

MINISTER OF FAMILIES' 2019/20 AND 2020/21 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

UNDER THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBANS ACT



Description: Accessible customer service. A smiling man in a wheelchair is working on a laptop at a business where the table provides accessible space for his wheelchair.

Province of Manitoba

Approved: May 2019

This document is available in alternate formats on request. Please contact the Disabilities Issues Office at DIO@gov.mb.ca or 204-945-7613 or toll free at 1-800-282-8069, extension 7613.



Description: Manitoba government logo

A Message from the Minister of Families

It has been over five years since The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) became law in Manitoba. Thanks to this legislation and the hard work of accessibility champions and supporters, barriers to participation are being identified and removed in areas as diverse as libraries, hospitals, government offices, rural arenas, public beaches, grocery stores and places of worship, to name a few.

As a medium-sized province and the second in Canada to enact standard-based accessibility legislation, I am enthusiastic with the progress we are making. The 2018 independent review of the AMA indicated that the willingness to advance accessibility was evident among stakeholders in all areas of society: businesses, non-profit organizations, public sector organizations and citizens who want to live in an inclusive and flourishing province.

Although there are reasons to be proud, we still have significant work ahead of us. Accessibility is a priority for this government. Our commitment remains to have five accessibility standards (regulations) in place in 2020. This goal will require sustained and collaborative efforts by standard development committees, the Accessibility Advisory Council, government officials and, importantly, Manitobans and organizations affected by accessibility standards who will be consulted at various stages. Application of accessibility standards in five key areas of daily living will make a tangible difference in the lives of Manitobans facing barriers.

This plan is different from previous ones in that it highlights the activities that government will undertake over two years to advance accessibility, instead of one year. The plan's longer view builds on our strengths, sharpens our focus, and strategically outlines our path forward for the next 24 months, from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2021. It incorporates many of the suggestions for improvement made in the 2018 review of the AMA.

Working together, we can make Manitoba a welcoming and supportive province for all.

Sincerely,

Original Signed

Honourable Heather Stefanson

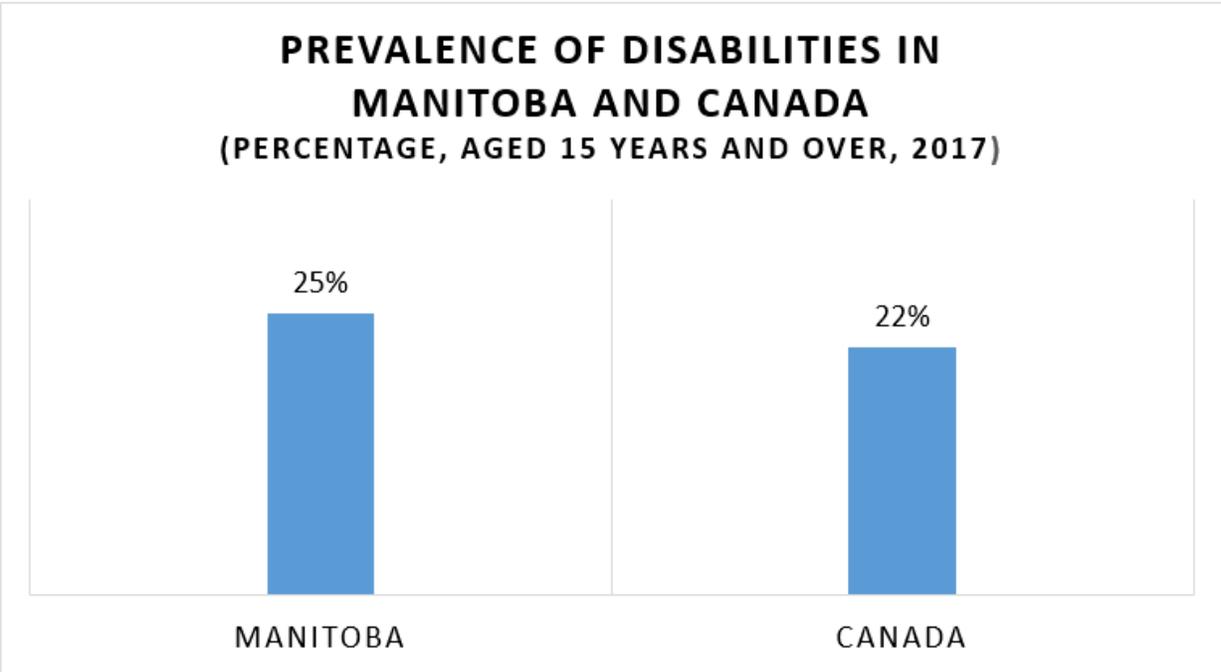
Minister of Families, responsible for The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

