3 Acronyms, initialisms and article usage

#### Acronyms and articles

Generally speaking, an acronym (which is pronounced as a word) does not require an article.

If you need to apply for OSAP, you now can do it three months earlier.

However, when used adjectivally, an acronym is typically preceded by an article.

Log on to the OSAP website to apply for student loans.

To be eligible, all applicants must be enrolled in an OSAP-approved program of study.

### Initialisms and articles

An initialism (which cannot be read as a single word) may or may not be preceded by an article. Familiar usage should dictate which is preferable.

The OPP and the RCMP met today to support the concerted effort to fight gun violence.

#### BUT

Every high school student in Ontario will now have the opportunity to learn CPR.

Like acronyms, initialisms are typically preceded by an article when used adjectivally.

To find out if your industry is exempt from an ESA standard, please contact the Ministry of Labour.

## 4.4 First reference to an acronym or initialism

Spell out the acronym or initialism on the first use, then follow with the short form in parentheses to prepare readers for its subsequent use.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) sets out the roadmap to make Ontario accessible by 2025.

When making a further reference to the term, you can then use the acronym or initialism already cited.

The minister stressed that we must continue to move forward to achieve the goals and objectives of the AODA.

If, in a lengthy letter, the acronym or initialism follows at a significant distance from its spelled-out form, consider repeating the complete version to facilitate ease of reading.

### Commonly understood acronyms and initialisms

Some widely understood acronyms and initialisms may be used without a first reference or definition.

MP	TVO	OPP
MPP	CBC	RCMP

As always, consider your intended audience when applying this rule. An international correspondent, for example, may not be familiar with acronyms and initialisms commonly understood in Ontario.

### 4.5 Time of day

We follow the recommendation of *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* that ante meridiem (before noon) and post meridiem (after noon) be abbreviated as a.m. and p.m.

The Employment Ontario Hotline is available from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.



## 5 Legislative and Legal References

The letters and emails you write, edit or proofread may make reference to federal or provincial legislation and regulations. As legislation is the foundation on which government builds and delivers its programs and services, it is vital that such references be cited accurately. This call for accuracy applies equally to the municipal bylaws or legal documents that you may have to cite. In this chapter, you will find advice on how to ensure that legislative and legal references are presented clearly and consistently.

When making reference to an Ontario act or regulation, it is always advisable to verify its correct name by consulting the [e-Laws website](#). For federal acts and regulations, consult the [Justice Laws Website](#).

In the case of an Ontario bill, you should verify its current status by visiting the “Bills & Lawmaking” section of the [Legislative Assembly of Ontario website](#).

### 5.1 Acts and bills

#### Acts

Italicize the names of acts but not the definite article preceding them. Bear in mind that, in most cases, the date of the legislation is part of the act’s name.

*the Open for Business Act, 2010*

*the Criminal Code*

#### Bills

The names of bills are not italicized.

Bill 3, Safe Drinking Water Act

However, the name of an act within the name of a bill should be italicized.

Bill 352, An Act to Amend the *Highway Traffic Act*

## Second references to acts and bills

While the first reference to an act or bill must contain its name in full, a second reference can use the common, lowercase reference to the legislation.

Thank you for writing about the *Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006*.  
I appreciate your sharing your views on the act [not Act].

## 5.2 Regulations, bylaws and legal citations

To ensure clarity and ease of access to information, refer to Ontario regulations as follows: O. Reg. [number] made under the [legislation].

O. Reg. 37/12 made under the *Highway Traffic Act*

For municipal bylaws, cite complete information, including the full title and the bylaw number.

City of Kenora By-Law Number 150-2010, a By-Law To Regulate The Keeping of Animals Within the City of Kenora

For court cases, italicize the name of the case.

*Smith v. Smith*

As the citation of case law can be complex, we recommend consulting the [Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation](#), know familiarly as the McGill guide.

## 6 Numerical Expressions

In the correspondence community, we work with numbers on a near-daily basis, incorporating dollar allocations, percentages, telephone numbers, dates and other numerical expressions into letters and emails. It is vital that these numbers — particularly those related to government funding — be presented clearly and accurately.

In this chapter, we narrow the focus to rules with the greatest relevance to our work as writers, editors or proofreaders of Ontario government correspondence.

Should you require in-depth guidance on numbers, we suggest consulting the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and the second edition of *Editing Canadian English*.

### 6.1 Writing numbers

#### Numbers zero through nine

Spell out cardinal and ordinal numbers less than 10.

The commission comprises seven members.

The debate is now entering its third week.

#### Numbers 10 or greater

Use numerals for cardinal and ordinal numbers 10 or greater. Do not spell out.

The agreement is the result of over 10 years of negotiation and consultation with affected stakeholders.

Apprentices and students participated in the 12th annual Ontario Technological Skills Competition held in Kitchener.

When using abbreviated ordinal numbers, do not use superscript.

12th

NOT

12<sup>th</sup>

## Numbers greater than 999

Use commas with numbers greater than 999.

The public has viewed the video series 1,200 times since its launch.

## Number beginning a sentence

If you must start a sentence with a number, spell it out.

Twenty years ago, the government passed the *French Language Services Act*.

When starting a sentence with a number, hyphenate numbers 21 through 99 *only*.

Twenty-five projects, designed by organizations from across Ontario, have been selected for funding.

Three hundred delegates attended the tourism summit.

Avoid beginning a sentence with a year. If possible, rewrite the sentence so that the year does not appear at the beginning of the sentence.

- Estimates for 2011-12 are now available on the Ministry of Finance website.
- 2011-12 estimates are now available on the Ministry of Finance website.

## 6.2 Numbers and sentence formatting

When using both numbers and measures, the whole expression should appear on the same line.

- The Government of Ontario will invest more than \$520 million in transit systems across the province.
- The Government of Ontario will invest more than \$520 million in transit systems across the province.

