



## Webinar Transcript: Monday May 27, 2024

### Webinar #1: Kick-Off to Manitoba Access Awareness Week Featuring an Overview of Requirements Under the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation

Darren Macdonald: It looks like everybody's logged in. So hello, everyone. And officially, welcome to our kick-off event to celebrate Manitoba Access Awareness Week or MAAW. My name is Darren Macdonald and I'm the Executive Director of the Manitoba Accessibility Office, so thank you all for joining. Today is our first webinar.

Darren Macdonald: I guess I can describe myself. I'm a middle-aged white male in my late 40s. I only have a little bit longer to say that. And shaved head and sort of a permanent five o'clock shadow.

Darren Macdonald: So hopefully lots of you know about MAAW. If you don't, the goal of MAAW is to promote an understanding of disability issues and to recognize the dedicated individuals working towards the elimination and prevention of accessibility barriers. So, we really try our best to provide information but also keep it very celebratory and acknowledge a lot of the fine work that's going on in Manitoba. And it is also a time to reaffirm Manitoba's commitment to The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the development and implementation of five accessibility standards. And, in Manitoba, these standards are in the areas of accessible customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation, and a forthcoming standard on accessible outdoor spaces. So today, Minister Fontaine will talk a little bit more about the purpose of MAAW in her opening remarks. But, first, I'd like to tell you what is planned for today and for the week in general. So, the focus on today's event is on achieving accessible information and communication, and throughout the week, we're going to host four webinars focusing on different aspects of the Accessible Information and Communication Standard.

So today is one and there's three more events this week so hopefully you can join us for those. More information to come about time and dates and that sort of thing. But I wanted to speak a bit about the history of MAAW and so since 2010, Manitoba has acknowledged the National Accessibility Week as well as Manitoba Access Awareness Week to raise awareness about

accessible barriers in Manitoba. And since 2013, our office, the Manitoba Accessibility Office, has hosted MAAW events that include information and training for organizations that must comply with the act and its standards.

Darren Macdonald: So, before we get going, let me jump into a couple of housekeeping items. If you're new to the webinar sort of forum, something technical will go wrong. It always does. So, on your end, if you need to reboot and come back in, you may need to do that or just close out, come back in. So, bear with us. We have folks behind the scenes trying to deal with technical difficulties as they come up. And so, if you do need assistance, you can email us, and our email address is [mao@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mao@gov.mb.ca).

[Mao@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mao@gov.mb.ca), and our folks will try to assist you. You'll notice you're muted and both microphones and videos are turned off. When you join the call, this just helps keep the background noise and visuals to a minimum so there's fewer distractions and it helps with our zoom recording.

One of the things we do is we spotlight and pin the presenters as they come on and the captioner as well as the ASL interpreters for your convenience. So, there are a few accessibility and language features on zoom, so to access live closed captioning, there's an icon at the bottom right of the page with two letter Cs. Click on that icon to activate subtitles. And for ASL interpretation, click on the globe icon which is also at the bottom right side of the page, and you can select American Sign Language. Also just wanted everyone to know that the webinar is being recorded and we will have a recording and the webinar transcript available along with a question-and-answer document posted to our website [accessibilitymb.ca](http://accessibilitymb.ca) and it will be on our website as soon as possible. So, we welcome your questions. Please feel free. If you can, type them into the chat or question box. You'll find it at the bottom of the screen, and you can also email us during the webinar, if that's more convenient. If you think of a question, a burning question tonight, feel free to contact us any time because we're here to answer those questions. As I say, we will post -- we'll get to as many questions as we can, if there are questions, and if we're unable to get to all of them, we'll answer them in that question-and-answer document that will be on our website. At the conclusion of the webinar, you will also be able to complete a short feedback survey on zoom as well. So, as I indicated, MAO will be hosting four webinars throughout the week and today's kick-off event is an overview of requirements under the Accessible Information and Communications Standard Regulation.

So, I think most folks hopefully know that Manitoba has accessibility legislation. We have an act, and we have a number of regulations under that act, and we're very fortunate that across Canada, more and more provinces are enacting their own legislation, and I think pretty soon, the federal government and all provinces will have accessibility legislation. So, this is the focus of today, and the week is really about our Information and Communication Standard.