Background

Context in Manitoba

One out of every four, or approximately 234,000, Manitobans has a disability.¹ This figure is expected to increase. As rates of disability are higher among older adults, the number of Manitobans with disabilities will rise as our population ages. The chart in Figure 1 below shows the percentage of Manitobans with disabilities compared to that of Canada.

Figure 1. Prevalence of disabilities in Manitoba and Canada



- Description of Figure 1. Prevalence of Disabilities in Manitoba and Canada (percentage, aged 15 years and over, 2017). Vertical bar chart (blue columns) showing prevalence of disabilities in Manitoba and Canada in percentage for individuals 15 years of age and over, from 2017. The bar for Manitoba shows a 25 per cent rate and the bar for Canada shows a 22 per cent rate.

¹ Statistics in this section are from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability. Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0374-01. Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories.

Barriers can prevent a person with a disability from fully participating in society. Barriers can be physical, architectural, information or communications-based, attitudinal, or technological. Barriers can also be established or perpetuated by policies or practices.

[The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) (AMA) became provincial law in December 2013. The objective of the legislation is to identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation in Manitoba, and to make significant progress towards achieving accessibility by 2023.

Spotlight:

[The Accessibility Advisory Council \(Council\)](#) is a vital player in advancing accessibility throughout Manitoba. The Manitoba government is grateful for the hard work and commitment of the Council and its accessibility standard development committees.

The Council is made up of members of the disability community and stakeholders affected by the AMA, and includes representatives from businesses, municipalities and other organizations. The Council consults with community and government stakeholders and makes recommendations to the minister on accessibility standards. The Council can establish committees to assist with the development of its recommendations.

Priority Area # 1: Accessibility Standards

The Building Blocks of the AMA

Standards (regulations) are the AMA's building blocks to achieve accessibility. The Manitoba government is committed to having five accessibility standards in place in 2020. These five foundational accessibility standards touch on fundamental aspects of every day life:

- Customer service
- Employment
- Information and communications
- Transportation, and
- The design of public spaces, a key aspect of the built environment

The AMA and its standards affect all of society: persons with disabilities, seniors and others who experience barriers, the provincial government, municipalities, the public, private and non-profit sectors, and the population at large.

The Customer Service Standard Regulation

Passed in 2015, the [Customer Service Standard Regulation](#) was the first standard enacted under the AMA. The Customer Service Standard Regulation is now in force for all Manitoba organizations that have at least one employee. The goal of the standard is to achieve barrier-free customer service, so that all residents and visitors in Manitoba have the same opportunity to access goods and services.

Spotlight:

Do you know if your organization complies with the Customer Service Standard Regulation?

To help you find out, review the [free tools and resources](#) available online for the public sector, businesses and non-profit organizations.

Figure 2. Accessible customer service



- Description of Figure 2. Accessible customer service. Two customers are seated in a restaurant booth. Space is provided for a service dog, who sits

beside the table at their feet. A server is setting a plate in front of one of the customers.

Going Forward:

To ensure affected organizations in Manitoba are aware of their obligations under this standard, we will continue to review, refine and share practical tools, resources and training on ways to offer accessible customer service throughout Manitoba. To access a range of tools on accessible customer service, visit [Manitoba's accessibility website](#).

In 2020, The Accessibility Advisory Council will be tasked with examining the objectives of the Customer Service Standard Regulation, including assessing how and by whom the objectives are being implemented. The Council may then develop recommendations to update the standard and submit them to the minister responsible for The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. Government will carefully consider the results of Council's review of this standard in an effort to improve accessible customer service throughout the province.

