# Disability Awareness Month Webinar 2025

## Webinar Transcript

### Accessibility at Work: Removing Barriers to Benefit All Employees

**Maria Ferraro**: Hi, everyone. Welcome. I'm just going to give everyone just a few more minutes just to log in as our numbers are just climbing up so just hang tight and we'll get started in just a couple of minutes. We'll get started in just a minute or so. We're just waiting, there's still people coming on to the call so we will give them a couple minutes, and we'll get started shortly.

**Maria Ferraro:** Okay. Let's get started. Welcome. Hello, everyone. Welcome to our webinar in celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month. My name is Maria Ferraro and I'm a policy analyst at the Manitoba Accessibility Office. Thank you for joining us today to talk about this very important topic on accessibility and universal design principles to create flexible workplaces that benefit all employees. I'm really excited to hear all our panellists who bring a broad rage of perspectives that are here today.

**Maria Ferraro:** But before we get started, I will mention some housekeeping and accessibility items that will assist you with today's webinar. First off, this webinar is being recorded and will be shared on accessibilityMB.ca, and for closed captioning, if you would like to access that, click on the CC icon along the bottom of the screen to turn it on or off. You can also access the live feed through the Stream Text link for captions, and this is going to be posted in the chat if it's not already. For ASL, click the global icon which is also at the bottom right hand side of the page and select American Sign Language. For technical questions, to troubleshoot, you may send an email to mao@gov.mb.ca, or call 204-945-7613, or tollfree 1-800-282-8069 extension 7613. So hopefully there's no technical issues and everybody can hear us okay or see us. All microphones and videos are off. This helps keep the background noise and visuals to a minimum for everyone. And we welcome your questions, so please type them in the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen and we'll get to them if there's time. There should be time at the end, so we'll try to get to everyone's questions. You can also email our office during this webinar if that is more convenient for you and again, that email will be in the chat, and it's mao@gov.mb.ca. And of course we will answer as many questions as we can during the webinar. And also, just to note, at the end of the webinar, you'll also be able to complete a feedback survey on zoom so it would help us if you could complete that survey. It helps us with planning future events and your opinions matter so we want to make sure that we provide the best services we can. And we're so pleased to see there's about 260 people that have registered for this session, so thank you again for taking the time to join us today. Your participation and engagement are crucial for the success of this day and Disability Employment Awareness Month.

**Maria Ferraro**: So before we get to the panellists, I'll give you a little bit of information on DEAM, Disability Employment Awareness Month. So, just to let you know, Manitoba was the first province to celebrate Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, with the goal of encouraging the hiring and inclusion of people with disabilities in our workplaces and job market, as well as making the opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of employees with disabilities.

**Maria Ferraro:** Now, here's an interesting fact you probably already know, most of us work with a person with a disability, a chronic illness or a health condition, and, in Manitoba, Stats Canada reports that about approximately 30 per cent of us, 15 years of age or older have disabilities. So it is important to note that disability is an identity that can happen to anyone at any time or change over a lifetime. And in 2024, among employed Canadians aged 15 to 64 with disability or long-term conditions, 70% experienced a barrier to accessibility in the workforce or workplace. This is why this topic of planning and creating work environments that can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by everyone is so important.

**Maria Ferraro:** Now, with that in mind, I'm eager to hear from our very knowledgeable panellists and their range of perspectives on how to make workplaces more accessible. But before we get to that main portion of the webinar, I want to talk briefly about the MAO's, Manitoba Accessibility Office's commitment to reconciliation and all of our duty to speak out against all forms of discrimination and oppression. A few ways we try to demonstrate that commitment to reconciliation are to take time to learn about our history and the legacy of colonialism, also taking time to learn about Indigenous culture, teaching, and knowledge and listening to and amplifying the voices of First Nations, Inuit, Metis and Indigenous peoples, also taking action not just being an ally in name only but considering how we can be accomplices together to break down barriers for all and make true and lasting change that benefits all people.

**Maria Ferraro:** Now, I would like to introduce Colleen Watters, a policy analyst with the Manitoba Accessibility Office, to talk about her connections to the traditional lands.

**Colleen Watters:** Hello, everyone. I will now read the land acknowledgement. Welcome, everyone, to the Disability Employment Awareness Month webinar. I am Colleen Watters, policy analyst with the Manitoba Accessibility Office. I am proud to be here today to present the land acknowledgement on behalf of the Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat. As a person with a disability living within Canada, I am a Canadian settler with parental origins from England and Ireland, and I am proud to call Treaty One Territory home.

**Colleen Watters:** On behalf of the Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat, I would like to further acknowledge that we are presenting today from Treaty One Territory and that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and Ancestral Lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Nehethowuk Nations. We acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the homeland of the

Red River Metis. We also acknowledge that northern Manitoba includes lands that are the Ancestral Lands of the Inuit.

**Colleen Watters:** As we gather in celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month, we recognize the advances Canada as a country has made to improve accessibility including accessible employment, workplace accommodations and flexible workplaces, while also acknowledging that work needs to continue. The Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat strive to improve accessibility with the full implementation of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, including the Accessible Employment Standard.

**Colleen Watters:** We respect the spirit and intent of the treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, collaboration, and to make Manitoba more inclusive and accessible for all.

**Maria Ferraro:** Great. Thank you, Colleen. Now I'd like to welcome elder Frances Sinclair Kaspick. Frances is a First Nations Cree woman and a member of Peguis First Nation. Welcome, Frances.

**Frances Sinclair Kaspick:** Thank you. Thank you for having me.

**Maria Ferraro:** Thank you, Frances. Next, we have greetings from Honourable Nahanni Fontaine, the Minister responsible for Accessibility.

**Kenny Huynh:** sorry, Maria, I think Frances has some words to share before that.

**Maria Ferraro:** Sorry about that, Frances.

**Frances Sinclair Kaspick:** That's okay. So I'll begin. All right. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Frances Sinclair Kaspick, and I just want to say that only through an Indigenous ceremony, one receives an Indigenous spirit name and animal clan. So I am Red Rainbow Woman, and I'm of the Bear Clan, and I'm honoured to have received this tobacco tie which I'm going to give a little teaching about so this tobacco tie that I received has been given to me for the blessings of the Disability Employment Awareness Month. The tobacco tie is passed to an elder, a respected offering for specific purposes, or a specific purpose. Accepting a tobacco tie is an agreement to assist what is asked of us. So Indigenous people believe when burning this tobacco tie, the smoke goes upward carrying our prayer to Creator. Always tobacco is a first use for all Indigenous ceremonies. So now I'm going to begin.