So today, we'll have Ministers greetings followed by a blessing from Vern Dano who is an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper. We have a land acknowledgment from Colleen Watters coming up, and then we will jump into our keynote presentation related to the compliance obligations for the Information and Communication Standard by Monika from the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat. And we're also going to profile a video that we put together, and we'll show the video on the IC Standard, and overcoming barriers to accessible information and communication. So, we are pleased to see that so many people are on the call today. I think last I saw, we were over 140 or so, so that's great, and thank you again for taking the time out of your day and joining us. And as I say, I encourage you to tune in to some of our events or others that are going on this week, and your participation and engagement, it's great to see. But it's also really crucial for advancing accessibility across the province.

Darren Macdonald: So now I'm going to just do a quick poll before we jump into the webinar and our keynote speaker today, just curious to have you, if you're able, the question we're just looking to see is have you attended a previous Manitoba Accessibility Office event? We would like to know. Those of you who have attended a webinar in the past or no, this is your first time attending a MAO event, so we do our best to raise awareness and broaden our audience, particularly this week. Some of the events are really of interest to anybody in manitoba, and some get a bit specific, if you're a web designer or web coordinator, you may want to attend some of our more technical webinars later in the week. So just giving everyone a minute to answer. I'm curious myself what the results are.

I think it's usually a bit of a mix. Oh, great.

A lot of first timers. 65% said no, this is your first time attending a MAO event.

Welcome. It's great to see so many new faces out there and 35% said, yes, you've attended before. So big thank you to you as well. And we hope to have many more webinars and information sessions and information to pass along. So, stay tuned.

Darren Macdonald: Without further ado, now I'd like to introduce Colleen Watters.

Colleen is a policy analyst here at the Manitoba Accessibility Office and she has been asked and graciously agreed to give a land acknowledgment to start us off today. So over to you, colleen. Sorry, we just need to unmute colleen and get her camera going.

Colleen Watters: Welcome, everyone, to our Manitoba access awareness week webinar kick-off event. I am Colleen Watters, Policy Analyst with the Manitoba Accessibility Office, MAO. I am proud to be here today to present the land acknowledgment on behalf of the MAO and Accessibility Compliance Secretariat, ACS. 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.

On behalf of the MAO and ACS, I would like to further acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and that Manitoba is located on the homeland of the Red River Metis.

As we gather in celebration of Manitoba Access Awareness Week, we recognize the advances Canada has made to improve accessibility while also acknowledging that work needs to continue. The disability rate is much higher for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Far too often, Indigenous peoples with disabilities face barriers within their daily lives. The MAO and ACS strive to improve accessibility with the full implementation of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act or AMA. We respect the spirit and intent of 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.

Darren Macdonald: Great, thank you, Colleen. It's certainly a good time to sort of recommit and think about our role in reconciliation, and further to that, I'd like to welcome Vern Dano. He is an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper who we've invited to provide an opening blessing to our event and really to our week. Vern!

Vern Dano: Good afternoon. Testing. Loud and clear? Awesome.

Vern Dano: Well, hello, everybody. Good afternoon. First off, I'd like to say thank you very much for the land acknowledgment. I truly appreciated the detail that was done.

As a Knowledge Keeper and, keeping that role for a number of years, I identify myself as a Non-Status Anishinaabe from a Metis community called Mallard, Manitoba. I've done lots of work in the community with disabilities of all types, and the biggest thing that I'd like to share is working with kindness, love, and looking at it as not problems but challenges. Today, I want you to take a step back within yourself, everybody, quieten your heart, quieten your mind, quieten your spirit. Listen to those old bones that are inside you with all that infinite wisdom that you carry. Within the Treaty One territory and all the rest of Manitoba with all our different treaties, it's important to know that the land is awakening right now.

What is awakening within you? Springtime is my new year where I start to prepare for the winter so spring, summer, fall as an industrialist person, I start preparing for my mental state for the winter because it's a hard time. We lose people at every season, and I always say give thanks that you made it through winter. And I hope you make it through with your family through the springtime.

