

Ministerial 2020/21 Annual Report

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

DURING COVID-19, ACCESSIBILITY IS...



Ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in daily activities, including work.

[AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca)

Manitoba 

This report is available in alternate formats, upon request. Please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office:

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Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that here in Manitoba, we gather on the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Ojibway-Cree, Dakota and Dene Peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. We respect the Treaties and agreements that were made on these lands and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

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Message from the Minister



Image of Rochelle Squires,
Minister responsible for Accessibility

As Minister responsible for Accessibility beginning in January 2021, I am pleased to submit the 2020/2021 Annual Report of Manitoba's accessibility initiatives. The report provides an update on activities carried out to support the implementation of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. It also acts as the final report on commitments made in the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Ministerial Annual Plan.

When the Manitoba government shared its two-year plan in spring 2019, no one foresaw the impact the pandemic would have on access to goods and services. As required by Manitoba's accessibility legislation, we have relied on consultation and public feedback to help us identify, prevent and remove barriers. Manitoba's accessibility standards provided excellent guidance to the government, public and private sector organizations on how to remove barriers to customer service and employment for Manitobans with disabilities. The

ongoing engagement of Manitobans with disabilities is vital in improving access to government programs and processes — for individuals directly affected by barriers.

This annual report is organized according to the five priorities identified in the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Ministerial Annual Plan. Priority One: Accessibility Standards – The Building Blocks of the AMA outlines the progress made in developing the final three accessibility standards affecting information and communications, transportation, and the design of public spaces. Priority Two: Educating into Compliance describes new initiatives to create understanding and compliance with the first two accessibility standards established under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act: [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service](#) and the [Accessibility Standard for Employment](#). Priority Three: Government Leadership provides more details about government initiatives in 2020/2021. Priority Four: Awareness, Tools and Training summarizes other activities to build awareness, notably the launch of the Manitoba Accessibility Awards. The report concludes with Priority Five: Accountability.

I am also pleased to report two significant administrative changes designed to strengthen implementation of accessibility legislation. In December 2020, the Manitoba government renamed the former Disabilities Issues Office to reflect the focus of its work.

Going forward, it is the Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO). In addition, in 2019, government created a separate [Accessibility Compliance Secretariat](#), which has begun to monitor and promote compliance among the private and public sectors

In closing, the pandemic has been a harsh teacher with lessons that extend well beyond COVID-19. One of these is that accessibility is vital to all Manitobans, not only the nearly one in four that have a disability. Furthermore, when we design programs for individuals who face barriers, we all benefit. For example, depending on the circumstances, each of us may require alternative options for communication, whether online, by telephone or in-person. Integrating accessibility considerations improves results, no matter the aim of an initiative, with examples including access to government pandemic programming, increased participation in community organizations and events, a stronger labour force or improved sales. Finally, when it comes to fulfilling our vision of a Manitoba that embraces accessibility and inclusion, we really are all in this together.

Sincerely,

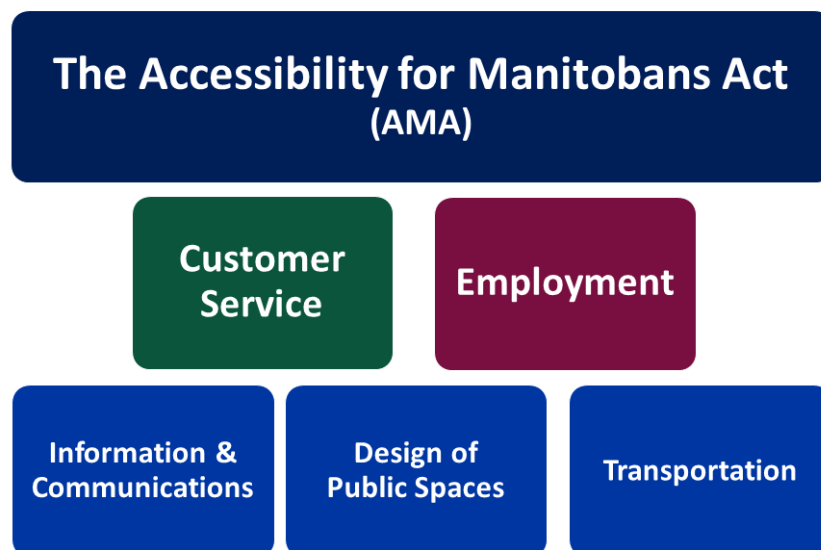
Rochelle Squires

Minister of Families, Minister responsible for Accessibility, and Minister of Francophone Affairs