**Frances Sinclair Kaspick:** So I speak to Creator, Mother Earth, and the Four Directions. I do a circle, the Four Directions. Sorry. Our prayer is to bring positive awareness and blessings for Disability Employment Awareness Month. We call upon Creator to continue assisting this month by removing employment barriers in all areas within the various workplaces, such as honest, open discussion of directors, managers to bring better awareness, understanding, acceptance, and encourage employment

leaders to become open and learn accessibility issues. We ask to raise higher learning awareness to employers to see beyond and focus on the various strengths and talents in each individual's uniqueness. Build us into the workplace, make inclusiveness for all diversities of abilities. Doing so will improve disability culture and society and improve hiring practises. The hiring practises need to be changed and improved and there is a need for training to enhance skills. Consider technology to assist in performing duties and opportunities to further educate. Disability is part of life. We are everywhere. Today, the past shows progress has evolved and it's necessary to continue paving the way for the future of families, communities, and children who become adults in society. We reflect by giving thanks to many people, past, present and future for advocating for the rights of disabilities and diversities inclusion and always accomplishing an immense pathway for us today.

**Frances Sinclair Kaspick:** However, there is still work to do. People with disabilities want and deserve to live happy and productive lives. Give us opportunities to prove our career skills. We are grateful people with disabilities have come so far through hard work of law and policy making. Advocacy is necessary to move forward into the future. We ask for continued success, blessings for disability employment awareness month. May the fire within us keep living and carry our powerful words to be put into action, presently and the years ahead.

**Frances Sinclair Kaspick:** So in my backyard, I have a bronze cast iron wood-burning chimney I use for the sacred fire. I will place this tobacco tie into the sacred fire, and the upward rising smoke will carry today's blessing to Creator, and our voices heard honouring Disability Employment Month, and we're proud of this month. Hay, hay means thank you.

**Maria Ferraro:** Thank you so much for that, Frances. That was lovely. Next, we have greetings from Honourable Nahanni Fontaine, the Minister responsible for Accessibility. Minister Fontaine was first elected as an MLA for St. John's in 2016, and she's a member of the Sagkeeng Anishinaabe First Nation. Minister Fontaine is globally recognized for her expertise in murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, two spirit and gender equity. Minister Fontaine was the first Indigenous woman to be house leader of any legislature or parliament in Canada and one of Manitoba's first two First Nations women in Cabinet. Minister Fontaine wanted to be here live today and in person, but her schedule couldn't accommodate that, so she recorded a message for us to share with you. So we'll play that message now.

**Minister’s Message:** I am pleased to officially acknowledge the month of October as Disability Employment Awareness Month or DEAM. Many of you know Manitoba was one of the first provinces to enact accessibility legislation anywhere in Canada when we passed the Accessibility for Manitobans Act in 2013. Manitoba took a significant step forward in 2019 with the enactment of the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation. The goal of the standard is to remove and prevent employment-related barriers experienced by employees and job applicants with disabilities. Barriers may be

structural, may affect information and communication, may be related to technology, or barriers may be systemic when they are the result of policies and common practises. But we know one of the biggest barriers of all can be people's attitudes. So, last fall, the Accessibility Advisory Council, who are responsible for developing accessibility standards, reviewed the Employment Standard and held consultations with Manitobans with disabilities, businesses, human resource professionals, union and labour representatives, the education sector, municipalities, disability organizations and members of the public to seek feedback on how well the Accessible employment standard is working and what improvements can be made. These consultations led to 27 recommendations for improvement focusing on clearer employer responsibilities, stronger workplace accommodations and better supports for job seekers with disabilities. The department of families is now working to implement meaningful changes that will help remove employment barriers and strengthen inclusion across Manitoba's workforce.

**Minister Fontaine:** To mark this year's Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Manitoba Accessibility Office is hosting this webinar focused on the theme of using universal design to create flexible workplaces for everyone. Universal design is a forward-thinking approach that ensures workplaces are inclusive and adaptable from the on set, benefiting all employees, not just those who require accommodations. Today's webinar features a diverse panel of speakers who bring a wide range of lived experiences, professional expertise and sector knowledge. Each panellist offers valuable insights into removing barriers and promoting full inclusion. I'm confident their success stories will inspire other organizations to take meaningful steps towards creating accessible workplaces for all Manitobans. Together, we can make Manitoba an accessible province for everyone. Miigwech.

**Maria Ferraro:** Okay, great. Now it's my pleasure to introduce our panel host Morgan Snape, our practicum student from the university of Manitoba's Master of Human Rights Program, and she will lead this discussion. So welcome, Morgan, and thank you for being here.

**Morgan Snape:** Hello. Thank you all for joining this webinar. As a disabled person myself who has experienced barriers in the workplace, I personally know how important this topic is, since discussions like this are essential to making workplaces safe for everyone. We want to thank not only our panellists for participating but also everyone for watching. Your engagement does make a difference. If you have questions as we go through the discussion, please write them in the Q&A box, and we will return to them if there is time at the end. We do have probably about 20 minutes allocated. If those questions aren't answered during that time, we will email responses, we'll make sure everything gets answered. What we do ask is that you please do not include specific names or details in your questions as we are unable to engage in individual case advocacy at this time. You are always welcome to contact our office with any questions

you may have about the rights and obligations under Manitoba's Accessibility Employment Standard, though.

**Morgan Snape:** Now, for the fun part which is introducing our four panellists and then diving into the discussion. So the first panellist I'll introduce is Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk who uses she/her pronouns. She is the V.P. Of People Marketing and Innovation at Matix Group of Companies, and she has over 20 years of experience in human resources. Born with Achondroplasia, she is a passionate disability rights advocate serving as President of Little People of Manitoba since 2015 and advocacy director on the Board of Little People of America where she is the first Canadian elected, recognized with numerous awards including the Manitoba 150, Nelly McClung Women Trailblazers Award, Winnipeg 150 Medal and the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal, also named on Ace Burpees most fascinating Manitobans list twice. Samantha is committed to breaking barriers and advancing inclusion. Thank you, Samantha, for being here.

**Morgan Snape:** So our next panellist that I will introduce is Jaime Chinchilla, a professional with experience in the development, implementation, delivery and evaluation of dei strategies and programs in business settings. Jaime possesses post secondary education from the University of British Columbia and certified in the International Standard for Human Resource Management, Diversity and Inclusion. In addition to working as an instructor at both the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, Jaime is the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisor for Johnston Group. As the Advisor, he is responsible for not only the organization's DEI Strategy but also for advancing related goals and programs. In 2024, the DEI investment strategies were recognized when they were awarded the CPHR Manitoba HR Excellence Unity Award for advancing diversity, inclusivity and accessibility at work. Thank you, Jaime, for being here.