Accessibility planning helps to make accessible customer service a reality. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act requires public sector organizations to develop accessibility plans, which identify, prevent and remove barriers in policies, practices and measures. Manitoba's public sector organizations must also update their accessibility plans every two years. In the next 24 months, government will continue to develop tools to help organizations with their accessibility planning activities. We will also continue to act as a resource, providing guidance and feedback on draft plans. For more information about accessibility planning, please visit: [Accessibility Plan and Update](#).

Spotlight: For Public Sector Organizations

Are you updating your accessibility plan? Have questions or want to receive feedback on your draft?

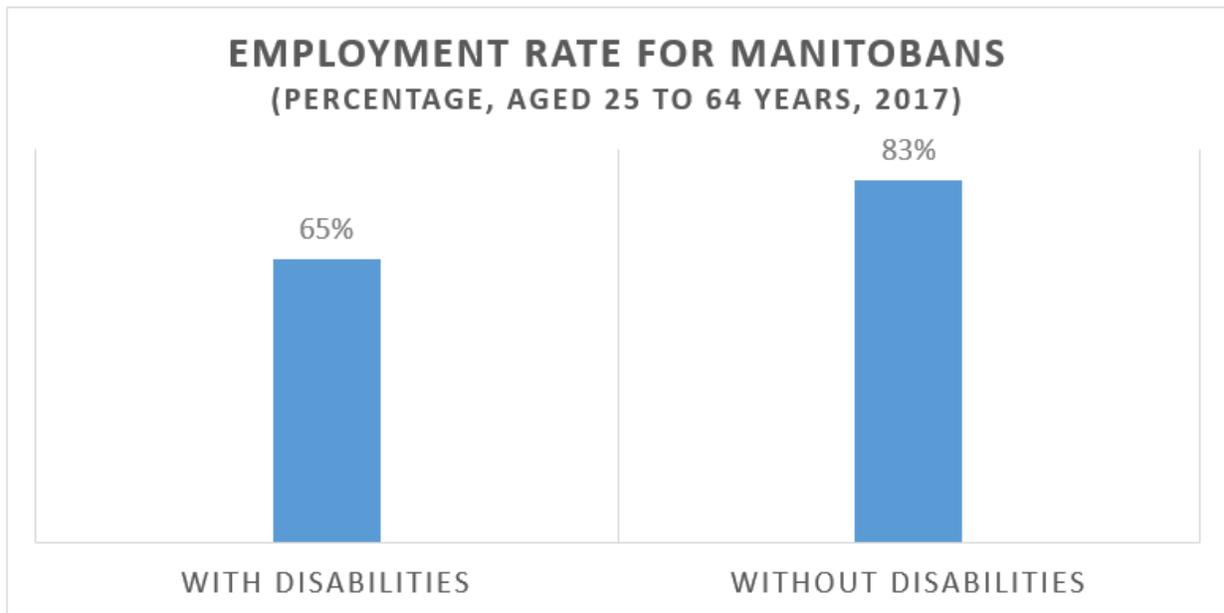
For personalized assistance, contact:

Disabilities Issues Office
Email: dio@gov.mb.ca
Phone: 204-945-7613
Toll Free: 1-800-282-8069, Ext. 7613

The Accessible Employment Standard Regulation

Employment is an area where barriers in recruitment, selection and retention practices can disadvantage Manitobans with disabilities, resulting in their underrepresentation in the labour market and lower employment rates compared to Manitobans without disabilities.

Figure 3. Employment rate for Manitobans



- Description of Figure 3. Employment rate for Manitobans (percentage, aged 25 to 64 years, 2017). Vertical bar chart (columns in blue) showing the employment rate of Manitobans in 2017, in per cent for those aged 25 to 64 years. The bar for the employment rate for persons with disabilities shows 65 per cent. The bar for the employment rate for Manitobans without disabilities shows 83 per cent.

The chart in Figure 3 compares employment rates for Manitobans with and without disabilities.² In 2017, the employment rate for Manitobans with disabilities (aged 25 to 64 years) was 65 per cent. The employment rate for Manitobans without disabilities in the same age bracket was higher – at 83 per cent.

In April 2019, Manitoba passed the second standard under the AMA, the Accessible Employment Standard. This standard (regulation) identifies steps that employers in Manitoba need to take to remove barriers across the employment cycle.