The spring! I want you to take time to spend not only with your loved ones but even those that drive you crazy and those that make you upset and whatnot. They teach us many lessons. I

want you to think about your children, your grandchildren, think about those that are struggling on the streets, in the jails, those with mental health issues that are compounded by addictions and so forth.

Take time to use that kindness and love in the work that you do. Every day, if you did greet today, do better tomorrow, everyone, but most of all, all of you that are listening today, are you getting your rest?

Are you eating well? Are you coping with your own stress to provide good quality work for the communities that you serve and the families that you love? I want you to know that it's important, every action you make is a ripple effect to what is your journey of life. So, if there's someone out there that really needs a call or a text or email and all that stuff that young people do, TikTok and all that, you know, communicate with them, and just say hello, how are you doing?

And there's an old teaching we have, say there's someone you just don't get along with, it's okay to just say hello to them, because maybe they might come out of whatever their challenge is and that's where we start building a community that has more harmony in it. So, in closing, folks, I give thanks for each and every one of you today. Know that the positions you carry are entrusted to you to do good-quality work. If you're not feeling well in your job, challenge yourself to find out why, do good work for those that we serve. And with that, I say miigwech.

Thank you very much, everyone. And in closing, I just want to say my last name is pronounced Day-No. We like to tease, eh, so thank you very much.

Have a great workshop this week, everybody. Miigwech.

Darren Macdonald: Thank you, Vern Dano, I will probably mispronounce your name again so let me apologize in the future for future me. And thank you for that.

Those were great words. I will admit I try not to listen to these old bones, but I will take your advice and I will listen to them and be grateful for what they do for me. So next up, thanks, Vern, next up we have greetings from the Honourable Nahanni Fontaine, Minister responsible for Accessibility, which is a big and important portfolio for her, so Nahanni Fontaine was first elected as MLA for St. John's in 2016. She is a member of Saugeen Anishinaabe First Nation, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and International Development from the University of Winnipeg, as well as a master's degree in Native Studies, Women's Studies, and Critical Theory from the University of Manitoba. Minister Fontaine is globally recognized for her expertise in missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirited individuals, Indigenous Women's Rights, Indigenous police relations and gender equality.

So, before we hear from Minister Fontaine, I'd just like to sort of explain the context we're in

because an election was called in Manitoba so our original agenda for today was to include information and an announcement related to this year's recipients of the Manitoba Accessibility Fund. However, because of the election period, we're in a bit of a publication ban and we're not able to announce new funding or new grant recipients until after the election. So you'll hear, because the Minister recorded her message a couple of weeks prior, you'll hear her reference the Manitoba Accessibility Fund and, again, that's just because we were going to have more information about that so I apologize that we're unable to do that today but, again, it's just because of the election period and us wanting to respect those rules. So now greetings from Minister Fontaine.

Minister Fontaine: As Manitoba's Minister responsible for Accessibility, I am pleased to recognize May 26th to June 1st, 2024, as Manitoba Access Awareness Week. On behalf of the Province of Manitoba, I'm honoured to bring greetings and welcome the many champions of accessibility and members of Manitoba's disability community.

Each year, Manitoba Access Awareness Week takes place simultaneously with National Accessibility Week.

Our government is committed to building a more accessible Manitoba.

This year, the \$20-million Manitoba Accessibility Fund will award grants up to \$50,000 to assist Manitoba municipalities, post-secondary institutions, non-profit organizations, and businesses in improving accessibility across the province. I wish to congratulate the organizations receiving funding in 2024.

During this week, from May 27th to 31st, 2024, the Manitoba Accessibility Office will host a series of four webinars. Today, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat will present an overview of compliance obligations for the Accessible Information and Communications Standard. You will also have an opportunity to view a video put together by the Manitoba Accessibility Office that addresses the importance of removing barriers. A second webinar will focus on the requirements for making accessible websites and how to work with web developers to create accessible websites. The third webinar will deal with accessible pdfs and word documents and writing for the web while a fourth will offer information on how to conduct accessibility audits.