**Morgan Snape:** Our third panellist is Lisa Dabrowski, the Executive Director at Reaching E-Quality Employment Services also known by its acronym RE-ES since October 2017. Lisa was involved with the organization in a variety of roles including sitting on multiple committees and serving on the board of directors. Across every role she's been in, Lisa has always advocated for inclusion and diversity. Her commitment to these values can be seen in her dedication and passion for the work that RE-ES does championing persons with disabilities and health conditions and assisting them with obtaining sustainable and meaningful employment. Thank you, Lisa.

**Morgan Snape:** And our fourth and final panellist Amber Hicks also from RE-ES. Amber has been with RE-ES since august 2017. In addition to her work at RE-ES, she supports multiple other DEI initiatives including co-chair of the Manitoba Supported Employment Networks Disability Employment Awareness Month Committee, long name there, as a board member of both the Manitoba Association for Career Development and the Career and Workforce Development Month Committee. So thank you all for

being here. We really appreciate it and I'm really excited to hear what you guys have to say and hear your expertise.

**Morgan Snape:** So the first question, we'll jump right in, and it will hopefully help to remind us of and ground us all in why we have a Disability Employment Awareness Month and why we are here discussing accessibility today. If you could please each share what does accessibility in the workplace mean to you and why is it important for everyone, not just people self identifying as having a disability. And any of you can jump in first. Does anyone have an answer that comes right to mind?

**Lisa Dabrowski:** Okay, I'll take the lead.

**Morgan Snape:** Excellent.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** Someone has to get the show on the road, right? So I think for us, and I may be speaking for Amber, she of course is welcome to add, it's about making sure that we're creating an environment where everyone, regardless of what their ability, background or circumstances are, can fully participate, contribute, and succeed. This would include removing the following barriers such as physical, technological, attitudinal, so that all employees can access information, spaces, tools and opportunities to the best of their ability.

**Morgan Snape:** Thank you. Love that. You hit all the key kind of concepts from our legislation as well.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** That's the goal.

**Morgan Snape:** Go ahead.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** Oh, sorry. I think for me, it means that everyone can show up and contribute without barriers, not just because of accommodations that were made but because the environment was designed that way from the start. You know, it's not, it's not just about ramps or technology, it's about culture changing and so I think being able to show up as yourself allows everyone to do their best work and knowing that the workplace is designed to include you and not just adjust to you, that's really what accessibility means to me.

**Amber Hicks:** Thanks, Samantha, sorry, a little crossover there, but you kind of hit right on the head where I was going with that. And I also just kind of wanted to add it's just being able to participate, contribute, not just those things but also be successful, you know. It's one thing to be there, but it's one thing to be putting everything into action and being supported in that.

**Samantha Rayburn Trubyk:** Exactly.

**Jaime Chinchilla:** I'd like to, it's hard to follow you. You've mentioned a lot of important aspects already, but my role at Johnston Group is in diversity and inclusion and I can't

help but think about how accessibility at that high level is part of a commitment and a goal to make sure that we improve the workplace for everybody and in that sense, we face historical and systemic issues because, as humans, we have ignored sometimes willingly sometimes ignoring that we ignore parts of who we are and accessibility aims to amend a lot of those historic and systemic issues but it's also a day today learning. We as humans are not necessarily knowledgeable of everything. We're discovering new things every single day and in diversity and inclusion, we are constantly committing to that mindset of trying to find what it is that can help people perform better and engage better and even produce better. So it's part of that higher goal of being a better society, a better workplace for everybody. I'll stop right here. As part of the dei journey, it's essential, I would think, it crosses over with other aspects.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** I think, just to add one more point to this, it's about making and workplace culture is definitely a big part of it but it's also about making the environment comfortable enough that people are willing to have those conversations rather than feeling that if they divulge certain information about themselves that there's going to be problems that they may encounter. So it's making sure that they feel they are in a comfortable and safe space, that they can share exactly what it is that they require, to be that productive individual as part of the workforce.

**Morgan Snape:** Absolutely, yeah, you guys all kind of touched on to kind of steal some of your words of really what I'm hearing is that it's really about that commitment to ensuring a culture where there is inclusion and participation supported for everybody rather than like what Samantha had said of adjusting that environment as needed. And when folks request it. How do we change that culture from placing that burden on disabled folks to be asking to be included versus having it already there. So thank you all for sharing on that one.

**Morgan Snape:** Our next question kind of connects the two core elements of this office's purpose, advocacy and law. As a disability rights and workers rights advocate, I'm very familiar with how well-intended legislation doesn't always have the intended impact. With that being said, I'm curious as to how each of you will answer our next question. In your experience, what part of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the supplementary accessibility standards do you think has made the biggest difference for accessibility and why? Anyone eager to jump in?

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** I can start this one. So I know it's the employment month, but I think the Customer Service Standard actually made the biggest difference only because it was the first of the standards and it really set the tone for forcing organizations to look how people with disabilities actually experience services. But then obviously the employment standards in my world of work has made the biggest difference in terms of with work being such a large part of inclusion where people at work find purpose and independence and belonging. And this standard really pushed employers to think differently not just about hiring people with disabilities but about creating accessible and inclusive workspaces from recruitment to day-to-day to

everything. So for sure, the Employment Standard has made a huge difference but in terms of the biggest difference, I would say the Customer Service Standard only because it set the tone for everything else.

**Morgan Snape:** Fair enough.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** I think you make a really good point there, actually, Samantha. Typically it's the first thing out of the gate that's going to set the tone for what comes next. And I think, depending on who you're speaking with and where they are in their, whether it's their career journey, employment journey, job search or so on and so forth, each piece of the act is going to hit people more importantly at certain stages throughout their careers. For us at RE-ES, because employment is what we mainly focus on and not just employment but sustainable employment for people with disabilities and/or health conditions, the employment standard itself is the one that, in many ways, for us is the most impactful because it's looking at every stage of that journey, whether it be right from the time a job posting is put up somewhere and the language and the way it's being presented right through the interviews, right through the on boarding, hiring process, and even through to wrap around supports after the fact.

So again, I just think it's going to hit people differently at different times during their journey and their various stages of life.

**Morgan Snape:** Absolutely. I really love how the legislation for the employment centre is so comprehensive. And I too went with employment.

**Amber Hicks:** I'm sorry, I keep doing that.

It's a bit of a lag here. Go ahead.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** No, it's okay, Amber, go.

**Amber Hicks:** No, I too had chosen employment, as well and, Samantha, you brought up great points about the Customer Service Standard too, that was kind of in my head too. But as to what Lisa said, this is what we see the impacts so directly.