Priority One: Accessibility Standard Development

The Building Blocks of the AMA

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) sets out five areas of standard development that relate to important aspects of daily living: customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation, and the design of public spaces, a key aspect of the built environment. These standards are the building blocks of the AMA, because they give instruction on who is obliged to do what by when.



Colorful blocks containing Manitoba's five Accessibility Standards.

The AMA mandates the [Accessibility Advisory Council](#) to make recommendations to the Manitoba government for accessibility standards. The council includes members of the disability community and affected stakeholders, such as representatives from businesses, municipalities and other organizations. Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, the council had seven meetings. As required by the AMA, council met with the Minister responsible for Accessibility on March 5, 2021. The Manitoba government is extremely grateful to the expert leadership provided by the council in standard development and review.

Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

Enacted in 2015, the [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service](#) sets out requirements for the Manitoba government, public sector organizations, and businesses and non-profit organizations with at least one employee. The aim is respectful, barrier-free customer service for all customers and clients.

In February 2021, the council began its five-year review of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, in accordance with Section 11 of the AMA. Plans to consult directly with Manitoba stakeholders include sector-specific focus groups, two public webinars, an [EngageMB](#) survey and a call for submissions. Outcomes of the review will be included in the Minister's 2021/2022 annual report.

Accessibility Standard for Employment

Enacted on May 1, 2019, Manitoba's [Accessibility Standard for Employment](#) is the second standard under the AMA. Its purpose is to remove and prevent barriers that affect current and potential members of Manitoba's labour force. The Accessibility Standard for Employment builds on existing provisions of Manitoba's Human Rights Code to ensure reasonable accommodations are provided at all stages of employment, beginning with hiring and affecting advancement, redeployment and return to work. Only the Manitoba government was affected by all requirements during the reporting period, with a compliance deadline of May 1, 2020.

To ensure the safety of employees with disabilities, all employers in the public, private and non-profit sectors must comply by May 1, 2020, with the following two requirements:

Workplace Emergency Response Information:

Create emergency response information to help employees with disabilities stay safe during emergencies.

Workplace Emergency Assistance:

Ask employees who require assistance during an emergency for permission to share information with individuals who agree to help.

Accessibility Standards under Development

The Manitoba government is grateful for the hard work and commitment of the three standard development committees that set the foundation for the three standards still under development affecting information and communications, transportation and the design of public spaces. All three committees completed their work and submitted reports to the Accessibility Advisory Council, which held public consultations before preparing its recommendations for standards to government.

Information and Communications

The [Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications](#) will address barriers to accessing information provided in print, in-person, on websites or in other formats.

The council submitted its [Recommendations for an Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications](#) in September 2019. The Manitoba government created a cross-departmental committee to review the recommendations and to work with its legal counsel in the development of its draft proposal, which it will post for a final 60-day period of public consultation in the fall of 2021. Government anticipates establishing this third accessibility standard in early 2022.

Transportation

The [Accessibility Standard for Transportation](#) will help remove barriers Manitobans encounter while using public transportation to go to work, school, shopping, or to participate in other aspects of daily life.

The council consulted with the public on its [Discussion Paper on Recommendations for a Transportation Standard](#) in November 2019. The council submitted its [Recommendations for an Accessibility Standard for Transportation](#) in January 2020. The Manitoba government has created a cross-departmental committee to review the recommendations and to work with legal counsel in the development of its draft proposal for public consultation in 2022.

Design of Public Spaces

The [Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces](#) will address areas of the built environment outside the jurisdiction of The Manitoba Building Code, such as

sidewalks, pathways, parks and other aspects of the environment that we design and construct.