The Manitoba Government is demonstrating our commitment to accessibility by developing and implementing the five accessibility standards. Standards in accessible customer service, accessible employment, accessible information and communication, and accessible transportation are now enacted with a fifth standard in development addressing the accessibility of outdoor public spaces.

As we celebrate our progress and reaffirm our dedication to support persons with disabilities and advance accessibility throughout the Province, I would like to say miigwech to all of our presenters for sharing their knowledge and for you all attending. Our government believes in accessibility and inclusivity, and we know that these are essential, core values for a future where we have one Manitoba accessible to all. I look forward to our continuing work in building a more accessible future for all Manitobans.

Miigwech.

Darren Macdonald: Great, thank you, Minister. So, before I introduce our speaker for today, Monika from the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat, we're just going to jump into a second poll question. So, in the first one, we heard that 65% of you are new to these events, which is great. And now we would like a little bit of information just to know sort of where you're from or what you're affiliated with, so the type of organization that you're with. Are you working with, employed or volunteer at the government, public sector, are you with business, with non-profit, are you retired, a student or do none of those quite capture your role, so there's some other category there, too. We'll give it a minute.

For folks to answer. Not sure if I'm allowed to answer., beef up the government public sector stats a little bit if I can.

We'll put Monika on notice that she's up in one minute and thank you all again for joining us for Manitoba Access Awareness Week and devoting some time to this today. So hopefully folks are answering, and we can get a bit of a flavour for where folks are from.

Looks like the poll is complete. And an overwhelming number seem to be from government public sector, which is great, good to see so many folks online. A second place goes to the non-profit sector, silver medal, great job. And then business, 9% and some others.

So, thank you very much for taking time to give us that information. It helps us know who's on the call and plan for future events. So, thank you.

Darren Macdonald: So now up, I'd like to introduce our speaker for today. Monika is from the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat and she's going to provide an overview of the work of her office as well as the Accessible Information and Communication Standard and discuss the ASC requirements and compliance. So welcome, Monika, and we'll put the floor over to you. We can see your presentation. Just give us a minute to unmute and get Monika with us.

Monika Bonsor: Hi, I'm unmuted. I'm just looking at sharing my screen.

Not the screen, video is what I'm looking at. There you go. Okay. We'll get there.

(Start video.)

Darren Macdonald: Yes, we can see you, hear you and see your presentation.

Monika Bonsor: oh, great. Hi, everybody. Welcome. My name is Monika Bonsor and I'm an Accessibility Compliance Officer with the Manitoba Government Accessibility Compliance Secretariat. Today I'm going to be doing a presentation about requirements under the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation which is currently coming into force across the province.

So, I usually do a bit of a disclaimer at the beginning of presentations. So please note that accessibility requirements may change and/or increase as accessibility standards are passed or amended. The information in this presentation complements the application of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards and is not legal advice. For certainty, please refer to the Act and regulations directly.

So, this is an overview of my presentation. We're going to review Manitoba's accessibility legislation. I'll talk a bit about my office, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat and what our role is. Then we'll get into the nitty gritty, the details of the requirements of the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation. And then I'll talk a little bit about resources that are available to support compliance.

Monika Bonsor: The Accessibility for Manitobans Act was enacted in 2013. And it's in place to identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation encountered by Manitobans. A barrier can be anything that prevents somebody with a disability from participating in society on an equal basis. The Act also provides the legislative framework to develop regulated accessibility standards.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act also builds on the principles of the Manitoba Human Rights Code. I won't get too much into the other standards, as I know Darren and the Minister have already introduced the various areas. So today, we're really focusing on accessible information and communication.

Monika Bonsor: The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat was established in 2019 and our role is to promote compliance with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its regulated standards as well as monitor and enforce compliance in the province. We conduct reviews and inspections to monitor compliance in all sectors. We investigate accessibility complaints and concerns. We enforce compliance through education, collaboration, and sanctions. This framework uses a progressive approach to compliance that aims to reduce the use of punitive enforcement actions. If an organization is found to be not complying, the first step is to provide education to support the organization to comply.