And I will just say, I want to comment in my role, because I do so much one-on-one and assistance with job search and stuff, I can see that the implementation of the standard, I especially notice this over COVID, this coincides with the implementation of the standards, just that there's more inclusive language in job posts. They aren't perfect but there's definitely improvements. You're seeing a little bit more, I guess, a little more concise language, you're seeing a little bit more direct, you know, direct asks as opposed to mumbo jumbo. It's still there, I'm not saying it's not, but, you know, I'm finding there's quite a bit of improvement on that side and that's just kind of what I see every day, and I look at, so I’m monitoring it.

**Jaime Chinchilla:** I will add to everything that's been said from the perspective of a privately-owned company, the most useful aspect of it is the enforcement aspect to us and with that, I mean the enforcement aspect in chasing people to get things done or

else, which can be interpreted, but the whole process of the office setting up this loop for us to submit and create policy and then getting reviewed in a very healthy environment, I think, helped us as a company to put pieces together. Maybe we were doing 80 to 90% of the things in terms of job postings, about you when you're able to centralize that into policy that has not only responsibilities but actions that you can follow up with has been super useful and it becomes then alive because policy is supposed to be interpreted and be applied and I think having that ability now to know that you have an office where you can submit not only your policy but even questions and issues that you might be having with applications is probably what the act did best for companies like ours.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah, that's really fair, and I love that you brought that up because there are some legislation changes potentially in the future around that. Yeah, you all really highlighted how the role, I guess the role that legislation has had in educating folks and really kind of raising that bar for employers and for the public, which is just so important, and it's why webinars like these are so important. Samantha, do you have something?

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** Yeah, just to wrap it, I think there's, I think the Employment Standard moves it out of, it moves accessibility out of the compliance box and into culture so it takes it out of just checking a box, ticking a box off, and it really is about creating the space where everyone can contribute fully.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah, absolutely. So the next question is  gets a little bit more specific, puts a couple of you on the spot, Samantha and Jaime since you both specialize in human resources. Since knowledge is power, we would love if you could each please share any insights you may have on how hiring, on boarding and day-to-day operations can be designed to be inclusive from the start rather than modified later.

**Jaime Chinchilla:** Maybe I'll start with a few examples of how we intend to do that on a day-to-day basis. For us, and I said it before, the standard helped us put together things that we were already doing some of them, some of them we were doing as reactive measures and sometimes as a planned activity and an example of that is, for example, accommodation during job postings is something that's been around in human resources for a long, long time but reviewing that intentionally and then linking that to maybe information that you're collecting from interviews and from other tools that might be in place is what we were able to implement. And hiring, for example, things like using plain language in descriptions, offering alternative formats, ensuring application platforms are screen reader friendly and things like that.

It's today more or less common place for companies like ours but thinking in terms of interview questions that  most importantly, I think communicating that to managers, implementing this system of how are you going to train your people into this mindset and this attitude, this culture that we have been talking about. And I think the standards, the three of them are very specific.

You have to have a plan in place on how you're going to train and document that training and being able to report that training. Same with on boarding. Things that have been in place for a long time, such as providing materials in multiple formats, digital, print, audio, offering orientation sessions with accessibility in mind and asking people for accommodations.

But then, again, training different people, for us it meant to comply with the standards that we had to have a back up, for example, and so it's now not just the one person in an organization or the team that is tasked with diversity and inclusion, for example, but having a back up plan for when they're not there and who is going to provide that on boarding.

And day-to-day, I think we all went through normalizing flexible work arrangements with COVID which is something employers tend to do to accommodate people living with disabilities but I think one of the things that we did is ensure that meetings, now that we live in this half virtual, half in person world, are always accessible in terms of not only the technology but making sure that you accommodate to how people do things. We had a lot of input from neurodiverse folks in our last two DEI services in how to use more inclusive communication tools, for example. So I'm going to stop here. But those are some of the things that come to mind.

**Morgan Snape:** Sorry, go ahead. Jaime, I love that you brought up the alternative formats and ensuring that those are available right from interviewing to job postings to kind of just creating that option. Samantha?

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** So I agree with everything Jaime says, and I don't have a ton more to add, and I don't want to repeat what he mentioned but I have the great benefit of working with organizations in the U.S. Through Little People of America and so I kind of reached out to my network there to ask what were some of the great tools that they were using, some of these big organizations were using in the U.S. As well. And in addition to all of this that we're doing here with plain language job postings and all of that fun stuff as well, a couple folks mention doing a short video on your I-Phone to welcome new employees to their work space so once somebody's been hired, kind of showing them a little bit of almost like a map but a virtual map of where they're going to be working so that they can understand before they come to work, what the setup is like, if there's anything that they need and we can kind of get ahead of that or they can get ahead of that. You know, some of the other stuff that we do is provide an agenda for the interview ahead of time just so that anybody, everybody has a clear and concise understanding of how the interview's going to roll, who's in these interviews and exactly what the step-by-step process would be. And its small things, too, like understanding what our wi-fi password is because candidates often come with their computers or with their accessibility tools and need access to the internet. And so being ready with everything possible is really helpful and I think it's helpful for everybody whether you have a disability or not. I think the question we have to ask ourselves as an employer,

always for everything, even outside of on boarding and hiring, is does this work for everyone? And nine times out of ten, accessibility is really great for everybody.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah, totally. I love that both of you brought up, and it just highlights the importance of this in employers and how they're creating their policies and procedures, is the inclusion of disabled people and their voices in those policies and in those procedures from, you know, the surveys that you had mentioned, Jaime and you, Samantha, consulting your community, it's so important and I think it's a big piece that some of the folks maybe watching may need is that, yeah, it really is, if some of you haven't maybe heard it that like the disability movement's anthem is nothing about us without us, so just really ensuring that inclusive element and amplifying those voices.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** And really, when accessibility is baked into everything, people don't have to ask to belong. They just do.

**Morgan Snape:** Totally. So thank you both for sharing. Jaime, were you going to say something?

**Jaime Chinchilla:** No, I will just maybe comment on that, and I want to notice some of the comments in the chat, as well, because neurodiversity and inclusivity and employers.