The council released a [Scope and Intent Document for the Proposed Accessibility Standard on The Design of Public Spaces](#) and hosted a public forum in May 2019. The council then consulted with the public on its [Discussion Paper on Recommendations for a Design of Public Spaces Standard](#) in January 2020. The council submitted its [Recommendations for an Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces](#) in October 2020. In 2021, the Manitoba government created a cross-departmental committee to review the recommendations and to work with its legal counsel in the development of its draft proposal for public consultation in 2022.

Establishment of all Five Standards

The government remains committed to establishing all five accessibility standards under the AMA by 2023. COVID-19 has affected the original deadline, which was the end of 2020. Thorough expert analysis and further public consultation in 2021/2022 will ensure government establishes standards that are effective in removing barriers, beginning with an Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications in 2021/2022.

Priority Two: Educating into Compliance

Tools and Training

The Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) is responsible for creating tools and training to support compliance with accessibility legislation. During 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, the MAO added new tools and training to the website to build awareness and compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Employment. A notable addition to the toolbox in 2020/2021 was the training video [Accessibility in the Workplace: Good for Everyone, Law in Manitoba](#).



Cory Beal, Production Manager at Floodway Print Co. explains the benefits of accessibility to his business. Taken from the video: Accessibility in the Workplace: Good for Everyone, Law in Manitoba.

The video explains the importance of accessibility in employment from the perspective of employers and employees who have benefitted from workplace accommodations. For instance, employer Cory Beal, Production Manager of Floodway Print Company, downplays the steps taken to accommodate an employee with a disability, noting: “We are always trying to make things simpler, safer and faster.” The MAO added this inspirational resource to other tools it introduced to facilitate compliance with the new standard, including:

- [Introduction to the Accessibility Standard for Employment](#)
- [Toolkit to Keep Employees with Disabilities Safe](#)
- [Employers’ Handbook on the Accessibility Standard for Employment \(Updated February, 2021\)](#)
- [Guide to Create an Individualized Accommodation Plan Process and Policy](#)
- [Sample Accessible Employment Policy](#)
- [Checklist for Business and Non-Profit Organizations, Checklist for Public Sector Organizations and Checklist for Small Municipalities](#)
- [Guide to Create an Individualized Accommodation Plan Process and Policy](#)

As promised, the MAO improved access to the resources it creates by adding a search bar to [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca). Thorough reorganization of the website will begin in 2021/2022.

The pandemic created an opportunity for government to reconsider how the MAO offers training to the public. In-person workshops ended in March 2020, when the MAO pivoted plans toward socially distanced webinar training. MAO worked with its community partners to ensure online accessibility, including captioning, American Sign Language, call-in options and posting content on the MAO YouTube playlist for later review. An unanticipated benefit of the webinars was a vastly expanded audience, who participated from homes and offices throughout Manitoba. Whereas monthly in-person workshops had 15 to 30 participants, the three large events organized by the MAO in 2020/2021 had more than 300 registrants each time. See section 5 for more details.

In 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, the Manitoba government supported the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities (MLPD) to provide additional training on the Accessibility Standard for Employment. During the pandemic, MLPD shifted its training online, but maintained its format of presentation followed by discussion and included Manitobans with disabilities.

By the end of 2020/2021, the MAO was finalizing the development of its new online training portal with the aim to help employers meet the accessibility standard training requirements. Beginning in 2021/2022, the portal [AMALearningMB.ca](https://www.amallearningmb.ca) will offer learning modules for each established standard. Along with content focussed on standard requirements, the modules will integrate voices of Manitobans affected by accessibility, knowledge checks and certificates to demonstrate course completion.

The MAO encourages organizations to subscribe to [Accessibility News](#) to receive announcements about new regulations, resources, training and consultations. Other features include:

- Eye on the Community – Accessibility Champions, recognizing outstanding Manitoba businesses, organizations, employers and people who are championing accessibility across the province
- Manitoba Accessibility Stories, which shares Manitobans' experiences with accessibility and tips for removing barriers
- Community Information, which includes additional resources, events, grant programs, training and other opportunities outside the Manitoba government

In 2020/2021, the MAO produced six issues of Accessibility News. As of March 31, 2021, Accessibility News had 1556 subscribers, and the number keeps growing.