## 6.3 Telephone numbers

As ten-digit dialling becomes increasingly mandatory in Canada, we recommend that the area code be followed by a hyphen. It should not be set off by brackets, by a period or by a space. In all cases, telephone numbers should appear on the same line.

- To provide feedback, please contact our help desk at 416-325-4000.
- To provide feedback, please contact our help desk at (416) 325-4000.

## 6.4 First reference to a measure

For the first reference to a unit of measure in a letter, spell it out in full, followed by its abbreviated form in brackets. In subsequent references, use the abbreviated form.

In cities, towns, villages and built-up areas where there are no posted speed limit signs, the maximum speed is 50 kilometres per hour (km/h). Elsewhere the maximum speed limit is 80 km/h.

## 6.5 Units of measure

The International System of Units (SI), known popularly as the metric system, is Canada's official system of measurement. Use SI exclusively unless it poses a barrier to communication, as it might with a person who was taught imperial measurement only, or with a correspondent from the USA. In such instances, you will prove yourself to be a helpful writer by providing the numeric information in SI, followed by the imperial measurement. The imperial equivalent can be included in brackets, or offset with an em dash. You should always ensure that the conversion you provide is done with precision.

Thank you for your letter about the price of peaches in southern Ontario. A recent market survey found the fruit averaged \$2.20 per kilogram — or \$1.49 per pound.

For an in-depth treatment of traditional and SI measurements, consult the second edition of *Editing Canadian English*.

## 6.6 Money

References to sums of money should be expressed in numerals to ensure clarity.

\$500 million      \$1.6 billion

Hyphenate sums of money when used as a compound modifier before a noun.

A \$500-million fund was announced by the minister.

For monetary units preceded by a symbol, a decimal point and zeros are not required.

\$2

\$2.00

### Specifying currency

Dollar amounts in different currencies should be distinguished from one another by a readily understood marker. A reference to \$20 will be ambiguous to a non-Canadian reader and could be taken as a reference to American or other currency. No single system is universally accepted, but we suggest the following for the Canadian and American dollars, and for euros:

The government spent \$2 billion CDN on the program.

The government spent \$2 billion US on the program.

The government spent €2 billion on the program.

In more formal writing, you may wish to consider using the three-letter currency codes — referred to as the ISO 4217 list — created by the International Organization for Standardization. This list is also available in the “Useful Tables” section of the [\*U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual\*](#).

## 6.7 Percentages

Per cent (*not* percent) is usually spelled out, and its use is favoured in longer prose. The *zero through nine* and *10 or greater* rules (see [section 6.1](#)) apply to numbers preceding *per cent*. Use the following format:

Reports indicate that four per cent of Ontarians believe...

Over 55 per cent of Ontarians polled believe...

Use the percentage symbol (%) sparingly, where space is tight and in shorter texts.

<i>Ontario's Real GDP Growth, 2011-2013</i>		
Forecasted	Year	%
	2011	3.2
	2012	3.2
	2013	3.0

## 6.8 Time

Time on the hour is written in numerals and without zeros.

The meeting began at 8 a.m.

Time not on the hour is written with numerals and with a colon separating the hour from the minutes.

The meeting scheduled for 8 a.m. has been moved forward to 8:30 a.m.

## 6.9 Dates

Do not use ordinal numbers in the date. And when the date is listed as month–day–year, separate the day from the year with a comma, and the year from the text that follows with a comma.

- Thank you for your letter of June 30, 2012, regarding tuition.
- Thank you for your letter of June 30th, 2012 regarding tuition.

## 6.10 Fiscal year

It is an OPS style preference that the fiscal year be written yyyy–yy. The year range is separated by an en dash.

You may be eligible to receive up to \$273 for the 2012–13 benefit year for the Ontario Sales Tax Credit.

## 6.11 Periods of time

Do not use an apostrophe when referring to a period of time.

- The Ministry of Government Services began building POLARIS in the late 1980s.
- The Ministry of Government Services began building POLARIS in the late 1980's.

Note also the advice provided in [section 7.5](#) on the use of apostrophes and plurals.



# 7 Punctuation

As R.L. Trask, author of *The Penguin Guide to Punctuation*, points out, “The problem with poor punctuation is that it makes life difficult for the reader...” In this section, we offer guidance on making our meaning clearer through punctuation — from how to use the comma to presenting items in a bulleted list.

## 7.1 A word about punctuation

There are several schools of thought about how to punctuate correctly, among them the open and closed styles of punctuation. Open punctuation favours the use of only those punctuation marks necessary to prevent misinterpretation — a minimalist approach — whereas closed punctuation calls for the use of all punctuation marks based on a strict interpretation of the grammatical structure of a sentence.

Some style guides take a stance on this issue. For example, the [\*Laurier Style Guide\*](#), published by Wilfrid Laurier University, has adopted the open style of punctuation. Similarly, the University of Oxford encourages the readers of its style guide “to use as little punctuation as necessary while retaining the meaning of the sentence.”

Whichever side of the debate you are on, your role as a writer, editor or proofreader of Ontario government correspondence is *to ensure that punctuation always aids the reader*. This fundamental purpose of punctuation — to clarify meaning — takes precedence over recommendations governing the use of a given punctuation mark. We concur, therefore, with the succinct advice of *The Canadian Press Stylebook*:

Punctuation brings order to writing. It helps make the message of a sentence immediately clear. But don't overdo it. A sentence littered with clauses set off by commas, dashes and semicolons can look like a word jungle and chase the reader away.

If you find that punctuation fails to bring clarity to your sentence, consider rewriting it.

## 7.2 The comma

Commas usually travel in pairs.

Minister Eva Lake, joined by Minister Simon Shield, today announced funding for the new program.

The series comma, also called the serial comma, separates items in a list or in a series comprising three or more elements. This style guide favours the omission of a comma before the final *and* or *or* in a list or series — unless the sequence is complex and a comma would provide clarity. Again, making life easier for your reader should always be your overriding consideration.