² Statistics in this section are from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability. Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0377-01. Labour force status of persons with and without disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories.

- ✓ The standard will help more Manitobans with disabilities participate in the labour force and economy.
- ✓ The standard will also help employers find untapped talent, retain skilled employees who age into disability, and meet their obligations under Manitoba's Human Rights Code.

All organizations in Manitoba with one or more employee will be required to comply with two provisions of this standard by May 1, 2020. The two provisions relate to planning individual workplace emergency responses to help employees with disabilities and organizations be better prepared for emergencies, such as severe weather, power outages or fire.

Spotlight: Individual Workplace Emergency Responses for Employees with Disabilities

Like most accessibility accommodations, planning individual workplace emergency responses for employees with disabilities may mean offering an adjustment to how things are usually done, at little or no cost. For example, consider Nick who works the night shift stacking grocery shelves. Nick has vision loss and is unable to read a new poster in the staff room that explains changes to emergency procedures. To ensure all employees are safe in an emergency, including employees facing barriers, the manager offers to email the procedures to Nick so he can read them with his screen reader.

Going Forward

We will proactively share tools and resources about this new standard, with a focus in the next six months on ensuring that organizations know how to comply with workplace emergency response requirements by May 1, 2020.

To make sure affected organizations in Manitoba are aware of their obligations beyond the workplace emergency response requirements, we will develop and share practical resources and training on ways to ensure employment practices are accessible.

We will help prepare organizations to meet future compliance deadlines of the employment standard, as follows:

All employers in Manitoba

- Compliance with two workplace emergency response provisions expected in May 2020.

The Manitoba government

- Compliance with all provisions of the employment standard expected in May 2020.

Large public sector organizations and agencies, boards and commissions

- Compliance with all provisions of the employment standard expected in May 2021.

Businesses, non-profit organizations, and small municipalities

- Compliance with all provisions of the employment standard expected in May 2022.

Figure 4. Accessible employment



- Description of Figure 4. Accessible employment. A worker with a wheelchair shakes hands with a client over a desk in the workplace.

A Roadmap to Develop Remaining Standards

The Manitoba government is well on its way to the enactment of five foundational accessibility standards.

The Accessible Information and Communications Standard

So much of our world today is about information and communications. A standard (regulation) is currently being developed to ensure Manitobans who face barriers have equal access to information and communication when surfing the Internet, reading a bus schedule, or attending a work meeting, for example.

The proposed Information and Communications Standard will set out requirements for organizations to:

- Provide accessible formats on request
- Provide communication supports on request, and
- Create and offer accessible web content

Spotlight: What are some examples of alternate formats and communication supports?

Large print

Handwritten notes instead of spoken word

Reading written information to a person directly

Text transcripts of audio or visual information

Information written in plain language

An electronic document formatted to be used by a screen reader

Accessible web content

Substantial progress is being made in the development of The Accessible Information and Communications Standard. In September 2018, the Information and Communications Standard Development Committee submitted its report and recommendations to the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Council. Based on a review

and analysis of the Committee's recommendations, the Council developed a discussion paper, which is guiding its consultation process with the public.

Spotlight: Your opinion matters

Hearing from the public, including Manitobans encountering barriers and organizations affected by the legislation, is an important function of the Accessibility Advisory Council. The Council has presented its recommendations for an accessibility standard for information and communications. The Council's discussion paper ([PDF](#)) has been prepared to invite public feedback, in accordance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

The public is being invited to prepare written submissions and comments between May 3 and June 30, 2019 to access@gov.mb.ca.

After reviewing the public's feedback, the Accessibility Advisory Council may make further changes before submitting its recommendations to the Manitoba Government.

The minister looks forward to receiving Council's submission in 2019 and working with the public service to draft a proposed standard. The public and Council will be consulted on the draft standard, as part of the process. The aim is to have a made-in Manitoba Accessible Information and Communications Standard enacted in 2020.

The Accessible Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces Standards

The ability to get from one place to another is essential, and accessible transportation gives everyone a chance to experience independence. Ensuring that public spaces, such as sidewalks, roadways and parks are accessible is also a priority of this government.