And just everything you're saying about creating those spaces for us. And I mentioned it before, every time you attempt to create and implement policy, it does become alive, and it does become interpreted in the day-to-day. It's never going to stay in the paper as you intended it, and I like to go back sometimes to the spirit of the policy when people are trying to interpret it, trying to find what you were trying to do and now how you apply to this specific situation. But for us, it's a long journey and creating those safe spaces so people can communicate to you because half of the candidates, when they come and interview with you and they have maybe an invisible disability, they choose not to disclose it. And the same will happen in service that you do in your workplace. And there's a reason for that, right? If you find that the environment is not welcoming enough or there is obvious evidence that the place is not inclusive in various aspects, then you might decide not to disclose it. It comes across all equity deserving groups so creating the safe spaces, it's not an easy task, it's a long journey. And I did mention service but it's things that we are trying and give us good results, our focus groups and employer resource groups. And through those, for example, we found out a lot of information from our neurodiverse employees, from the lighting of the building to the level of noise to the setting up their desks and many other things. I just wanted to make those notes for the last answer that we gave.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah, no, thank you for sharing that. Definitely navigating a culture change like that which we are here talking about today involving accessibility in the workplace can be difficult. Especially when, historically, an employer or supervisors only has experience with ableist and accessible processes and policies. A little guidance can make the world of difference which is why webinars are so great. With our next

question, we'll centre on Lisa and amber's experiences as accessibility advocates external to an employer. If you could each, please share what are some of the barriers you have seen when supporting disabled people in their job search or when they begin new jobs. What suggestions do you have for how employers can proactively remove these barriers?

**Lisa Dabrowski:** Amber, shall I take the first part, you take the second?

**Amber Hicks:** I was just going to suggest that. You read my mind. See how well we work together?

**Lisa Dabrowski:** I would like to just throw a comment out there about what Samantha and Jaime were just discussing and I think also I've been reading the comments in the chat and I think that it's important that we acknowledge that regardless of the size of the employer, small, medium or large, many are there, many are adopting these changes and adapting how they make things work within their organizations. I happen to have firsthand experience with Johnston Group, long story, I'm not going to get into it, less so with Samantha's company. But we really do need to acknowledge that these are two employers that definitely are making huge inroads, they're acknowledging that things still may need to change and morph and adapt as required, but there's also organizations out there that have not yet gotten there and may need our guidance and may need to look to employers such as yourselves to lead by example because not everybody is there. And we get it, and that's one of actually our challenges, which kind of is a segue into our question. And the barriers are varied. I'm not going to lie. We sort of narrowed it down to three or four sort of specific areas, but it does cross all areas. One of them is attitudinal. And I know these are things that Minister Fontaine addressed in her opening remarks. But the attitudinal ones, for example, employers underestimating a person's ability or assuming that accommodations are going to be costly when they don't have the necessary information to make those determinations. Looking at a person and making assumptions based on how they appear versus, you know, taking the time to properly interview them, get to know them and understand what those accommodations or accessibility needs might look like. Amber touched on this earlier about the communication barriers.

Where they're not speaking in plain language that everybody would understand, they tend to fall into using jargon and as a person that has a very extensive background in the context centred industry, that has a whole language unto itself, and a lot of other employers have that.

The process where it's like not everybody understands that language and you need to make sure that you're using language that everybody can understand. And the alternate formats.

As an in-person interview, the ideal way to go.

Some people think it is, otherwise, maybe we need to do it through a teams meeting because they need closed caption or some other form of accommodation . The physical and technological barriers. And again, we've touched on this already.

Inaccessible work spaces, and that's going to be something that's going to be on going with the Manitoba Act and there are a number of organizations that are in buildings that accessibility is being grandfathered, as long as they don't undertake any major work at their building where they need to get permits and so on and so forth through the city, it's not going to change any time soon, and that is something that we need to acknowledge.

Same with equipment or software. There's a lot of different technological pieces of software out there that can help people, whether it's closed captioning or something, and I'm sure it's been updated but Dragon Speech, voice-to-text, all this kind of stuff. It is readily available, and it doesn't have to cost a lot. And in a lot of cases, clients will come with those pieces already in place. And then finally, the procedural barriers. Having such rigid hiring processes and inflexibility in scheduling that don't account for those individual needs and those accommodation needs. We at RE-ES, we certainly learned a lot through COVID. We have always been an organization that doesn't just talk the talk, we walk the walk. Everybody here that has and does work at RE-ES, we all have our own individual accommodation needs, and we learned very quickly through COVID how to work very effectively in a hybrid mode and saw some really quite significant improvements in performance as far as that is.

So again, about being more flexible as we move forward. So I'm going to let Amber sort of talk about how you might proactively look at removing these barriers.

**Amber Hicks:** Thank you for that.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** Thanks.

**Amber Hicks:** And of course this is not an exhaustive list.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** Oh, gosh no.

**Amber Hicks:** We don't have a lot of time today. But just a few points I wanted to bring up. The first is providing disability awareness and inclusion training for all staff. This is not just about HR, policy makers, managers, supervisors. This is about the co workers, this is about the people with disabilities themselves. Inclusion has to be a shared value. It has to run through the company in the veins, let's say. We've talked about that from the beginning, if it's all, you know, if everybody is on board and everything's accessible, then, you know, it's much better for everyone. We're going to get back to this review and update job postings because this is something that I do deal with every day and coincidentally was the topic of a workshop I did this morning. If I'm losing my voice between the cold I had, I was talking for a good three hours, and dissecting job posts actually so it's a little fresh in my mind but one of the things we're talking about, some of the things thrown into job posts that act as barriers are the lifting requirements, do you need a licence, all these things we see, and then we're like, does this have anything to

do with the job and thank you for telling us we need to lift 50 pounds. Where are we taking that 50 pounds? How long are we carrying that 50 pounds? How many times a day do we have to lift that 50 pounds? If it's once or twice a day, could we not do a little job carving or job sharing and maybe somebody able to lift that 50 pounds once a day, why am I disqualified from this job because I can't do it that one moment of the day? So those are the types of things I'm talking about, just as I clearly could go on about this all day, and I have.

But just some examples about how that can be changed, ensuring the interviewing and on boarding processes are accessible. This has been touched on a little bit but offering different formats or assistive technology. The interview itself, one little, you know, there's all kinds of ways to interview, and we all tend to do it in a traditional way, you know, and I catch myself doing it in intake meetings and things like that. I'm asking all the conventional questions, the situational stuff, but that doesn't work across all disability demographics so kind of review your interview questions, your policies and things around that because the interview itself could be such a barrier. It could be as easy as how would you prefer to interview on the phone, in-person, online, you know. Just make it more conversational, that puts a lot of people at ease. There's lots of ways around that, designing flexible work environments so that's allowing for adjustments in hours, workspace or tools. That can be your chair, the nice ergonomic chair I'm sitting on that keeps me able to work because I need it very badly, all those kinds of things. Maybe the bus doesn't work quite out for you, can I work through lunch or make it up over here? Just little tiny adjustments. Instead of you're late, it's 15 minutes that can be put somewhere else. And the last thing I just want to say is consult actually with people with disabilities and the supporting agencies. I think a lot of the times; we're going and getting disability awareness and inclusion training from people without lived experience and things are hearsay and second. There are tons of qualified people, not only qualified in the way that they're able to facilitate and teach, but they're qualified because they have lived it, they breathe it and eat it every day. And those are the people that you should be talking to.