The summit welcomed speakers from Canada, the United States, England, Wales, Ireland and South Africa.

Use a comma preceding and following a parenthetical phrase.

The commission, having met with community groups across the province, will submit its report later this year.

To separate two independent clauses, use a comma before *and*.

The task force completed the report, and then the committee began its work.

Use a comma to separate an introductory dependent clause from the independent clause that follows.

As you noted in your letter, the minister is reviewing the report's recommendations.

Commas are used to offset the year when the format of a date is month-day-year.

The minister announced on February 17, 2012, that commuters would have better access to transit and shorter commutes to work.

If only the month and year are used, commas are not required.

The government announced in January 2012 that it would provide greater support to cultural tourism.

## 7.3 The colon

While the primary use of the colon in correspondence is to complete the salutation, it has other functions in writing, such as introducing vertical lists.

Tips for a safe barbecue season include:

- inspecting and cleaning barbecues at least once a year
- always using propane barbecues outdoors
- keeping children and pets away from barbecues
- making sure the barbecue is completely cool before closing the cover

Colons can be used to stress the main point of a statement.

“Education has failed in a very serious way to convey the most important lesson science can teach: scepticism.”  
— David Suzuki

In addition, colons can be used to precede the restatement of an idea or a thought, or to introduce an extended explanation or elaboration.

The minister proposed several things Ontarians could do to help their province succeed: from reading to their kids to volunteering in their community.

## 7.4 The semicolon

Often associated with formal writing, the semicolon is used principally to join two closely related independent clauses.

“A cautious people learns from its past; a sensible people can face its future. Canadians, on the whole, are both.”  
— Desmond Morton

For more information on how to use the semicolon, we refer you to *The Canadian Press Stylebook* and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. [\*The Penguin Guide to Punctuation\*](#) also provides a handy reference.

## 7.5 The hyphen

Do not hyphenate a compound adjective if its meaning is clear. But use a hyphen when it is necessary to group words or to join adjectives to ensure clarity.

- The government-funded programs were welcomed by Ontarians.
- The government funded programs were welcomed by Ontarians.

Hyphenate when a compound modifier precedes the noun.

The well-regarded teacher received the Premier’s Award for Teaching Excellence.

Do not hyphenate when the compound modifier follows the noun.

The teacher is well regarded by the school and the community.

Do not hyphenate adverbs ending in *ly* that modify adjectives or participles.

- The hastily assembled news conference started late.
- The hastily-assembled news conference started late.

Use a hyphen to attach prefixes to nouns when there are two possible meanings.

re-cover      recover

A hyphen should be used if the combination of prefix and noun results in a double vowel.

re-elect      re-examine

Similarly, this guide recommends *co-ordinate* over *coordinate* and *co-operate* over *cooperate* — hyphenation endorsed by The Canadian Press.

Avoid hyphenating titles, unless so indicated in the incoming letter.

The Governor General met with Ontario’s Lieutenant Governor.

## Omission of hyphens in compound words

Certain compound words used throughout the OPS are commonly written as one word. Four examples follow. In other cases, let readability and contemporary usage guide you in your use of compound words.

interministerial                      intergovernmental  
postsecondary                        provincewide

## 7.6 The apostrophe and possessive forms

An apostrophe is used in the possessive form, like *Canada's veterans* or *Ontario's waterways*.

This same rule applies to singular nouns ending in s.

Thomas's job                            the bus's arrival

However, as *The Canadian Press Stylebook* suggests, there may be times when adding the extra s will make a word “hard to say or grate on the ear.” We concur with The Canadian Press and provide these examples to suggest when to omit the 's.

Minister Jones' announcement surprised the press.

The Premier quoted from Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Plural words are followed by an apostrophe alone.

my parents' wedding                two weeks' work

Joint possessives use only one apostrophe.

The committee expressed its support for Janet Jones and Anita Fong's proposal.

Do not use the apostrophe to indicate a plural.

- Several MPPs attended the news conference.
- Several MPP's attended the news conference.

Never confuse *its* (possessive pronoun) with *it's* (contraction of it is).

“It’s [*contraction of it is*] investment that is moving the neighbourhood forward,” noted the Sunnyville Business Improvement Area in its [*possessive pronoun*] latest newsletter.

## 7.7 Quotation marks

In Canada, we follow the American practice of using double quotation marks to enclose quoted sentences, phrases or words. (British style favours single quotation marks.)

As the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs recently said: “Ontario’s top-quality foods are available year round and are always a healthy choice.”

Note that commas and periods are placed *within* closing quotation marks.

Avoid using quotation marks to offset words or phrases taken from incoming correspondence. This usage is often referred to as scare quotes, as they suggest the writer is distancing herself or himself from the term set in quotation marks. As writers of government correspondence, we do not wish to suggest disapproval by using quotation marks in this manner.

✘ Thanks very much for letting me know about the “parliament” you and your fellow students are organizing.

## 7.8 Italics

Italicize the titles of publications — books, magazines and newspapers — as well as plays, movies, paintings and songs. If a definite or indefinite article is part of the title, remember to italicize it as well.

*The Globe and Mail* is widely read.

The Art Gallery of Ontario owns Tom Thomson’s painting *The West Wind*.

The Premier quoted from Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*.

## 7.9 Em dashes

Em dashes are used to precede and follow parenthetical information in a sentence, often in place of bracketing commas or parentheses. It is the view of some grammarians that a pair of em dashes represents a strong interruption from the rest of the sentence whereas bracketing commas and parentheses reflect a weak interruption — a perspective that you may wish to consider when presenting information to readers.

This website, launched recently by the Ministry of Energy, helps citizens to do their part in creating a culture of conservation.

This website — one of the best resources available on the subject — helps citizens to do their part in creating a culture of conservation.

As in the example above, em dashes typically come in pairs — unless the parenthetical information comes at the end of a sentence. Again, the view is that this represents a strong interruption.

We are taking steps to ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach their potential — and this is the right thing to do.