In late fall 2018, two committees were struck to help develop the outstanding standards for accessible transportation and the design of public spaces, a key aspect of the built environment. Membership on these two committees includes persons with disabilities, technical experts, and stakeholders expected to be affected by the standards. The committees have been meeting regularly and conducting research; they will soon submit their recommendations to the Accessibility Advisory Council. To make sure government keeps its commitment to have these two standards passed in 2020, the two committees are working concurrently.

Based on a recommendation made in the [2018 AMA legislative review](#), government has issued revised Terms of Reference for the two standards, which:

- ✓ Clarify reporting relationships between the Minister responsible for the AMA, the Accessibility Advisory Council and standard development committees, and
- ✓ Include timelines by which committees and the Council are required to complete their work on these two standards.

The enhanced Terms of Reference for the two standards provide clear guidance and direction to the players involved in the development of accessibility standards, and help committees and Council determine their scope of work. As required under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, and to promote transparency, the recently revised [Terms of Reference](#) documents are posted online and are available in alternate formats on request.

Spotlight:

Listening to stakeholders is very important as the Accessibility Advisory Council and government work on developing standards. With each remaining standard, the public will have the opportunity to weigh in on two separate occasions:

1. During the phase when the Accessibility Advisory Council or its committees are developing recommendations.
2. Before the minister develops the formal regulation - the minister is required to consult with the public on a proposed standard for 60 days, under the legislation.

In response to a recommendation from the 2018 review of the AMA, government will increase its efforts to attract and motivate businesses, the non-profit sector and municipalities to participate in accessibility consultations.

Going Forward

In 2019, the Accessibility Advisory Council will receive and review the set of recommendations made by committees, for these outstanding standards. The Council will also conclude its standard development work by providing its recommendations to

the minister on all three remaining standards related to information and communications, accessible transportation and the design of public spaces.

We look forward to receiving and carefully considering all recommendations made by the Council, in order to accomplish our task of having five accessibility standards in place in 2020. In order to achieve our goals and advance accessibility, timelines will be tight for all players involved. However, by working hard and in a collaborative manner, we can collectively accomplish noteworthy progress in the implementation of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Priority Area # 2: Educating into Compliance

Compliance Framework

Manitoba is advancing its approach to applying the compliance and enforcement provisions of the AMA. Manitoba will implement a progressive approach to achieve compliance and enforcement. This approach aims to reduce the use of punitive enforcement processes, actions and decisions, and place particular attention to the concept of “educating into compliance.”

Spotlight:

“Educating into compliance” means providing support to organizations in ways that best encourage and promote their compliance with the AMA, its standards and deadlines.

It includes targeted outreach, awareness raising and developing and refining tools, resources and training that are tailored for each sector (e.g., municipalities and other public sector organizations, and private and non-profit sector organizations).

Pre-compliance and Compliance Periods

During “pre-compliance periods,” or the times before a sector needs to comply with a new standard, the Manitoba government will spearhead extensive efforts to educate into compliance. This proactive support will allow time for organizations to learn about the coming requirements and to make changes that are needed for them to comply.

Each pre-compliance period will consist of actions that support educating into compliance well in advance of compliance deadlines. These actions will include:

- ✓ Communicating by sending notices and letters to organizations.
- ✓ Launching targeted outreach and awareness campaigns.
- ✓ Developing, refining and sharing tools, resources and training.

For each remaining standard, organizations will be supported during pre-compliance periods. These educating into compliance efforts will occur at various points in time, well in advance of compliance deadlines (e.g., one year, six months, one to four weeks before a compliance deadline).

Educating into compliance will continue through “compliance periods,” or the time when an organization needs to comply with a standard. Compliance periods involve a variety of monitoring activities. Compliance monitoring work has already begun, with reviews of and feedback provided on completed accessibility plans submitted by large public sector organizations.

[Free online training](#) was developed and launched so that organizations can meet their training obligations under the Customer Service Standard Regulation. This training will continue to be available. In-person workshops are also available to help organizations develop and implement policies to comply with the Customer Service Standard Regulation.