Educating into compliance, the goal is really to encourage and promote compliance with accessibility legislation. Sanctions such as written orders to comply and signs are a last resort of the compliance framework.

Monika Bonsor: The Accessible Information and Communication Standard is the third regulated accessibility standard under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. It requires that organizations create an act on policies, practises, and measures that identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessing information or communicating. This may involve but is not limited to the utilization of accessible formats and communication supports. This regulation is currently coming into force across Manitoba.

Monika Bonsor: As of May 1st, 2023, the Manitoba Government has had to comply with a requirement for the regulation and just earlier this month, May 1st, 2024, designated organizations such as educational institutions, libraries, health authorities, cities, and certain government agencies have had to comply. On May 1st, 2025, the public sector, non-profit sector, and municipalities that are towns, villages or rural municipalities will need to comply with the standard as well. So, it will be fully in force as of May 1st, 2025.

Monika Bonsor: We're going to talk a lot about accessible formats and communication supports. So, I'll give a bit of an introduction to what those are for those who might not be aware.

Monika Bonsor: Accessible formats provide information in a way that is accessible to people disabled by barriers. They're also referred to as alternate formats. So, if I use the word "alternate format," I mean an accessible format. Examples of accessible formats include documents in large print or Braille, plain language, recorded audio, text transcripts of audio or visual information, and documents that are formatted to be usable with a screen reader. Communication supports facilitate communication between two or more people and help organizations to effectively communicate with a wide audience. Examples include Sign Language Interpretation, screen reader technology, captioning, video relay services, and adaptive or assistive technology.

Monika Bonsor: Requirements of the information and communication standard include specific requirements for educational institutions and libraries, and these requirements focus on information that's provided through education materials or library resources, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later in the presentation. Exceptions may apply to requirements under the different sections that I'll talk about. And I'll review exceptions throughout the presentation as well.

Monika Bonsor: General requirements that will apply to all organizations in Manitoba will be covered first. So, the first requirement is to inform the public and employees of an organization that information is available in accessible formats and through communication supports.

And often a good way to do this would be on your website, alerting the public to the fact that accessible information can be requested or through an active offer on a document that lets people know that they can request an accessible format of the document. When a request is received by an organization, the requirement is to consult with the person making the request to identify the support or format that would remove the barrier. And this is an important step.

Everybody has their own means and their own experiences. Don't assume what format or support would remove a barrier for somebody, just ask them. Once an organization has consulted with a person making a request, the requirement is to provide the information through the identified format or support in a timely manner. The regulation doesn't specify what exactly or what exactly a timely manner would be.

Some requests will be easier to respond to such as providing a copy of a document in a larger font. But some requests may take a little bit more time to provide such as if a document's requested in Braille, you might need to send that to another organization to have it printed or if a request is made to have let's say video content, a transcript of it interpreted into ASL for an individual. Most importantly, on this slide, do not impose a cost or fee for providing an information through a communication support or ultimate format. So that cost should not be passed on to the person that is making the request for accessible information.

Monika Bonsor: Another requirement that will apply to all organizations is to have a process in place to receive and respond promptly to feedback including complaints about the accessibility of information and communication. Organizations must also document the actions taken to respond to the feedback received and make that documentation available upon request to the person that provided the feedback.

Monika Bonsor: There are some exceptions that may apply to requests for providing information through an accessible format or communication support and these exceptions include: If it's not technically feasible to provide the information through the requested support or format, if the technology required to provide the information is not readily available, if providing the information through the requested support or format would say result in demonstrable undue hardship on the organization, the organization does not have direct control over the information or if the information relates to product labels or other product information. And it's important that, as an organization, if you're examining whether an exception would apply to a request, to make sure that there's evidence to support the exception and how your specific organization applies.

Monika Bonsor: Next, we'll talk a bit about accessible web content.

So, Manitoba has chosen to adopt international web accessibility guidelines in our regulations and these guidelines are developed by an organization called the World Wide Web Consortium or W3C. This is an international community that develops open standards to ensure long-term

growth of the web. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or WCAG, were developed by the W3C in cooperation with individuals and organizations around the world.