While an em dash can be used without spacing, this style guide recommends a space *before and after* an em dash.

## 7.10 Numbered or bulleted lists

Lists begin with a statement and are followed by a colon. Typically, the statement is a complete sentence. However, the statement can also be a sentence fragment — particularly if the items in the list complete the statement.

When bulleted items are short, each item should begin with a lowercase letter and end with *no* punctuation.

People who visit ServiceOntario are most likely to ask about:

- renewing their photo health card
- renewing their driver's licence
- obtaining licence plate stickers
- applying for an Ontario Health card

When bulleted items are long or represent complete sentences, each item should begin with an uppercase letter and end with a period.

There are many ways to conserve energy in your home. You can:

- Save money by switching some of your energy use to mid- and off-peak hours when electricity prices are lower.
- Unplug electronic items – like computers, TVs and cell phone chargers – that continue to consume small amounts of electricity if they are not disconnected.
- Incorporate energy savings into your buying decisions by purchasing ENERGY STAR appliances and compact fluorescent light bulbs that consume less electricity.

For additional guidance on bulleted lists, consult the *OPS Communications Style Guide*.

## 7.11 Accents

In the correspondence we receive, we may note accents, more properly known as diacritical marks, in the spelling of names of people and organizations. As it is a matter of cultural respect, we should endeavour to reproduce these diacritics in outgoing correspondence. Accents can be composed using the numeric keypad or inserted using the Microsoft Word Symbols command on the Insert menu.

There are several Web resources that give the various key sequences required to compose diacritics, among them the Punctuation and Diacritics Table included in the [Toolbox](#), offered by the Office of Francophone Affairs, and PennState’s [Computing with Accents, Symbols & Foreign Scripts](#).

As a former governor general of Canada, Michaëlle Jean retains the title *The Right Honourable* for life.



NumLock on, press Alt, hold,  
type 137 on numeric keypad

Casa dos Açores do Ontario



NumLock on, press Alt, hold,  
type 135 on numeric keypad



## 8 Clear Writing

As members of the correspondence community, we recognize the benefits of clear writing: when citizens do not struggle to understand what they are reading, they are less likely to feel frustrated or to seek clarification. The use of plain language also builds stronger relationships with citizens as it conveys openness and honesty. As Martin Cutts, author of the *Oxford Guide to Plain English*, puts it: “What has motivated me and others to work in the plain-English field is that clearer documents can improve people’s access to services, benefits, justice and a fair deal.”

The first rule of plain language is to keep your audience in mind always. Use language that your audience knows and feels comfortable with. Avoid using a grade eight level of English if your audience is composed of doctoral candidates, small business owners, working parents or newcomers. Only write at a grade eight level if your audience is, in fact, a grade eight class.

In this chapter, we offer advice on how to connect successfully — and clearly — with your reader.

### 8.1 Keep it simple

Use concise sentences and paragraphs. Avoid jargon, clichés, buzzwords and unnecessary adjectives, adverbs and intensifiers. Intensifiers include words like *very*, *extremely*, *highly* and *greatly*.

- Thank you for sending me resolutions from the 6/70 Area Economic Diversification Committee.
- I greatly appreciate your taking the time to provide me with copies of the official resolution from the 6/70 Area Economic Diversification Committee.
- All future clean energy contracts will be subject to the new price schedule.
- Going forward, all future clean energy contracts will be subject to the new price schedule.

## 8.2 Choose the active voice

Whenever possible, write in the active voice rather than the passive voice. In the active voice, the word order is subject–verb–object.

- The committee will review all applications for new licences in early April.
- In early April, all applications for new licences will be reviewed by the committee.

## 8.3 Emphasize the positive

People are more receptive to positive messages.

- When you pass the examination, you will qualify for admission.
- If you fail to pass the examination, you will not qualify for admission.

Avoid restating negative comments that may be contained in an incoming letter or email.

- Thank you for your letter about funding.
- Thank you for your letter about funding cuts.
  
- I have noted your comments on the ministry’s training programs.
- I have noted your comments on training program inadequacies.

## 8.4 Avoid noun forms of verbs

Use verbs when possible, rather than their noun forms known as *nominalizations*. While we might talk about “implementing the policy,” we may end up writing about “the implementation of the policy,” perhaps in an attempt to adopt a more formal tone. Unfortunately, nominalizations tend to lengthen sentences, make writing more bureaucratic and obscure meaning. When possible, choose a verb in the active voice over a nominalized noun.

- The ministry helps to deliver quality services to Ontarians.
- The ministry supports the delivery of quality services to Ontarians.

## 8.5 Use plain words and phrases

The table below offers a selection of common words that can replace complex ones. For a more complete list, see the “Plain Words” section of *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*.

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
accomplish	<b>do</b>
activate	<b>start</b>
allocate	<b>give</b>
approximately	<b>about</b>
ascertain	<b>find out</b>
attempt	<b>try</b>
disseminate	<b>send out, distribute</b>
endeavour	<b>try</b>
going forward	<b>from now on, in the future</b> (or delete)
hopefully	<b>I am hopeful that</b>
impact (verb)	<b>have an effect on</b>
(have an) impact on	<b>affect, influence</b>
in lieu of	<b>instead of</b>
indicate	<b>show, suggest</b>
input/feedback	<b>advice, ideas, comments, suggestions</b>
inquire	<b>ask</b>
linkages	<b>links</b>
objective	<b>goal</b>
optimum	<b>best, greatest, most</b>
necessitate	<b>need, require</b>
regarding	<b>about</b>
request	<b>ask</b>
strategize	<b>plan</b>
sufficient	<b>enough</b>
utilize	<b>use</b>

## 8.6 Use alternatives to bureaucratic English

You can replace many bureaucratic words and phrases with plain language — and with no loss to your intended meaning. See the table below for examples. Again, consult the “Plain Words” section of *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* for a more complete list.