Going Forward

The next step in refining the approach to compliance and enforcement is to post the compliance framework online. Over the next two years, a phased-in approach to compliance will be implemented. For example:

- ✓ Government will continue to implement pre-compliance activities to educate into compliance by sending notices, launching targeted awareness campaigns and developing and distributing tools and other resources to public, private and non-profit sector organizations, such as:
 - Toolkits for Workplace Emergency Response Information
 - Brochures, templates, fact sheets, and checklists for accessible employment, information and communications, transportation and the design of public spaces. Resources will be developed and shared before these standards come into effect.

- Training and workshops to increase awareness about what organizations need to do under the law as new standards come into effect
- ✓ The compliance focus in 2019/20 will be on supporting public sector organizations to update their accessibility plans, including:
 - Municipalities, and
 - Agencies, boards and commissions.
- ✓ The compliance focus in 2020/21 will be expanded to supporting businesses and non-profit organizations to comply with the Customer Service Standard Regulation.

Priority Area # 3: Government Leadership

Championing Accessibility

In 2018/19, Manitoba's Civil Service Commissioner, Charlene Paquin, was appointed as Government's Accessibility Champion for the public service. The Accessibility Champion will provide leadership and support to executive and senior managers in understanding and achieving accessibility, and engage employees in increasing awareness about providing accessible services.

The Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee includes membership from the top levels of the civil service, including the Clerk of the Executive Council, the Civil Service Commissioner, the Deputy Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, and the Deputy Minister of Families. With a new [Terms of Reference](#), the Steering Committee will support the Accessibility Champion and the Director under the AMA to provide leadership by example throughout the Manitoba government and to other public sector organizations.

The [Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan \(MGAP\) 2019 and 2020](#) was updated and released in December 2018. This keystone corporate-wide plan sets out the public service's commitments to meet the needs of people who face barriers in ways that maintain dignity and independence.

Building and fostering relationships across sectors is essential to achieve the goals of the AMA. Through the leadership of the Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee, the MGAP for 2019 and 2020 will leverage key partnerships and networks to remove barriers. We will increase public servants' awareness of and capacity to address accessibility issues and accommodations, both internally for public servants and for Manitobans who access our programs, services and supports. As a service

provider to Manitobans, the Manitoba government is committed to offering barrier-free customer service and is seeking to improve access for everyone.

Going Forward

With the support of the Accessibility Steering Committee, the Accessibility Champion will encourage departments to achieve goals identified in the updated Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan. The highlighted commitments below include some of the actions that will be implemented in 2019 and 2020:

- ✓ Completing mandatory training regarding accessibility by all government staff by December 31, 2019, and promoting other accessibility awareness activities
- ✓ Adopting new legislated requirements regarding accessible employment that will come into force for the Manitoba government within the next year. This includes prioritizing workplace safety for all staff by establishing training for leaders so that they know what to do to support employees affected by barriers in workplace emergencies.
- ✓ Updating existing Manitoba government policies and practices to ensure they respect the needs of employees and applicants who experience barriers in the workplace
- ✓ Reviewing public communication approaches to improve the accessibility of online and social media content
- ✓ Equipping senior managers with resources to ensure public servants are able to provide accessible services and know where to find additional resources. This includes continued work to update the tools in the accessibility toolkit for supervisors and employees.
- ✓ Integrating accessibility features into new government buildings and considering accessibility upgrades for existing government sites
- ✓ Integrating accessibility considerations into procurement modernization efforts

Spotlight:

The Manitoba government will lead the way as the first organization that must adhere to all requirements of the Accessible Employment Standard before other sectors, by May 2020.

Priority Area # 4: Raising Public Awareness

Efforts to raise public awareness about accessibility are essential to achieving the goals under the AMA.

Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

The Manitoba government promotes accessibility awareness by continually creating new tools, providing presentations and collaborating with Manitoba's disability community, across sectors and with other jurisdictions. Posters, fact sheets, consumer guides and a regular electronic newsletter provide updates and plain language information to encourage awareness raising.

In addition, the Manitoba government joins business and the community to participate in national and international disability awareness events. One week every June is proclaimed as Access Awareness Week during which learning events are held to celebrate and advance awareness.

