MAAW2020 Webinar June 18, 2020:
Accessibility in the Workplace During COVID-19 – Questions & Answers

Questions received during the webinar are posted below with related responses.

Question 1:
With regards to the hiring practices of Indigenous Peoples in the Province of Manitoba, while working for the Manitoba government, I have met one other First Nations person employed with the government. After many years of speaking with various managers and employees in the civil service, I have discovered there are few Indigenous peoples and fewer Indigenous peoples with disabilities working for the Manitoba government. Can you please speak to the recruiting and hiring practices of the government focusing on Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples with disabilities, including your new strategies and practices? If you could please provide data and report on the progress of Indigenous peoples being hired, including with disabilities.

Response 1:
The Following Response was developed with assistance from the Diversity and Inclusion Unit of the Civil Service Commission. Thank-you for these helpful comments and suggestions. Please find below the corresponding information to the points you make:

(1) Civil Servants with disabilities who are Indigenous

The Civil Service Commission tracks and reports self-declarations of people with disabilities and Indigenous peoples separately. As per the Civil Service Commission's most recent annual report: the employment equity statistics for people with disabilities is 5.8%, and for Indigenous peoples it is 14.5%.

(2) Programs to encourage employment equity

Employment Equity is a factor in the selection progress for all competitions. The following programs require candidates to self-declare as at least one of the following employment equity groups: Indigenous, Visible minority and Persons with a Disability.

The Career Gateway Program assists in the recruitment of employment equity candidates with relevant skills and abilities to perform jobs across the Manitoba government.

The Manitoba Diversity Internship Program is a one-year program for the recruitment of external candidates and is designed to assist government departments with renewal challenges while helping address difficult to recruit positions and diversity goals. The program is focused on position / occupation specific placements with limited rotational assignments within similar occupational groups

The Diversity Employee Development Program is a 12-month development program for existing regular employees of the Manitoba Government who have demonstrated leadership potential.

The Civil Service Commission also supports Touchstone groups, which focus on providing support through community among Indigenous employees.

(3) Networking among civil servants with disabilities and who are Indigenous

Employee-led networks are another way the Manitoba government facilitates support of employment equity groups.

The Civil Servants with Abilities Network is a network of employees with visible or invisible disabilities, their supervisors and any civil servants interested in supporting and mentoring the career goals, professional development and social inclusion of people with disabilities in the Manitoba civil service.

The Anishinabe Wichitiwin (*helping one another network*) is a network resource directory for Manitoba Civil Service Indigenous employees.

(4) Truth and Reconciliation

The Path to Reconciliation Act, was enacted on March 15, 2016, was the first reconciliation legislation of its kind in Canada and demonstrates Manitoba's commitment to advancing reconciliation. The Act sets out the principles of respect, understanding, engagement and action to guide reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations is the Minister responsible for reconciliation.

Although the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action are largely directed at the federal government, the Manitoba government has addressed many of the calls to action, including as they relate to eliminating educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. See also pages 9-10 of the 2017/18 Annual Progress Report.

Question 2:
"[A question with regards to] the workplace emergency response obligations created by the Accessible Employment Standard. Given that many employers have significant portions of their workforce working from home right now, what would a workplace emergency response plan for these employees look like? The challenge is that employers do not have a much control over an employee's workplace when that workplace is their private residence. Do you have any suggestions for organizations seeking to fulfil their workplace emergency response obligations when employees work from home?"

Response 2:
The following response is based on information provided on the [SAFE Work Manitoba](#) and the [Disabilities Issues Office](#) websites. Working from home can present new challenges for staff and employers. However, employers should implement basic safety and health guidelines for working from home, beginning by updating employee emergency contact information. Employers may also wish to review home safety measures, including: • health and safety related to the workstation • when and how to report injuries • options to exit the home • safe location to evacuate if needed • regular reporting and check-in, and • how to contact the employer during an emergency

Both employers and employees must understand their role, duties, and responsibilities. There are a number of online resources available to support employees who work alone or in isolation, including recommendations for staff check-in and out: https://www.safemanitoba.com/topics/Pages/Working-Alone.aspx.

Key safety and health requirements when working from home

Many safety and health roles, rights, and responsibilities are just as applicable for at-home workers as they are for more traditional workplaces, including:

- Reporting workplace injuries
- Requirements for education and training
- Worker's duty to follow safe work procedures
- Furthermore, check-in and other procedures are required if the worker is working alone or in isolation.
  - For more information, here are some resources that can be used when working alone.
- Ergonomic assessments may be useful in preventing worker injuries
  - Try using Bulletin 264 to direct employees on how to set up workstations while working at home!
- If questions arise, consider connecting with SAFE Work Manitoba at 204-957-SAFE (7233). One of our team members may be able to help!
- Employers should also consider the follow-up and investigation of reported incidents.

For more information
For other information about COVID-19 and the workplace, please see SAFE Work's COVID-19 page and the following links:

- Manitoba Health
- Public Health Agency of Canada

Consider also the accessibility needs of your employees:

- **Ask whether they have any accessibility or disability concerns and consult with them on how to address these concerns**
    - You may be unaware that an employee has asthma, a heart condition, a family member with a disability, or other concerns related to COVID-19. Invite all employees to discuss any health or disability concerns. This will help you to understand employees' needs and help keep everyone safe.

- **Maintain employee contact and offer mental health support**
    - [6-Tips to Respond to Employee Anxiety About COVID-19](#)

- **Communicate in a way that works for everyone**
    - Use basic programs like HTML or Word to reach as many employees as possible.
    - Avoid imbedding messages in an image, which creates barriers for people with low vision or who are blind.
    - Add a short description to any images to assist in removing barriers affected by vision or understanding.
    - Keep documents and messages simple and easy to understand.
    - Use easy-to-read fonts, color contrast and white space.

- **Offer flexible work hours**
    - Many accommodations, like flexible hours of work, are low or no cost, and can make a world of difference.
    - Working from home is a great way to accommodate a range of disabilities. During COVID-19, many organizations are making adjustments that allow their employees to work from home.