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
adequate number of	<b>enough</b>
at the present time	<b>now</b>
by means of	<b>by</b>
during such time	<b>when</b>
has the capacity	<b>can, is able</b>
in the absence of	<b>without</b>
in the event that	<b>if</b>
in order to	<b>to</b>
in view of the fact	<b>because</b>
on the part of	<b>by</b>
subsequent to	<b>after</b>
until such time	<b>until</b>
with a view to	<b>to</b>
with reference to	<b>about</b>
with respect to	<b>on, for, from, about, as for</b>
with the exception of	<b>except</b>

## 8.7 More about clear writing

[Clear Communication Resources](#), National Adult Literacy Database

[Clear Writing Factsheet](#), Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

[Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#), Plain Language Action and Information Network

[Plain English: Good Practice Guide](#), Government of South Australia

[The A to Z of alternative words](#), Plain English Campaign, UK

[The plain English guide to writing letters](#), Plain English Campaign, UK

## 9 Using Inclusive Language

Given the diversity of the Ontario population, we need to ensure that the language we use is inclusive and free from bias. Our writing should be in tune with the pluralism of society, and this means framing the content of letters and emails in a way that treats all citizens with dignity, respect and seriousness.

If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of the language you propose using, consult, if possible, the websites of recognized organizations that represent the person or group of persons to whom you are writing.

### 9.1 Avoiding gender bias

Today, no profession or endeavour is the exclusive domain of men or women. To reflect this reality, the language we use should be gender neutral.

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Use</i>
businessman, businesswoman	<b>business person, executive, manager</b>
chairman	<b>chair</b>
fireman	<b>firefighter</b>
fisherman	<b>angler, commercial fisher</b>
forefathers	<b>ancestors, forebears</b>
foreman	<b>supervisor</b>
layman	<b>layperson</b>
layman's terms	<b>ordinary terms</b>
mankind	<b>humanity, humankind, human race</b>
manpower	<b>workforce, staff, personnel</b>
middle man	<b>intermediary</b>
policeman	<b>police officer</b>
spokesman	<b>spokesperson, representative</b>
sportsmanship	<b>sense of fair play</b>
workman	<b>worker, employee</b>

For more on gender-neutral language, consult the second edition of *Editing Canadian English*.

## 9.2 Preferred terms for disability issues

With the enactment of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, we have entered an era of heightened awareness of the need to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities. As members of the correspondence community, we can help to advance that inclusion by making the right word choices when writing to and about persons with disabilities.

Now housed at the Legislative Library, [\*Word Choices: A Lexicon of Preferred Terms for Disability Issues\*](#) remains a useful resource for aiding writers in choosing language “that is neither demeaning nor hurtful, and terms that are preferred by people with disabilities.” We have included some of this lexicon in the table below.

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Use</i>
blind (the), visually impaired (the)	<b>a person who is blind, a person with visual impairment</b>
deaf (the)	<b>a person who is deaf</b>
differently abled	<b>a person with a disability</b>
disabled (the)	<b>people with disabilities</b>
physically challenged	<b>a person with a physical disability</b>

As language is in a state of constant evolution, it is important to stay current with changing preferences in terminology. As suggested earlier in this chapter, organizations representing the interests of people with disabilities may be your best source of information on the most up-to-date and preferred terms.

## 9.3 Age-friendly communication

According to *Ontario Population Projections Update, 2010–2036*, the number of seniors aged 65 and over is projected to more than double from 1.8 million, or 13.9 per cent of the population in 2010, to 4.1 million, or 23.4 per cent, by 2036. By 2017, for the first time, seniors will account for a larger share of population than children aged zero to 14.

These findings point to a near future where more seniors may be sharing their perspective on government policies and programs.

Although we will not always be aware of the demographic group to which a correspondent belongs, we should ensure that our writing addresses the interests of seniors both sensitively and respectfully. This means that your writing should reflect seniors as we know them to be — active participants in Ontario society — and should avoid ageist language that categorizes seniors negatively.

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Use</i>
aged / elderly	<b>seniors, older adults, older persons</b>

## 9.4 Aboriginal people

For information on appropriate word usage related to Aboriginal people in Ontario, please see [section 3.8](#).

## 9.5 More about inclusive language

[\*Age-Friendly Communication: Facts, Tips and Ideas\*](#), Public Health Agency of Canada

[\*A Way with Words and Images: Suggestions for the portrayal of people with disabilities\*](#), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

[“Guidelines for gender-neutral language,”](#) Language Portal of Canada

[\*Guidelines for Reporting and Writing About People With Disabilities, Research and Training Center on Independent Living\*](#)

[“Inclusive Language,”](#) *UVIC Style*, the University of Victoria style guide

[\*Recommended Guidelines on Language and Terminology – Persons with Disabilities, A Manual for News Professionals\*](#), Canadian Association of Broadcasters

[Terminology](#), Canadian Association of the Deaf

## 10 Styles of Address

As members of the correspondence community, we need to know the proper way to address officials, dignitaries and VIPs. We are fortunate to have experts in the OPS — the Office of International Relations and Protocol (OIRP) — to help us with this task. You can ask a protocol co-ordinator at the OIRP for assistance by calling 416-325-8535.

As styles of address are applied to people with titles in a wide range of areas (including religious denominations, government, the diplomatic service, royalty, the judiciary and the military), it is vital to have access to resources that can guide us in choosing the correct form.

Perhaps of greatest interest to the OPS correspondence community is the [Styles of address website](#), maintained by Canadian Heritage. Here, you will find information on the proper way to address dignitaries: from members of the Royal Family to mayors. Some of this information has been excerpted and placed in the tables on the following pages for your ready reference.

Also recommended is Robert Hickey's *Honor & Respect: The Official Guide to Names, Titles, and Forms of Address*. This nearly 600-page tome provides comprehensive advice on everything from addressing letters to local officials to sending formal invitations to heads of state. A good deal of this advice is available online at [On-Line Guide to Forms of Address](#).