Compliance with Accessibility Requirements

Manitoba's Accessibility Compliance Secretariat (ACS) monitors compliance with accessibility legislation among stakeholders in the private, non-profit and public sectors. The secretariat also works with organizations to raise awareness about accessibility and enforce compliance. Some accessibility requirements vary across sectors and by the size of an organization, and some sectors have more time to comply with accessibility standards. [Learn more about compliance requirements and deadlines.](#)

The [accessibility compliance framework](#), released in March 2020, places a strong emphasis on raising awareness and providing guidance to help organizations achieve and/or return to compliance before issuing orders and penalties. In 2020/2021, the secretariat developed an Achieving Compliance Plan template, which it will use to outline the specific areas (sections) of the legislation requiring compliance, along with the date by which the secretariat will re-assess the organizations' compliance. The secretariat will also provide the affected organizations with free tools and resources to achieve compliance.

In 2020/2021, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat conducted a review (audit) of accessibility plans among a sample of large public sector organizations, and provided tailored feedback to these organizations to enhance compliance, as per section 33 of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. In addition, the secretariat initiated an audit of the accessible customer service policies of over 250 large companies in Manitoba. The secretariat will complete the audit in 2021/2022 by sending letters and tailored Achieving Compliance Plans to numerous employers in sectors, such as department stores, home good retailers, grocery stores, restaurant chains, gyms and real estate companies.

The government also sent letters to over 3000 recipients about upcoming compliance deadlines related to accessible emergency planning in the workplace. The letters included links to practical tools for organizations to adapt in their workplaces, such as The Workplace Emergency Response Information Toolkit that helps employers plan for barrier-free emergencies.

In 2020/2021, the secretariat collaborated with the Manitoba Accessibility Office to respond to calls and emails associated with compliance concerns. The two offices also assisted members of the public and regulated organizations to understand requirements under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards (regulations). The two offices responded to 33 inquiries and concerns from the public, private and non-profit sectors between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021. Over half of these (17 of 33, or 52 per cent) pertained to compliance concerns that fell within the scope of the AMA and its current regulations, with topics including:

- the right to be accompanied by a service animal in public places
- meeting communication needs through American Sign Language (ASL)
- accessible customer service in light of COVID-19 public health guidelines

- accessibility during municipal council meetings

Concerns raised will help inform future compliance and awareness-raising activities. The secretariat anticipates increased future public engagement, as more organizations and members of the public become aware of the office and the opportunity to report concerns related to compliance.

Priority Three: Government Leadership

Civil Service Commissioner Charlene Paquin continues to serve as Accessibility Champion for the Manitoba Government, providing leadership to senior managers and engaging employees across government in understanding and achieving accessibility. The commissioner, along with the Clerk of the Executive Council and Deputy Minister of Families, form Manitoba's Accessibility Steering Committee, which provides overall direction in advancing an accessible and inclusive Manitoba government.

The government provided an update on its achievements and outlined its priorities in the [Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan 2021 and 2022 \(MGAP\)](#). The goals are to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the public service and to implement the accessibility standards under the AMA. The plan has six areas of focus:

- policies, resources and employee training
- accessible operations and practices
- employment of persons with disabilities
- Manitoba government as an employer
- information and communications actions
- barrier-free universal design