The goal is to provide a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organizations, and governments internationally. WCAG guidelines continue to evolve over the years and continue to be updated by the W3C.

Monika Bonsor: Manitoba's Accessibility Standard for Information and Communication requires organizations to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA.

WCAG guidelines are available for free on the W3C website. So, if you're on the W3C website, you'll want to look for the WCAG2 Quick Reference Tool and then you can sort by the level of 2.1 Level AA which is what's required here in Manitoba.

Monika Bonsor: Organizations that do not have the in-house expertise to make updates are still required to comply with this legal requirement. A professional such as a web developer, web designer or digital designer may be best situated to assist organizations to meet WCAG compliance.

Accessible web content includes any information that is published on the internet website of an organization in Manitoba.

Web content must meet WCAG 2.1 level AA if one or both of the following apply: if the web content is required to access the organization's goods and services or if the web content is newly published on or after the compliance deadline.

Historical content on your organization's website that is not required to access goods and services such as old newsletters or blog posts do not need to be updated to WCAG 2.1 Level AA under the regulation, but your organization does still need to be prepared to respond to specific requests for historical web content through an accessible format or communication support.

Some organizations are required to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA on intranet or internal websites. So, these organizations include the Manitoba Government, educational institutions, libraries, health authorities, cities, and designated government agencies. For all other organizations, having intranet or internal websites updated to WCAG 2.1 Level AA would be considered a promising practice but not required by regulation.

Monika Bonsor: Accessible web applications also have requirements under the Accessible Information and Communication Standard, and web applications are defined as software that is run on a web server and accessed through a web browser. Web-based applications must meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA if the application is newly published on us after the compliance deadline

for the organization or if the application receives a significant update on or after the standard comes into force. Significant updates change the functionality, user base or purpose of an application. And mobile applications are not included in the standard and do not need to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA, although that would also be considered a promising practice. A common type of web-based application is an E-Commerce application, so these applications facilitate online buying or selling, and functionalities include using product catalogues, products search and filtering, shopping carts and payment processes. Educational platforms are another example of a web-based application.

Monika Bonsor: There are some exceptions that may apply to organizations who need to meet web content and application requirements. So organizations are not required to wcag 2.1 aa if one or more of the following apply: If it is not technically feasible for the content or application to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA, if the technology required to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA is not readily available, if meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA would result in demonstrable undue hardship on the organization, if the organization does not have direct control over the web content or application or if the content or application relates to product labels or other product information. And again, if an organization feels that a web exception applies to their specific circumstance, it would be important to be able to demonstrate through evidence that an exception has been met.

Monika Bonsor: Training requirements are included in the regulation. Organizations in Manitoba are required to provide accessible communication training to employees, agents, and volunteers who are responsible for the applicable duties. So, the people in the organization that need to be trained are those who provide information directly to the public or to other organizations in Manitoba on behalf of the organization they work for.

In addition, those who develop or maintain web content, those who purchase or procure information technology or communication tools, those who develop or implement the organization's accessible information and communication emails and practises, and educators at educational institutions need to receive training. Training needs to include How to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessible communication, how to provide information through a communication support or alternate format, a review of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation and a review of the Manitoba Human Rights Code. Training must be provided as soon as reasonably possible to applicable persons and organizations must provide ongoing training when there are changes to the organization's accessible information and communication policies, practises, and measures. Organizations are free to develop their own in-house training but there's also a free online training module that meets the minimum training requirements of the regulation that's available through the Accessibility for Manitobans Act on-line learning portal, [AMALearningMB.ca](http://AMALearningMB.ca).

Monika Bonsor: There are policy documentation requirements included in the regulation and some organizations in Manitoba are required to keep a written record of accessible information and communication and training policies, a summary of training materials offered, and when training is offered. Organizations with policy documentation requirements must inform the public that accessibility and training policies are available on request. Organizations that must document policies under the regulations include the Manitoba Government, educational institutions, libraries, health authorities, designated government agencies, cities, organizations in the private or non-profit sector with 50 or more employees, and towns, villages, and rural municipalities with 50 or more employees. Organizations that aren't required under the regulation to document their policies may choose to do so as a best practice but, again, that is not required if the organization isn't in this list.