Additional resources on styles of address can be found at the end of this chapter.



## The Queen

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
The Queen	Her Majesty The <sup>1</sup> Queen <sup>2</sup>	Madam, <sup>3</sup>

## Federal dignitaries

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Governor General of Canada	His/Her Excellency the Right Honourable <full name> <sup>4</sup>	Excellency:
former Governor General	The Right Honourable <full name>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Prime Minister of Canada	The Right Honourable <full name>, PC, MP <sup>5</sup>	Dear Prime Minister: <sup>6</sup>
former Prime Minister	The Right Honourable <full name>, PC	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Speaker of the House of Commons	The Honourable <full name>, MP	Dear Mr. Speaker: Dear Madam Speaker:
Cabinet minister (House of Commons)	The Honourable <full name>, PC, MP <sup>7</sup> Minister of <department name>	Dear Minister:
former Cabinet minister	The Honourable <full name>, PC <sup>8</sup>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Senator	The Honourable <full name> Senator Senator the Honourable <full name>, PC (if a member of the Queen's Privy Council)	Dear Senator:
former Senator	The Honourable <full name> <sup>9</sup>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
MP (not a minister)	Mr./Ms. <full name>, MP <name of riding>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:

<sup>1</sup> Articles are always capitalized in titles used with the [Royal Family](#).

<sup>2</sup> For further information on writing to The Queen, see [How to contact The Queen](#).

<sup>3</sup> Note that it is a comma, not a colon, which follows *Madam*.

<sup>4</sup> The Governor General may have other post-nominal letters. Verify at the Governor General's [website](#).

<sup>5</sup> The Prime Minister may have other titles, such as *QC* (Queen's Counsel). Consult the [Parliament of Canada](#) website.

<sup>6</sup> Never write *Mr. Prime Minister* or *Madam Prime Minister*.

<sup>7</sup> The minister may have other titles, such as *QC*. Consult the [Parliament of Canada](#) website.

<sup>8</sup> A federal Cabinet minister retains the title *Honourable* for life. As a member of the Queen's Privy Council, his or her name is followed by the post-nominal letters *PC*.

<sup>9</sup> Senators retain the title *Honourable* for life.

## Provincial and territorial dignitaries

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Lieutenant Governor <sup>10</sup>	His/Her Honour the Honourable <full name> Lieutenant Governor of < >	Your Honour:
former Lieutenant Governor	The Honourable <full name> <sup>11</sup>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Premier of a province or territory	The Honourable <sup>12</sup> <full name> Premier of < >	Dear Premier:
Speaker of a provincial/territorial legislature	The Honourable <full name> Speaker of the <legislative body> <sup>13</sup>	Dear Mr. Speaker: Dear Madam Speaker:
Provincial/territorial Cabinet minister	The Honourable <sup>12</sup> <full name> Minister of <ministry>	Dear Minister:
Leader of the Official Opposition	Mr./Ms. <full name>, MPP <sup>14</sup> Leader, Official Opposition	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Leader, opposition party, (not Official Opposition)	Mr./Ms. <full name>, MPP <sup>14</sup> Leader, _____ Party	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Parliamentary Assistant	Mr./Ms. <full name> Parliamentary Assistant to...	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Member of a provincial/territorial legislature	Mr./Ms. <full name>, MPP <sup>14</sup> <riding>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:

<sup>10</sup> When the Premier and the Cabinet make a decision, and when the Lieutenant Governor has approved it, it is said to have been made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Note that Lieutenant Governor in Council does *not* take hyphens.

<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant governors retain the title *Honourable* for life.

<sup>12</sup> A premier or provincial Cabinet minister uses *Honourable* only while in office.

<sup>13</sup> In Ontario, the Speaker's title is Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker is addressed as *The Honourable* only while in office.

<sup>14</sup> or appropriate post-nominal letters for given province or territory (e.g. MLA, MHA, MNA)

## Aboriginal leaders

<i>Leader</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Grand Chief	Grand Chief <full name>	Dear Grand Chief <surname>:
Chief	Chief <full name>	Dear Chief <surname>:

## Municipal dignitaries

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Mayor	His/Her Worship <full name> Mayor	Dear Mayor <surname>:
Reeve or Warden	Mr./Ms. <full name>: Reeve/Warden	Dear Reeve <surname>: Dear Warden <surname>:
Councillor	Mr./Ms. <full name>: Councillor	Dear Councillor <surname>:

## Newly elected municipal officials

Until a council is sworn in, the heads of council should be addressed as mayor-elect, reeve-elect or warden-elect. Similarly, a councillor should be styled as councillor-elect until he or she is sworn in.

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Mayor-elect	Mr./Ms. <full name> Mayor-elect	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Reeve- or Warden-elect	Mr./Ms. <full name>: Reeve-elect/Warden-elect	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Councillor-elect	Mr./Ms. <full name>: Councillor-elect	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:

## Judiciary

### Ontario Court of Justice

<i>Judiciary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Chief Justice	The Honourable <full name> Chief Justice	Dear Chief Justice <surname>:
regional senior judges	The Honourable <full name> Regional Senior Judge for the Region	Dear Regional Senior Judge <surname>:
provincially appointed judges	The Honourable Mr./Madam Justice <full name>	Your Honour: or Dear Mr./Madam Justice <surname>:
Justices of the Peace	His/Her Worship <full name> Justice of the Peace	Your Worship:

### Superior Court of Justice or Court of Appeal for Ontario<sup>15</sup>

<i>Judiciary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Chief Justice	The Honourable <full name> Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice  The Honourable <full name> Chief Justice of Ontario	Dear Chief Justice <surname>:
regional senior judges	The Honourable Mr./Madam Justice <full name> Regional Senior Judge for the Region Superior Court of Justice	Dear Regional Senior Judge <surname>:
federally appointed judges (Superior Court of Justice)	The Honourable Mr./Madam Justice <full name> Superior Court of Justice	Your Honour or Dear Mr./Madam Justice <surname>:
federally appointed judges (Court of Appeal for Ontario)	The Honourable Justice <full name> Court of Appeal for Ontario	Dear Justice <surname>:

<sup>15</sup> Upon retirement, judges from the Superior Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal for Ontario can retain the honorific *The Honourable* while returning to the salutation *Mr./Ms.*

## Diplomatic dignitaries

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Ambassador to Canada	His/Her Excellency <full name> Ambassador of < >	Dear Ambassador:
High Commissioner of a country to Canada	His/Her Excellency <full name> High Commissioner for < > to Canada	Dear High Commissioner:
Canadian Ambassador abroad	Mr./Ms. <full name> Ambassador of Canada to < >	Dear Ambassador:
Canadian High Commissioner abroad	Mr./Ms. <full name> High Commissioner for Canada to < >	Dear High Commissioner:
Consul General	Mr./Ms. <full name> Consul General	Dear Consul General:

## Religious dignitaries

### Protestant

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Present Moderator (United Church of Canada and Presbyterian Church in Canada)	The Right Reverend <full name> Moderator of <church>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Past Moderator (United Church of Canada and Presbyterian Church in Canada)	The Very Reverend <full name> Moderator of <church>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:
Minister	The Reverend <full name>	Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:

## Anglican<sup>16</sup>

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Archbishop	The Most Reverend <full name> Archbishop of <diocese>	Dear Archbishop <surname>:
Bishop	The Right Reverend <full name> Bishop of <diocese>	Dear Bishop <surname>:
Archdeacon	The Venerable <full name> Archdeacon	Dear Archdeacon <surname>:
Canon	The Reverend Canon <full name>	Dear Canon <surname>:
Minister	The Reverend <full name>	Dear Father <surname>: or Dear Mr./Ms. <surname>:

## Roman Catholic

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
The Pope	His Holiness, Pope <name and numeral>	Your Holiness:
Cardinal	His Eminence <first name> Cardinal <surname>	Your Eminence:
Archbishop	The Most Reverend <full name> Archbishop of <diocese>	Your Grace:
Bishop	The Most Reverend <full name> Bishop of <diocese>	Dear Bishop <surname>:
Priest	The Reverend <full name>	Dear Father <surname>:
Sister (Nun)	The Reverend Sister <full name>	Dear Reverend Sister <surname>:

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<sup>16</sup> See also [Forms of Address for Anglican Clergy](#).

## Jewish

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Rabbi	Rabbi <full name>	Dear Rabbi <surname>:

## Muslim

<i>Dignitary</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Imam	Imam <full name>	Dear Imam <surname>:

## Canadian Forces<sup>17</sup>

<i>Officer</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
General	General <full name>	Dear General:
Captain	Captain <full name>	Dear Captain:
Colonel	Colonel <full name>	Dear Colonel:
Sergeant	Sergeant <full name>	Dear Sergeant <surname>:
Private	Private <full name>	Dear Private <surname>:

## Police officers

<i>Officer</i>	<i>Address reference</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Chief	Chief <full name> <name of police service>	Dear Chief <surname>:
Staff Superintendent	Staff Superintendent <full name>	Dear Staff Superintendent <surname>:
Constable	Constable <full name>	Dear Constable <surname>:

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<sup>17</sup> See the National Defence and the Canadian Forces website for all [rank and appointment insignia](#).

## 10.1 More about styles of address

*Debrett's Correct Form*, UK (includes a web page on [Forms of Address](#))

*Preparing Letters*, U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs (includes a Forms of Address section on how to address US officials and dignitaries)

*Styles of Address: The Royal Family*, the Canadian Crown



# 11 Email Correspondence

Given that the majority of Ontario households now have access to the Internet,<sup>18</sup> it is not surprising that email has become the citizen's preferred way of communicating with government. As such, correspondence units across the OPS have experienced a significant increase in email volume.

While email has demonstrated its potential to enhance communication between government and citizens, certain caveats apply when using it. We set out a number of them below, while encouraging users of this guide to consult *Email Correspondence Guidelines*, available on the [Cabinet Office Communications](#) wiki page, for more complete information.

## 11.1 Language and tone

Email is an informal means of communication — one that is more conversational in tone than a letter written for the post. Government email correspondence should contain authoritative content while being couched in respectful, friendly and approachable language.

As people tend to scan emails, short paragraphs and bullet points may better serve the needs of the reader as they convey key information quickly. Email replies should be concise, written in plain language and contain brief, to-the-point sentences and useful hyperlinks.

<b>POST</b>	Thank you for your letter of May 17, 2012, regarding... I appreciate your sharing your comments and concerns.
<b>EMAIL</b>	Thanks for your online message. I'm pleased to receive your comments on...

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<sup>18</sup> According to [Statistic Canada's Canadian Internet Use Survey](#), 81 per cent of Ontario households had Internet access in 2010.

## 11.2 Privacy concerns

Privacy considerations should always come first when weighing the decision to reply by email. To this end, all correspondence staff should understand how the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) applies to correspondence. If you are uncertain about sending a response by email, consult your ministry's FIPPA co-ordinator first.

While bearing in mind the importance of protecting personal information, it is possible to reply by email in the majority of cases. Choose to reply by email if the reply:

- is a straightforward acknowledgement
- contains approved information on a current issue or on a government policy or program
- is a general reply to an MPP
- relates to operational matters
- is a referral to a ministry
- declines attendance at a meeting or event
- contains publicly available information

**Please note:** Do not attach a copy of the incoming email to the outgoing reply, as it may contain personal information.

### The confidentiality notice

As many email replies are sent to private individuals, the information should be protected from unauthorized access or disclosure. We advise, therefore, the use of a confidentiality notice. Consideration should be given to placing the notice at the top of the email reply. If it is placed at the bottom of the reply, the reader will only see the notice once she or he has read it.

Please find below, as an example, the disclaimer used in the Premier's outgoing email replies.