Communications

Accessibility awareness has also been enhanced through the continuation of a three-year communication strategy, which included a social media ad campaign delivered across popular social media platforms. Advertisements included clear, plain language and simple messaging, such as the one shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Accessibility awareness



- Description of Figure 5. Accessibility awareness. Sample advertisement shows an accessibility icon for a person in a wheelchair in the centre, placed on a brick wall. Under the icon, an arrow provides direction. The ad is captioned that

“Accessibility is easy-to-read signs.” The bottom left corner encourages employers to be “Open for everyone.” The Manitoba logo is in the bottom right corner.

Going Forward

Over the next two years, enhancing public awareness will involve:

- ✓ Exploring and expanding the use of social media and online platforms to expand the conversation on accessibility.
- ✓ Making it easier for businesses, small municipalities and other organizations to find the tools and resources they need to comply.
- ✓ Developing innovative and creative ways to raise awareness, such as:
 - Launching an info-graphic poster in time for the new employment standard, to promote the business case for accessibility and inclusion in employment.
 - Releasing a series of videos in which political, business and community leaders will join Manitobans with disabilities in sharing what accessibility means to them.
- ✓ Fostering community partnerships to expand the conversation about accessibility to include Manitoba children and youth.
- ✓ Ensuring online tools are available for each standard as they come into force and apply across sectors.
- ✓ Collaborating with partners to enhance public awareness about accessibility and the law, including building relationships with public sector organizations, businesses, professional associations, municipalities and community associations.

Figure 6. Online accessibility tools, resources and training

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act



- Description of Figure 6. Online accessibility tools, resources and training. Screenshot of the accessibilityMB.ca home page showing six headings that organizations can click on to find more information about The Accessibility for Manitobans Act: The Law, Business and Non-Profit, Public Sector, Resources, Training and Contact. The picture below the headings is of three women on a pathway outdoors in the summer. One woman is in a wheelchair.

Priority Area # 5: Accountability and the AMA Review

Independent reviews are an important measure of government accountability. The December 2018 report of the review of the effectiveness of the AMA provided a unique opportunity to reflect on progress to date, and to bring to our attention areas for improvement. As of the release of this two-year Accessibility Plan, the following recommendations from the legislative review have been either fully implemented or are well underway:

- ✓ Improve Terms of Reference for standard development committees that:
 - Clarify reporting relationships between the Minister responsible for the AMA, the Accessibility Advisory Council and standard development committees
 - Include deadlines by which committees and the Council are required to complete their work and
 - Promote greater transparency
- ✓ Establish concurrent accessibility standard development committees.

- ✓ Improve the Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan so that it includes specific proposed measures, leadership responsibilities and timelines. A [new plan](#) was released in December 2018.
- ✓ Establish a central AMA accountability centre to coordinate and direct responsibilities under compliance that is separate from the function of the Disabilities Issues Office.
- ✓ Enhance resources within and support to the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) by realigning it within the Department of Families, under a departmental division.
- ✓ Develop a formal system to assist the DIO in responding to public inquiries and concerns
- ✓ Adopt Ontario's approach and amend the requirement to document policies and measures so that it applies to organizations with 50 or more employees.
- ✓ Develop and provide accessibility plan templates and other tools tailored for small municipalities.

Going Forward

Government will continue to act upon many of the recommendations made as part of the AMA review and provide updates to the public on our progress through various channels, such as accessibility newsletters, annual reports, websites, and social media posts. As the review's recommendations are implemented, we will observe progress in numerous interconnected and important areas, including:

- An improved standard development process
- More organizations in Manitoba with practical and achievable accessibility plans
- Accessible, barrier-free customer service in all sectors
- Strengthened measures of accountability and compliance
- Broadened public awareness and
- A Disabilities Issues Office that is increasingly supported to meet its mandate

A Concluding Call to Action

Accessibility is increasingly becoming a part of every day life across Manitoba. We need to continue to be proactive and promote an accessible province. We look forward to providing support and guidance to the sectors that are affected by the legislation, and to building strong and collaborative relationships. We will share updates and progress made in future annual reports, as required by law.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act could not have been drafted and passed without the hard work and commitment of so many Manitobans. At this unique point in time – more than five years after the enactment of the legislation, our collective and continued efforts will ensure we are successful in making significant progress towards achieving accessibility by 2023.

Over the next 24 months, let's demonstrate our unified commitment to making Manitoba a more inclusive province for all.