**Morgan Snape:** Exactly. absolutely. I love that, Amber. Yeah. That's all I really have to say is I love that. That summarizes it. So this next question leads us into a discussion for all the panellists to participate in. The general approach to accessibility by many in our society focuses on individual accommodation requests rather than the pursuit of accessibility measures that reduce barriers for many instead of only a few. One of the main approaches recommended for pursuing accessibility proactively and for many individuals is known as universal design. So universal design, for those of you that aren't aware, it is about intentional utilization of resources and the design of environments, so the greatest number of people have access. Its aim is to proactively address accessibility barriers to reduce the number of individual accommodation needs. So it's kind of been brought up a number of times already, kind of that potentially rather than just throwing it on your job posting of, you know, if you have accommodation needs, request them. How do you kind of proactively offer that? So if you could each

share what universal design like approaches you have use or seen be effective at meeting individual accommodation needs while also striving for proactive, long term accessibility solutions. Bit of a long question. Jaime?

**Jaime Chinchilla:** I'd like to start with a real live example of not using universal design. And right now at Johnston Group, we are a beautiful building, it's located at 1051 King Edward Street, and anyone is welcome to visit, and I would give them a tour personally because I love talking about this. We hired an accessibility audit, I don't know if calling it an audit after we wanted to know how our building was doing right at the time where we start implementing this standard. And it came back with about more than 80 different things that were not good basically. And some of them were things, the designer thought about natural light, so we have lots of glass. But transparent glass is not good for accessibility purpose because people with low vision or even regular people can bump into the glass easily. But more than anything, people with service animals get to work on the building and said service animals will never recognize those doors so very simple examples. And in our new building, we're trying to apply universal design. Best example is automatic doors. They do help people in wheelchairs, but they actually help everybody else because if you're busy with your hands carrying stuff, you benefit from an automatic door. If you are a parent with strollers, you're going to benefit from an automatic door. So that's how in my head, that's how it works, it's something that is going to help everybody else. You need to take the time to think about the people that you're actually serving, your employees or your customers, versus what an accommodation is. And what we're doing with our current building because we never thought about any of those, is lots of different accommodations. Some of our spaces are not accessible so we have a beautiful lounge upstairs that everybody can use and it's mythic, like everybody comes and takes a picture at the swings at Johnston Group but it's a space that can only be accessed through stairs. So the benefits are huge if you start with universal design in mind. For us, we would have to take that whole thing down if we want to make it accessible. So we opted for having a similar space in our building we're building with all these things in mind. I encourage everyone to have this concept at the top of their minds when designing spaces and buying furniture and everything else, because at the end of the day, it benefits everybody else, not just people with disability.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** and I think just to add on to that, to Amber's point, it starts with talking to folks with disabilities and ensuring right at the get-go, at the design phase, that it's going to work. And I think universal design also, you know, as an employer, it's really important that we're talking the talk and doing what we say we're going to do so ensuring just even the wording we use is not ableist and ensuring that we're using inclusive wording and ensuring something we do here, we train everybody on disability. It doesn't matter if it's a have-to in the Employment Standard or one of the standards, everybody gets taught on accessibility here. And I think it's so important, and that's where really universal design starts because then everybody's looking for it and everybody's thinking about it and everybody is, you know, speaking it and removing

catching themselves when they're using ableist wording and understanding how that impacts folks with disabilities.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah, and it helps to inspire other folks when you're seeing those things and hearing that language and just kind of continuing that. Was that Amber or Lisa who was going to? Lisa, okay.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** I think you've got to be careful. When you talk about universal design, I don't think it can be a constant. I think it's something that ever has to change, morph, I think, a key word is adaptability. If somebody were going to write, you know, like they have the computers for dummies, if somebody were going to write a book about universal design for dummies, there would be a volume 1, 2, 3, 4 and it would continue on and on and on and on because everybody is going to have their own individual requirements and needs, and if you try to put it in a box with a bow on top, you're going to fail because somebody is going to get missed in that equation. So it's great to give it a term like "universal design," but I think people may get the wrong impression on, well, as long as I follow this, then I'm good. And to Jaime's point, I've toured Johnston Group years ago, and it was about their space and what not, it was in a previous life, they did an amazing job, don't get me wrong, and I'm really going to be curious to see their new space to see where they've taken it from there, but they've already acknowledged that they didn't get it a hundred percent right and that's my point, that is, you will never get it a hundred percent right because if we did, all people with disabilities or health conditions would all be sustainably employed and we wouldn't be having this conversation today.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** And I just want to provide a real-life example to your point, Lisa, and to Jaime's point. I'm only four feet tall, four feet on a good day, and automatic doors don't work for me. I don't often hit that whatever the threshold is, the sensor, so often I'll be carrying something, and the door just doesn't open. Many, many, many moons ago, I worked at a company where I was in charge of locking up for the night and thought the door was locked, again it was so high, too high for me, I had to stand I wasn't accommodated, I had to stand on many things, thought the door was locked, tried to walk through, it appeared to be locked and the door wasn't locked because I didn't hit the sensor. So to your point, it's evolving. Universal design is not a one-and-done. It's something you have to constantly think about and constantly think there are so many different types of disabilities. So you're not going to hit and get it all right all the time. So you have to be constantly thinking about the people that work in your facility, the people that you're serving, and what are you trying to accomplish.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** I think we all, there has to be, and this will be my last point because I know Amber wants to say something, I think as an employer, because yes, we work with people with disabilities but we're also an employer just like everybody else, there has to be an understanding that there is this thing called undue hardship. We get it. The fact that with some employers, undue hardship will come into play because if they have one person that might be accessing their work space, and maybe it would be a good thing to

make that improvement, whatever that improvement is, but if it's going to cost this small business enterprise 25 or $50,000 to maybe put that accommodation in place, is that an undue hardship and who determines that? And is there a different way? But if you don't have the conversation, they're going to say this is an undue hardship for us, we just can't do this, yes, you're a great person but we can't accommodate you in the workspace, well then why can't they work hybrid? Let's put them at home if, again, it's a possibility. So I think we have to be cognizant of the piece we're trying to do the best we can with what we've got and some of us have a lot more than others and can maybe do more than some of the others. But as long as you're doing your best, I think, in many regards, that's what we have to focus on. And there's always a way.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** And there's always a way.