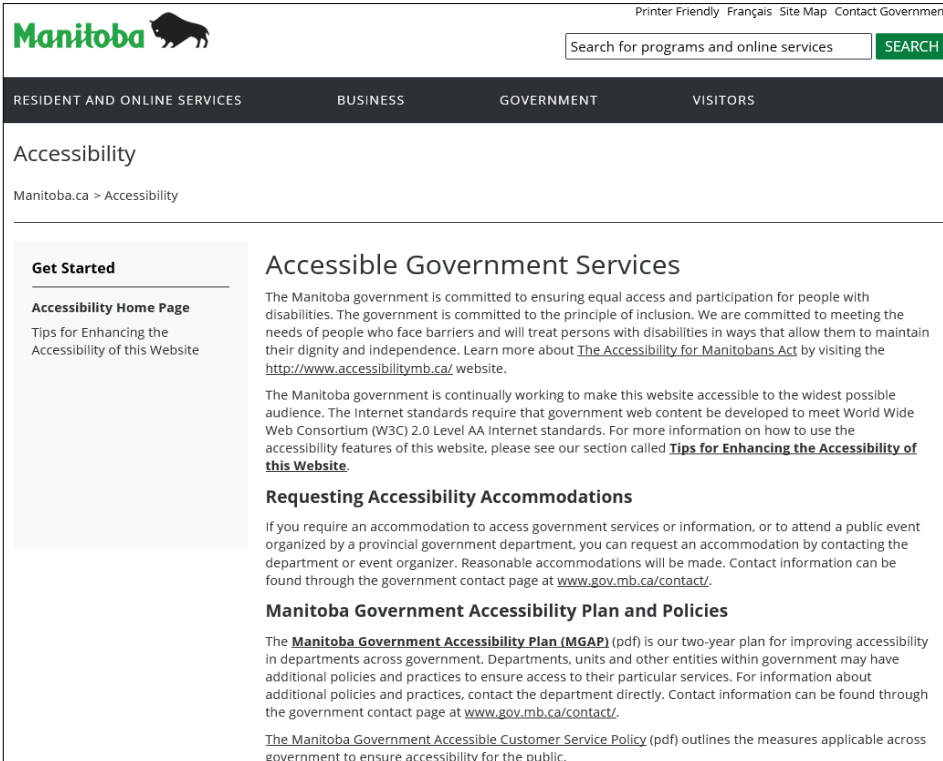
The government has fulfilled its priority to review employment policies and to update these policies to ensure they meet the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Employment. During 2020/2021, the government also met the challenge of maintaining accessibility during COVID-19. It equipped employees with new protocols; training and personal protective equipment to ensure everyone was safe, whether the job entailed entering the homes of vulnerable Manitobans or connecting with colleagues by computer from home.

During 2020/2021, the Civil Service continued the development of the accessibility and inclusion toolkit and created new training materials and resources to meet the obligations of the Accessibility Standard for Employment. Departmental Access Coordinators had a key role in ensuring accessibility directives and resources were

disseminated across government. Most departments developed additional resources and encouraged staff to participate in training and use the resources of the Manitoba Accessibility Office. By way of example, Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development promoted its own accessibility toolkit in its Lay of the Land Newsletter.

MGAP sets a goal to have all new and existing employees complete the mandatory Accessibility for Manitobans Act training over the next two-years, including all members and chairs of Agencies, Boards and Commissions. By March 31, 2021, government achieved a completion rate of 83.1 per cent (or over 11 thousand employees).

Communication Services Manitoba and Business Transformation and Technology are the government leaders in ensuring accessible public communications with departments across government. By selecting the Accessibility link at the bottom of each government webpage, website visitors can review the accessibility features of websites and provide feedback or make a request for alternative formats.



The screenshot shows the Manitoba Government website's Accessibility page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Manitoba logo, a search bar, and links for 'Printer Friendly', 'Français', 'Site Map', and 'Contact Government'. Below the navigation bar, there are four main categories: 'RESIDENT AND ONLINE SERVICES', 'BUSINESS', 'GOVERNMENT', and 'VISITORS'. The 'Accessibility' page is selected, and the breadcrumb trail shows 'Manitoba.ca > Accessibility'. The main content area is titled 'Accessible Government Services' and includes sections for 'Get Started', 'Requesting Accessibility Accommodations', and 'Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan and Policies'. The 'Get Started' section includes a link to the 'Accessibility Home Page' and 'Tips for Enhancing the Accessibility of this Website'. The 'Requesting Accessibility Accommodations' section provides information on how to request accommodations for government services. The 'Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan and Policies' section describes the MGAP and provides links to the plan and the accessible customer service policy.

A Government of Manitoba website that indicates accessible government services.

During COVID-19, it was particularly important that the public access information relayed during press conferences or online. For the first time, the government provided American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation at all COVID-19 briefings and offered ASL during the vaccine rollout, in addition to providing ASL interpretation and captioning during online webinars and training events. Accessibility features of the [COVID-19 Screening Tool](#) include captioning and an interactive voice response. Both the Consent

Form and application for a vaccine card considered the needs of Manitobans with disabilities.

The Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan 2021 and 2022 (MGAP) notes that Manitoba Central Services upgraded some Manitoba government properties and offices while others moved to new locations to improve physical accessibility. Examples include washroom and elevator upgrades, adding power door buttons to entryways and revising physical layouts. Manitoba Central Services designed or completed over 20 major renovations and additions since 2019, totaling \$22 Million, and including barrier removal in public schools.

Manitoba's investments in accessible infrastructure also targeted outdoor spaces, including play structures and much more. In 2020/2021, an investment of approximately \$100,000 has resulted in lake access for people with mobility disabilities in provincial parks across Manitoba. Mobi-mats have introduced firm surfaces across beaches and into the water at Birds Hill, Riding Mountain (Clearwater Lake), Whiteshell (Falcon Lake Beach), Grand Beach, Spruce Woods (Kiche Manitou Beach), Winnipeg Beach, Lundar Beach and Rainbow Beach. Upgrades at Lundar Beach also included a new accessible washroom and accessible pathways and trails.



Three images of the Mobi-mats installed in provincial parks across Manitoba that provide a firm surface from the beach into water for people with mobility disabilities.

The [Building Sustainable Communities Program](#) (Manitoba Municipal Relations) grant helps build thriving, sustainable communities that provide a high quality of life for Manitobans, including Manitobans with disabilities. For example, the Manitoba government contributed \$75,000 to the Save Our Seine non-profit organization for the design and construction of Manitoba's first-ever fully accessible dock, located in Winnipeg's John Bruce Park.



A person who is exiting a canoe receives help from another person, while the canoe sits cradled in the accessible dock at John Bruce Park.

Priority Four: Public Awareness

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 brought profound changes to our personal lives, business operations and the delivery of services. In addition to common challenges that we all face, Manitobans with disabilities are reporting new barriers related to mobility, hearing, vision and understanding. For example, during the pandemic, Manitobans reported that some businesses directed visitors to stand in line, without seating options, regardless of an individual's mobility. Many retailers posted messages and directional arrows, which created additional challenges for people who do not see or understand them. While communicating through cloth masks and protective shields became commonplace, people who are hard of hearing and Deaf faced additional challenges understanding muffled speech and being unable to read lips.



A graphic containing the words "COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus" that was created by the Government of Manitoba.

COVID-19 was a reminder that with every new initiative, there is the possibility of introducing additional barriers. The government did not design accessibility standards with pandemic restrictions in mind. Nonetheless, the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service provides significant guidance on how to provide safe and effective access to goods and services during COVID-19. Equally important, the May 2020 safety requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Employment demonstrate how reasonable accommodations in the workplace keep everyone safer.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) used the accessibility standards to create COVID-related public messaging and resources, which it shared under the COVID banner on AccessibilityMB.ca, in its newsletters, training events and social media campaigns.

Manitoba Accessibility Awards

One of the highlights of public awareness initiatives in 2020/2021 was the inaugural celebration of the Manitoba Accessibility Awards. The awards celebrate innovation and leadership in accessibility among large and small municipalities and businesses, as well as rural and urban non-profit organizations. A selection committee of community organizations with expertise in accessibility, business and non-profit organizations chose the winners. Many thanks go to Reaching Equality Employment Services, Community Futures: Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, Manitoba Possible Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities, March of Dimes and SCE Lifeworks.

The MAO prepared profiles of nominees and video presentations of three of the six award winners to share during the online celebration. The Winnipeg Airports Authority, the City of Selkirk and Gateway Church created their own videos. The winners were congratulated by the Honourable Heather Stefanson, former Minister responsible for Accessibility on December 3, 2020, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). Videos of the award winners are included in the [IDPD Webinar](#).



Manitoba Accessibility Awards

The logo for the Manitoba Accessibility Awards.

Congratulations to the following award winners:

- Large business – Winnipeg Airports Authority, Winnipeg
- Small business – Red Apple, Stonewall
- Urban non-profit organization – Gateway Church, Winnipeg
- Rural non-profit organization – Woodlands Pioneer Museum, Woodlands
- Large municipality – City of Selkirk
- Small municipality – Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach

The accessibility achievements of these organizations have appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press, The Municipal Leader, The Selkirk Record, among other local papers, and in Manitoba government social media posts and Accessibility News.