Confidentiality Warning: This email contains information intended only for the use of the individual named above. If you have received this email in error, we would appreciate it if you could advise us through the Premier's website at <<https://correspondence.premier.gov.on.ca/en/feedback/default.aspx>> and destroy all copies of this message. Thank you.

## 11.3 Ensuring accessibility

With the passing of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* in 2005, the OPS has made a solid commitment to becoming an accessible, inclusive organization. You can play your part in furthering these efforts by making emails accessible. In doing so, you are ensuring that emails can be read by the widest possible range of people.

You should prepare email correspondence so that assistive technologies (such as screen readers, magnifiers, Braille displays and speech input systems) can access the text and present it to the user. HTML is the preferred default format.

For additional information, please consult:

- the *Accessible Email* tip sheet, available on the [OPS Diversity intranet](#)
- [Making Your Email Accessible](#), ServiceOntario

See the [More about](#) section at the end of chapter 13 for other resources on making emails accessible.

# 12 Electronic Media

## 12.1 E-terms

Below is a list of some of the Government of Ontario's preferred spellings, capitalizations and abbreviations for e-terms.

Adobe Acrobat	hyperlink	the web
blog	instant messaging	tweet
bookmark	Internet ( <i>note uppercase</i> )	Twitter
browse	intranet( <i>note lowercase</i> )	user-friendly
browser	JavaScript	web browser
chat room	malware	web page
cyberspace	mashup ( <i>noun</i> )	webcam
domain name	online	webcast
drop-down menu	phishing	web-enabled
email	PowerPoint	weblog
Firefox	pull-down menu	webmaster
Google	site	website
home page	spyware	World Wide Web

### Abbreviations

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language)

PDF (Portable Document Format)

RSS (Really Simple Syndication)

URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

For more information on e-terms, consult [\*The Yahoo! Style Guide\*](#) or the [\*Microsoft® Manual of Style\*](#), fourth edition. While *The Yahoo! Style Guide* is not available online in its entirety, you can access the [Yahoo Word List](#), which covers terminology related to communications and technology.

## 12.2 Website addresses and hyperlinks

When providing a website address to a citizen, ensure that it is working by testing the link. Email addresses should always be current and correct.

### URLs in post and email replies

In post and email correspondence, remove the leading *http://* from URLs, except when the URL does not start with *www*.

- Please visit [www.fin.gov.on.ca](http://www.fin.gov.on.ca) for further information.
- Please visit <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca> for further information.

### BUT

- You can access the Ontario Education Resource Bank at <https://resources.elearningontario.ca>.

Do not include the final forward slash (also called a trailing slash) in URLs.

- [www.citizenship.gov.on.ca](http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca)
- [www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/](http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/)

### URLs in post replies

In post replies, remove the hyperlink from any URL and from any @address in the text. In addition, do not break a URL over two lines. If possible, rewrite the sentence to ensure that the URL remains on one line. When a URL falls at the end of a sentence, it should be followed by a period. We can assume it has become common knowledge that a period is not part of the URL.

- To make an online reservation at an Ontario park, please visit the Ontario Park's website at [www.ontarioparks.com/english/reservations.html](http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/reservations.html).

## URLs in email replies

In email replies, hyperlinks are obviously permissible. In general, try to avoid providing a long URL in an email reply. If you have to provide a long URL, consider making it shorter by using a safe and reliable URL shortening service.<sup>19</sup>

### 12.3 Writing email addresses

Email addresses are usually written in lowercase. However, if uppercase is used in the part of address preceding the @ symbol, then write it exactly as it appears.

Use a period after an email address that appears at the end of a sentence. Readers will understand that the period is not part of the address.

- For more information, please email the ministry at [ministryhelp@ontario.ca](mailto:ministryhelp@ontario.ca).

For more information on digital tools that will allow you to build a stronger relationship between government and citizens, consult the [Digital](#) intranet page of Cabinet Office Communications.

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<sup>19</sup> [Google URL Shortener](#) is an example of such a service. Note that WatchMouse [provides a qualitative assessment](#) of URL shortening services.

# 13 Accessible Correspondence

## 13.1 Landmark legislation

In 2005, the Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). The AODA, which requires Ontario to become an accessible province by 2025, has a direct bearing on the work of the correspondence community as it requires the provision of accessible formats.

Of specific interest to the correspondence community is section 12. (1) of [Ontario Regulation 191/11](#) made under the AODA:

Except as otherwise provided, every obligated organization shall upon request provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities...

## 13.2 Requirements and resources

As set out in [Accessibility in the Ontario Public Service: Leading the Way Forward](#), the AODA requires that communication materials — including letters and emails — be made accessible to people with disabilities. Among other ways, this is to be achieved by:

- developing guidelines on creating accessible documents using desktop applications such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- creating, evaluating and enhancing accessible PDF documents using Adobe Acrobat Professional
- ensuring that OPS staff use best practices to make email communication more accessible

While your own ministry will have taken steps to ensure compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards, the OPS Diversity Office has made this task easier by developing accessibility resources. Among these resources is a series of tip sheets on creating accessible Word documents, emails and attachments. These can be accessed by visiting the [Accessible Documents web page](#) of the OPS Diversity Office intranet site.

The Inclusive Design Research Centre of OCAD University, a project supported by the Government of Ontario, also provides [some excellent resources](#) on creating accessible Word documents.

Contact your own [Ministry Accessibility Lead](#) for further guidance.

### **13.3 More about making correspondence accessible**

#### **Ontario government resources**

[Creating an accessible email](#), OPSpedia

[Format of Documents](#), OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy and Guideline, OPSpedia

[MTO – Creating Accessible Documents](#), OPSpedia

[Top Ten Accessibility Tips for Delivering Inclusive Communication](#), ServiceOntario

#### **Other resources**

[Clear Print Design Standard](#), CNIB

[Creating accessible Word documents](#), Microsoft Corporation