**Morgan Snape:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Amber Hicks:** I just wanted to add that in there.

**Morgan Snape:** Amber, tag, you're it.

**Amber Hicks:** Oh, no, no, no, just when I hear the term "universal design" I too have some thoughts. For myself, because I have, there's multiple layers to my health conditions, I have been in situations when something's an accommodation for one thing it's a barrier for another within my own body, you know, so I was thinking about these struggles. An example might be, that I can use it right now because I'm looking at it, it's closed captioning, it's great when I have brain fog and I can read it out, because if I can't focus on everything, I can at least read this and this is what people are saying. And then there's days where it's overstimulating. So the universal design itself is the closed captioning but the flexibility within it is being able to turn it off and on when I need it and it's always there because it is not just about me, there are many people that absolutely 100% rely on the closed captioning and so I'm able to work within that. So the big thing about universal design is the flexibility within it and to make myself a little bit feeling better about the idea of universal design and getting over some of my fears about how I personally feel about it so I can effectively help clients and employers talk about it was I did a little bit of research and if nobody minds that I add in the chat, I came across, it's called "universal design 101" and it's about seven principles about universal design. It's from the Rick Hansen Foundation. I thought it was a good starting point so I'm going to put it in the chat if nobody minds and then us and the 173 other people that aren't making me nervous can take a look at it.

**Morgan Snape:** Brilliant. Thank you, Amber. I love that you all kind of highlighted that really universal design is kind of, it's still, it's not a one-all, but it should be done in partnership with individual accommodations of kind of, yeah, what comes to mind when I think of accommodations and universal design is like those build your own stories that we had growing up where you kind of had options and it was your choice and what that it's all there rather than simply having that blanket statement, well, if you need accommodations or, you know, yeah, keep going back to that same example. Perfect.

Thank you, guys, for sharing, that was really great. My next question, you all kind of answered but I'll leave it hanging just in case. So in follow up, what benefits have each of you seen as a result of the utilization of universal design or accommodations? It's one thing to speak of benefits in theory and another to speak of them from experience. So I know you guys' kind of highlighted a couple of the downfalls to universal design. Does anyone have anything to add on that before we move on to the next?

**Amber Hicks:** I'll share a quick story. I think it's an example of universal design. It is a situation that kind of led to everything working for everybody. But there's a workplace situation we had going on a couple years ago, the workspace somebody needed to work off a table and they found that the height that it was at, it was too low, and it aggravated their chronic pain. So the simple solution was build a platform, this is a work environment, there was wood everywhere, they knocked it together really quickly and put it in. It was light weight, easily removable. And they found a lot of people and said, you know what, that does help me, this is working out really well, you know, and then the question came of like but it's going to be too high and what if somebody's here that can't lift the table platform, so it led to there being multiple work stations, a variety of tables where everybody can kind of pick and choose, you know. So it itself wasn't a universal design but it led to a universal idea of everything being everybody being able to work at the station no matter what they had to do. This particular task was folding laundry but they're like we need tables for all kinds of projects and things like that, why not have them at all different levels, and this doesn't have to be a laundry table anymore, as long as we keep it clean, anything can be a laundry table, you know, those kinds of things. So just an example of where this whole what do we do became a very simple solution, you know.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah. It's a great example. And how sometimes accommodations, you don't have to go out and buy the $4,000 standing desk that is adjustable but what kind of easier hacks are there for that, and I mean folks with disabilities are really great at coming up with those. So it's really just involving them.

**Amber Hicks:** I was just going to say there's, you know, nobody accommodates us more than ourselves, right?

**Lisa Dabrowski:** We can be pretty creative. One other thing I would suggest is that... And Amber touched on this earlier, it's about reaching out to other community partners or agencies. We will sometimes say we're experts in the field.

We're experts in what we've dealt with. However, and I'm going to blow our own horn right now, because we're funded partly two projects, one's private, one's provincial, we can actually help employers who are willing to on board our clients with some of the accommodation needs and unless employers are aware that there are organizations not just REES but organizations out there that if you tap into their resources and their participants or clients, you may get some assistance with those accommodation needs and it may not become something that is a barrier to the employer and it may be

something that, you know, isn't going to help just one person, it may help multiple people. So I think it's about doing your homework.

As an employer and as a job seeker, do your homework, check out organizations and community partners and agencies and find out exactly who's out there and what services do they provide. And, you know, is it within their capacity to help you and assist you with this journey. You don't necessarily have to do it alone and I know that that's something amber and I have experienced for many years, is the lack of self confidence and self esteem because they have been fighting and struggling with this on their own for so long that they don't know that there's people out there that are willing to champion for you, we're willing to work with you, give you some guidance, some tips, some tools, resources and maybe, just maybe help you get that role or at least a starting point because you've got to start somewhere.

**Morgan Snape:** Absolutely, yeah. I always say there's a lot of times not a need to reinvent the wheel. So it's kind of just going to what is already out there and getting creative.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** And it's exhausting to have to advocate for yourself all the time as a person with a disability. Exhausting. Yeah. And often, I'm speaking for myself as a person with a physical disability, you get in your head and you don't want to appear as high maintenance and you want to appear as average and so you'll often, you know, talk yourself out of saying what you need.

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** And I think universal design has broadened the conversation and made it more acceptable and has more folks talking about it but I have been in many workplaces where not many workplaces, but I have been in places where I have said what my accommodation need is and I have been met with, well, here's your stool, everything else is too expensive. Or I have also had the great pleasure of working at places like where I am right now where, you know, you need this ergonomic chair that only goes to this size that we can only get in the U.S., no problem, we want to accommodate you. I was part of a workplace, a startup several years ago where they brought me in at the design phase of the building and accommodated me right from the building part of it, beyond the code. So it's really cultural, and I think universal design has made it so that folks that don't often think about disability or accessibility, they're talking about it and they're thinking about it more. And so for that, I am really grateful.

**Morgan Snape:** Yeah, I love that, and that's now tying it back for them to still be including those accommodation options and still looking to continue to engage. So thank you all for sharing. We will just skip the last question as we've got a couple of questions that have trickled in here on this last on your last answers. So thank you again for sharing. I believe Maria was going to answer or ask some of these questions.

**Maria Ferraro:** Sure. So one question is what accommodations can you consider for staff working from home when you have staff celebrations and appreciation at in-person gatherings?

**Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk:** For myself and for where we are, do it on zoom. You can pretty much have any celebration that's on zoom and do something or teams and do something virtually that everybody can join from wherever they are, including the folks here, don't make it an in-person celebration, put it on zoom and have fun with it.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** and I actually remember participating in one, I think it may have been during COVID, where everybody got a gift card for Skip or whatever it was, and it became an online event but they still had the food and beverages and they had games so whether you, you know again if it was a COVID scenario which that will probably never happen again, but if you've got that split audience where some is zoom/teams or in-person, you can still accommodate. It's, again, start asking them how can we accommodate you? There are ways.