Events

The Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) typically hosts one large training event per year, along with its public consultations. In 2020/2021, when its accessibility allies cancelled their conferences, the MAO stepped in and expanded its training program. Three webinar events took place from June to December, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the MAO's five-person staff and its network of community supporters.

Original plans for an in-person event the first week of June to mark Manitoba Access Awareness Week (MAAW) were delayed to June 18, as it became evident there would

be no gatherings during the pandemic. The webinar was the first opportunity for the MAO to present Manitoba's accessibility standards targeting customer service and employment in the context of a pandemic. Much of the focus was on the impact of COVID-19 on Manitobans with disabilities and guidance on how to maintain accessibility and public health protocols simultaneously, with reference to new resources posted on [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca). The webinar also featured the launch of a new training video on accessibility in the workplace [Accessibility in the Workplace: Good for Everyone, Law in Manitoba](#). In comparison to the 150 individuals who typically register for MAAW training, over 346 people registered, many of them for the first time. Webinar accommodations included captioning, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, call-in option, and a recording of the event [available on YouTube](#). Many thanks go to Manitoba Possible who provided the Zoom platform and assistance to host this event.

On October 29, 2020, the Manitoba Accessibility Office hosted a second webinar training event in celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month. This time, organizers took advantage of the webinar format to invite a renowned leader in accessible and inclusive employment to share his expertise from his home in Washington, D.C. Shane Kanady, Vice President, Workforce Development, Source America and Senior Fellow, Portulans Institute provided the webinar's keynote address: The Future of Work: Accessible and Inclusive Employment during COVID-19. The presentation was followed by an overview of Manitoba's Accessibility Standard for Employment, with a focus on the significance of its workplace safety requirements during the pandemic. Once again, the number of registrants (335) was about double that of an in-person training event, with repeated thanks to Manitoba Possible for co-hosting.



Yvonne Peters and John Wyndels in conversation during the International Day of Persons with Disabilities December 3rd webinar.

The final webinar of 2020 took place in celebration of United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, on December 3, and incorporated the inaugural presentation of Manitoba's Accessibility Awards (described above). The event also reflected on the importance of Manitoba's contribution to international disability rights, culminating in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Human Rights lawyer Yvonne Peters shared her personal story, which is integral to the story of

Canada's disability rights advocacy, including early protests on Parliament Hill to include disability in Section 15 of the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), which contains guaranteed [equality rights](#). The interview with Ms. Peters is [available on YouTube](#), and is a valuable resource for classrooms and organizations seeking a greater understanding of the fundamental shift from a medical and charitable model to a civil rights understanding of disability.

December 3rd also marked the launch of a new name for the former Disabilities Issues Office, henceforth known as the Manitoba Accessibility Office.

Communications and Marketing

Beginning in 2020, the MAO introduced social media toolkits (text and images) related to provincial accessibility events for the public, available on [AccessibilityMB.ca](#). The aim is to encourage members of the public to engage in raising accessibility awareness via their social media networks using related hashtags, including [#AccessibleMB](#). The Manitoba government's corporate social media also assisted in creating awareness among its significant network of approximately 16.5 thousand Twitter and 55,000 Facebook followers.



An example of an advertisement that ran during a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of accessibility during COVID-19.

Besides using government internal and partner social media platforms, the government also hired a marketing firm to undertake a paid social media campaign in fall 2020. The theme was maintaining accessibility during COVID-19. A total of eight different messages and images were posted on Facebook and Twitter, which were viewed almost 1.8 million times and resulted in 18,722 visitors to [AccessibilityMB.ca](#). The MAO also continued to advertise through print media, which in 2020/2021 included city and regional newspapers.



Keep your business accessible during COVID-19

Is COVID-19 creating new accessibility barriers for your employees and customers? Consider your signage:

- Where and how high is it posted?
- Is the print large enough?
- Can you use symbols or pictures to make the message clearer?
- Does it block any other important features of your business, like a ramped entrance?
- How do you communicate with customers who have low or no vision?

