SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
STANDARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
9:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M., WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2017
6TH FLOOR, 200 GRAHAM AVENUE
DXC TECHNOLOGY

Present: Lisa Snider (Chairperson), Tanis Woodland, Doris Koop, Jim Hounslow, Carol Bartmanovich, Tony Sailor (Substitute), Paul Knapp, Allen Mankewich, John Wyndels (DIO)

Regrets: Jeff Buhse

1. CHAIRPERSON REMARKS

Four members of the Information and Communications (IC) committee met with Barrier-Free Manitoba and authors from Pitblado Law on November 1 to discuss their prepared jurisdictional scan regarding a potential information and communication standard being established in Manitoba under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA). The document had been shared with the IC committee prior to the meeting. There were a number of issues that required clarification.

It is important that the committee see representatives that have contributions to make to this discussion, such as members of the Deaf and Hard to Hear and Cognitive organizations. In addition, a preliminary public forum will be held to gather further input regarding a proposed IC standard. It would be a targeted public forum, which we would like to conduct in December.

The Chairperson also spoke in a conference call amongst provincial/federal/territorial offices on issues relating to accessibility and disability. These are regularly scheduled conference calls initiated to share information. The focus of this discussion was IC standards being developed in Manitoba and Ontario.

The proposed MB Employment Standard has been posted for a second phase of public comment. The committee will discuss the proposed standard to see if there are areas of overlap.

As has been mentioned previously, WCAG is going through different iterations. Things are changing on the ground as well as with screen readers having to be reactive to rapid changes in technology.

The committee has discussed content and the delivery of content. The third phase is production of content or authoring. Authoring can include content management systems, editors, HR systems, etc. The fourth phase is procurement, or the purchasing of content, delivery and/or authoring, such as when buying course ware from a publisher.

When something is said to be made accessible, what does that mean? Accessibility checkers only go so far. There are always things that they are going to miss. Recently, the government sent out a number of documents that were thought to be accessible, but were proven to be inaccessible for a number of individuals. There is an assumption about using a mouse to access websites, but a lot of people don't.

We then spoke of functional performance requirements, which requires an assessment of digital or print accessibility from a disability standpoint. Technology is always changing. Disability is a constant. There will always be people who can't see. There will always be people that can't hear. There will always be people who can't move all their extremities. Functional performance requirements asks fundamental questions, such as "If a person can't see, can they still use it?" or "if a person can't hear, can they still use it?" Organizations prove compliance by providing alternate methods to access the digital or print content, delivery, authoring or procurement in question.

Functional requirements adds an element of usability. It becomes less of a check list and puts the focus on people instead. The Committee felt this would simplify things, and possibly give more choices, options and inspire more creativity. If it's not functional to the user, it is not accessible. With functional requirements, you don't get frozen in time.

How do we apply functional requirements to the physical world? In Section 508 of the European Union access practices, they applied to websites. Would we apply functional requirements to the physical world in this standard? The Committee agreed that the functional requirements would apply to print.

The Committee then discussed how we would deal with enforcement and compliance, in terms of whether we use standards. Also discussed were timelines for legacy and archived materials, and whether just a reference to alternative format would solve the issue of timelines for these kinds of materials.

The meeting adjourned shortly before 12:00 p.m. It was determined the committee will met again on Wednesday, December 7th at 9:30 a.m. at DXC Technology, 6th Floor, 200 Graham Avenue.