**Amber Hicks:** We also did that bingo game, do you remember, with united way?

**Lisa Dabrowski:** yes, yes.

**Amber Hicks:** We did that great and that was one of the lunches, too, so that definitely was we did that during covid for sure. And there was a whole like united way had done this set up this whole bingo game that we could do with or whatever it was before, there was some great tool, now slide-o is what everybody uses but there was something else before and I can't remember what it was. There's lots of those apps and activities you can do online that everybody can participate in for sure.

**Amber Hicks:** Yeah.

**Morgan Snape:** Love that. Thanks for sharing those examples. Amber?

**Amber Hicks:** I was just going to say I totally know what it's like. I worked in restaurants forever, I can imagine what that's like with a disability, I won't get into that, and I did that for 25 years and came out the other side but there was a lot of the staff party is bowling. That's great.

Can't go, you know. Those kinds of things. So yeah, making sure that it's inclusive for everybody is super important.

**Morgan Snape:** Absolutely.

**Maria Ferraro:** Another question is what are some components to building accessible workplaces that you are finding lacking?

**Lisa Dabrowski:** I think we've got to be a little careful in answering that particular question simply because we by no means profess to be experts as far as that is actually concerned. That comes down often, like we said, if it's, and I'm assuming we're talking about actually building something. If it's an existing building, they could be

grandfathered the way they are and nothing's going to happen. And if they are building sort of ground up or going through large renovations, the city of Winnipeg issues the permits and they're the ones that should be managing that piece. So for us to sit here and say, well, this is wrong, and this is wrong, and this is wrong, we all would get ourselves into hot water either.

**Morgan Snape:** Does anyone have any suggestions to evade the hot water while still

**Jaime Chinchilla:** I can go back to part of what I shared earlier in that I wished we had done the audit that we did with our current building was nothing but having a bunch of people living with disabilities walk the building up and down several times and taking notes.

And I wish they had done that when designing the building, I'm not going to talk about, because, yes, going into legislation or what is lacking in terms of city permits and all of that, I also don't want to go there. But attitude and culture wise, include people in the whole process from the beginning. That would have made a difference for our building here. It's making a difference now. It's making a difference for the next building that we're building for sure.

**Morgan Snape:** I love that.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** It's really interesting that you said that because I'm actually looking at one of the questions here and I know Amber and I kind of went, maybe we don't want to touch this particular subject, but the question is there and it's about the city on transit.

And we know and I don't bus; I live outside the city so that's kind of out of my realm. Amber lives in the city and definitely relies on me or the buses.

They have those consultations. They spoke to many, many, many, many people.

**Amber Hicks:** I was one of them.

**Lisa Dabrowski:** Amber being one of them, and basically a lot of what was put out there as being this is going to create issues actually was ignored and has created problems.

As an example, we're located at 1200 portage avenue. We used to have a bus stop 15 steps maybe from our front door. It was great for people with disabilities because they weren't required they could either just directly cross the street and come in or the bus stop is outside, and they could come in. That bus stop is moved three blocks down.

How did that help? It hasn't. It's created more issues, more problems because of our accessibility now is creating problems for clients that we're supposed to be helping. Amber, I'm almost afraid to open the door for you on this one.

**Amber Hicks:** Yeah, you should be. No, no. It is a huge concern. We saw that today, all it takes is a little bit of rain for everybody to be almost a half hour late, you know. See what the winter's going to bring. It's the locations of the bus stops, it's the structure of

them, it's the timing of them, and how so many of them end so early at night. I'm a good girl these days and go to bed pretty early. Buses are still  but they don't run long  stop running long after I go to bed from what I'm hearing for the most part. It's a big problem and I do have to wonder how this was rolled out with there being a transportation standard. Like I don't know how that happened.

And that's all I gotta say.

**Morgan Snape:** Yep, yep.

**Amber Hicks:** They cut, what, 1200 bus stops, how did that help the situation?

**Morgan Snape:** Well, and I think that really draws us, I think it draws us back to it's a really great point to kind of be concluding on, is that it brings us back to what we really started with of that commitment to ensuring that cultural change in that you're not just checking the boxes, you're not just, you know, we're saying we'll invite disabled people to the table to have those consultations and it's not just about having those consultations, it's about really doing something meaningful with them and really listening and continually engaging and working with folks and really working to amplify their voices and not just  really not just checking the boxes is, yeah, that accessibility is about so much more. So I think that it's really great  it's a great point for us to end on. So thank you all for participating in this panel.

I'm really excited and honoured to have had the opportunity to host this. Like I said, initially, disability in the workplace is something that's really personal to me and I'm really passionate about it so I made a point to really stretch my practicum into the fall to be able to participate in this. So it's been really great to get to hear from all of you.

So thank you very much.

Panelists say thank you.

**Morgan Snape:** I will just pass it back over to Maria for a few updates from the Manitoba Accessibility Office.

**Maria Ferraro:** This was a great discussion. Thanks, morgan. Super interesting. Just a few additional webinars I want to highlight before we go. On November 25th, we will celebrate Indigenous Disability Awareness Month with the webinar from 1 to 2:30 in the afternoon, entitled “Sharing our stories:  a conversation on accessibility indigenous identity and community.” This webinar features an insightful discussion between Indigenous author Frances Sinclair Kaspick, who's on this call right now, and media personality Shaneen Robinson, as they explore their personal stories, lived experiences and perspectives to find community. And then also on December 3rd from 1 to 2:30 p.m., we will celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities with a webinar round table discussion on past successful Manitoba Accessibility Fund grant projects and celebrating the people with disabilities putting in the work to make these projects effective. And before we go, I want to send my heart felt appreciation and gratitude to all

those involved today in making this happen. Thank you to Frances, the Minister and our panellists, also to Morgan. You all did a great job. I'd also like to thank our interpreters and our captioner for your professional work. And my gratitude to the team at the Manitoba Accessibility Office for your hard work and dedication organizing and running these webinars. And thanks, everyone, for taking the time to join us.

We know that's a long time in the day to be listening to something like this, so we appreciate you. And if you had questions that we didn't get to, please contact our office and we can follow up. And all webinar recordings will be available on accessibilityMB.ca in a couple of weeks so just check back with us. Webinars are located under the resources and training tab, then select awareness dates, and past events are also located there so you can access all of that information. And please subscribe to our newsletter, Accessibility News for monthly updates from our office and if you have any feedback or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us by phone at 204 945 7613 or through our email at mao@gov.mb.ca. And thank you again for joining and happy Disability Employment Awareness Month. Thank you. Take care.