The solutions to balance public health measures with accessibility concerns are often simple, low or no cost. Provide flexible customer service to people with disabilities:

- Offer seating in lineups and priority service.
- Allow support persons to assist customers, clients, and loved ones.
- Make accommodations for people with disabilities in places with one-way traffic, entrances and exits.
- Check in with employees and ask about their accessibility needs.

As you take action to stop the spread of COVID-19, ensure you are meeting the needs of the nearly 1 in 4 Manitobans who have a disability.

Learn more about how your business can stay safe and accessible.

AccessibilityMB.ca **Manitoba** 

An example of a print ad that was included in the Winnipeg Free Press that explains simple ways of how to increase accessibility in businesses.

Communications Strategy Going Forward

The MAO works with Communications Services Manitoba (CSM) to develop and implement its communications strategy. In preparing this strategy, in March 2021, CSM engaged Prairie Research Associates to gauge the level of awareness of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act among small and medium businesses and to determine the best ways of reaching them. Nearly half of the 200 businesses surveyed by telephone indicated they were aware of the legislation and most preferred to receive information by email. The results will help determine communications initiatives going forward.

Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

More than ever, the Manitoba government and its Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) relies on allies to achieve its objectives. During the pandemic, this network was especially important in the transition to training via accessible webinars. The government also owes its gratitude to community partners for the production of the video [Accessibility in the Workplace: Good for Everyone, Law in Manitoba](#), in which approximately 20 disability organizations, businesses and individuals shared their expertise. The successful launch of the Manitoba Accessibility Awards also occurred thanks to community participation, particularly in the independent selection of winners. The initial intention was to celebrate the Manitoba Accessibility Awards as part of existing awards programs, with hosts such as the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, in order to reach new audiences. This will be the plan going forward.

For many years, the MAO has held monthly meetings with allies from the disability community and public sector organizations, many of whom are responsible for implementing accessibility standards in their organizations. These include a number of disability organizations, the United Way, the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Public Insurance and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries. In 2020/2021, this group was established more formally with the name Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Network.



Logo for MBAAN - the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Network.

The MAO is always seeking additional strategic alliances with organizations with overlapping mandates. In 2020/2021, MAO collaborated with SAFE Work Manitoba to spread awareness about the safety requirements under the Accessibility Standard for Employment, as they apply to workplace accommodations and returning to work after the pandemic.

Priority Five: Accountability

In February 2019, the government released the final report of the first independent review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. [The mandated review included 52 recommendations](#) targeting improvements to the accessibility standard development process, compliance on the development of accessibility plans and increased public awareness of accessibility legislation.

As of March 31, 2021:

- 98 per cent or 51 of the 52 recommendations were complete or in progress
- 85 per cent or 44 of the 52 recommendations were complete
- 14 per cent or seven of the 52 recommendations were in progress and will continue to be, given their medium and long-term nature (e.g., that department staff work with Legislative Counsel in the development of accessibility standards; that government improve the level of awareness of accessibility legislation)
- two per cent or one of the 52 recommendations was not accepted by government

This recommendation called for alternate individuals to be able to attend Accessibility Advisory Council meetings. To ensure continuity of work and deliberations among council members, and in consultation with the Manitoba's Agencies, Boards and Commissions Office, this recommendation was not accepted.

2020/2021 highlights of actions taken on the review's recommendations include:

- renaming The Disabilities Issues Office to reflect its role more accurately; the office is now called The Manitoba Accessibility Office
- establishing an awards program for municipalities, as well as organizations in the public, private and non-profit sectors to showcase innovative and/or exemplary successes in advancing accessibility

The Accessibility Advisory Council meets regularly to guide the development and review of standards and [posts its summaries](#) on [AccessibilityMB.ca](#). In addition, the Manitoba government has demonstrated its accountability with timely annual plans, reports from the Minister responsible for Accessibility, and on government compliance with the AMA, summarized in the [Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan \(MGAP\)](#).

Contact Information

If you have any questions, require this information in an alternate format, wish to subscribe to Accessibility News, or are interested in attending a training workshop, please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office.

Manitoba Accessibility Office

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