Monika Bonsor: We're going to talk a little bit more about accessible educational institutions which have specific requirements under the regulations. And these requirements are specific to information provided through educational materials. Educational materials are defined in the regulation as textbooks, student records, supplemental learning resources such as reference books, workbooks or educational kits, and descriptions or information about the availability of or scheduling requirements for classes, lessons, workshops, or programs. Educational institutions must take measures to inform employees, students, applicants, prospective applicants, and their parents and guardians that educational materials are available through a communication support or accessible format on request. When a request is received, the educational institution must consult with the person making the request to identify the support or format that would remove the barrier. Then the educational institution must provide the material through the identified support or format in a timely manner. And importantly, educational institutions cannot charge a cost or fee to the person who made a request for accessible information.

Sometimes, in the case of a fee for a program, that everybody has to pay the educational institution wouldn't be able to charge an extra fee to the person that has needs related to exceptional educational materials. The regulation does not include exceptions for educational institutions in regard to providing accessible educational materials. If an original material cannot be reasonably provided through the identified support or format, a comparable material must be provided to remove the barrier. A comparable resource provides the same information to the person making the request as the original material. For example, if a class schedule or report card is inaccessible, it can be reformatted perhaps in a word document by staff and if there's any questions about textbooks, an institution could contact a supplier or publisher to see what accessible formats might already be available.

Monika Bonsor: There are also library-specific requirements that apply to municipal and regional public libraries, libraries operated by the City of Winnipeg, and libraries within educational institutions. Requirements specific to libraries focus on accessible library

resources. Library resources are items, materials, recordings, or software that can be accessed, borrowed, or used at a library. Accessible libraries must consider the accessibility needs of their users when procuring or purchasing library resources. Libraries must inform users of each resource currently available through a communications support or accessible format. Libraries must also identify the types of supports and formats that are available for library resources.

There are exceptions to providing library resources through a requested support or format. These include: If it's not technically feasible to provide the resource through the requested support or format, if the technology required is not readily available, if providing the resource through the requested support or format would result in demonstrable undue hardship on the library, if the library does not have direct control over the resource or if the resource relates to product labels or other product information.

Monika Bonsor: And let's talk a little bit about resources that are available now.

So first, the office I work for, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat, we can be contacted to answer questions related to compliance with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its regulated accessibility standards. We're able to review organization's accessibility policies before they are finalized and offered feedback related to compliance, and we can share tools and additional resources to assist your organization to increase service accessibility and comply with legislated standards.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office has a website, [accessibilityMB.ca](http://accessibilityMB.ca) that includes many different tools to support accessibility and resources to help your organization meet accessibility standards. You can subscribe to Accessibility News, which is a free monthly electronic newsletter published by the Manitoba Accessibility Office that will help you stay informed on accessibility in Manitoba. And the free online training modules including ones for accessible information and communication that are available at [AMALearningMB.ca](http://AMALearningMB.ca). And now I think I got through that pretty quick, so we have lots of time for questions, if there are any.

Darren Macdonald: Yeah. Thanks, Monika, that was very informative.

Maria Ferraro: There is one -- there's a few questions. The first one is my organization has recently updated its website, web application, and content to meet the WCAG 2.1 Level AA, can I contact the Manitoba Government to have an accessibility audit done?

Monika Bonsor: The Manitoba Government does not conduct accessibility audits of websites or web content upon request. If your organization would like to have an accessibility audit to ensure that your website content or web application meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA, there are organizations in the private sector that offer this type of service. In the future, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat will conduct planned audits of specific sectors for compliance

purposes.

Participant: Great, thank you.

Maria Ferraro: There's another question: Will the PowerPoint be available?

Darren Macdonald: That's a really good question. I believe it will be included with the webinar that's posted, but I might have to double-check if the PowerPoint itself will be posted online.

Participant: Okay.

Maria Ferraro: The next question is how will the Manitoba Government monitor and ensure compliance with this regulation?

Monika Bonsor: Once the standards in force, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat will monitor and enforce compliance. Dedicated reviews to determine compliance with accessible web content, applications and other requirements in this regulation will take place. When we conduct reviews or audits, the aim is to provide organizations with constructive feedback and, if applicable, a concrete plan to achieve compliance. If that approach is ineffective, activities may be escalated to include sanctions such as written orders to comply or administrative penalties.

Participant: Okay.

Maria Ferraro: Next question is I am a member of the public, what if an organization does not respond to my request for accessible information or to the feedback provided about accessible information and communication?

Monika Bonsor: If you have made a request or provided feedback to an organization related to accessible information and communication and you do not receive a response in a timely manner or if you believe the response is insufficient to address your accessibility needs, you may contact the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat to report possible noncompliance with accessibility legislation.

Participant: Okay.

Maria Ferraro: Just a couple more. The next one is I don't have the skills to update my website to WCAG 2.1 Level AA. Does my organization still need to comply with the standard?

Monika Bonsor: Yes. If an organization doesn't have the in-house expertise to make updates, you are required to find outside sources to ensure you comply with this legal requirement. The Manitoba Government is unable to promote specific organizations that provide these services but a professional such as a web designer or developer or a digital designer may be best situated to assist your organization.

Participant: Okay.

Maria Ferraro: There is another one from Amber who says where can I find a list of the designated government agencies that supply tools for 2024?

Monika Bonsor: That's a good question. And I'd say if you have a question about a specific agency and need help figuring out if they need to comply in 2024 or 2025, you can contact the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat to help you sort that out. The regulation is specific. Just give me a second, I've got the regulation open here. So how the regulation defines a government agency, for the purposes of compliance with a standard, it relies on the definition that's included in Section One of The Financial Administration Act which, like I said, we would be happy to help you figure out if you have a specific agency that you're wondering if they need to comply or you're welcome to check out the Financial Administration Act and see if that agency would fit into the definition.

Amber: Okay.

Maria Ferraro: There's another one here. Some government departments and communications often in an inaccessible format such as EIA letters, are you aware of any work to make your communications more accessible?

Monika Bonsor: For a specific program like EIA, I would first direct you to the program itself.

You may wish to talk to staff in the program if you have an ongoing accessibility need and require all your communications in an accessible format, that's a great thing to bring up with the program that you're conducting or you're dealing with directly. There's also ways to -- a way to provide the government feedback on the Manitoba Government website. If you click the accessibility button or you can provide it to general inquiries. If you have a complaint related to the accessibility of information and communication that comes from a Manitoba department or program that you're dealing with, you also can contact the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat if you've made a request, provided feedback and you feel your needs aren't being met. I know there's lots of work in all government departments right now to ensure compliance with the standard so there's lots going on behind the scenes to continuously approve the accessibility of the information that the government provides.

Participant: Great.

Maria Ferraro: There's another one, where can we access possible accessibility training materials for employees and volunteers?



Monika Bonsor: I will direct you first to the Manitoba Accessibility Office website, [accessibilityMB.ca](https://accessibilityMB.ca). There's tools and resources that have been created for all of the regulated accessibility standards that are in force right now and there's ongoing work to keep up and continue publishing resources. Specific to training, [AMALearningMB.ca](https://AMALearningMB.ca) is the website that you want to go to access free online training modules that have been developed in addition to a facilitator's guide.

Participant: Okay, great.

Maria Ferraro: The last one, if my organization receives a request, can a cost or fee be applied to the person making the request?

Monika Bonsor: No. Organizations are not permitted to impose a cost or fee on a person who makes a request to provide information in an accessible format or support. If a cost or fee already applies to the information that has been requested, your organization is not permitted to impose an additional cost or fee on a person who requests accessible information.

Participant: Okay.

Maria Ferraro: There's one more here. Are there tools and resources but no actual training provided so as organizations are required to adhere to regulations, do you agree there has been no formal training given? Do you want me to read that again?

Monika Bonsor: Yes, please.

Maria Ferraro: There are tools and resources, but no actual training provided, so as organizations are required to adhere to regulations, do you agree there has been no formal training given?

Monika Bonsor: As of, I believe, April 2024, there is free online training that is now available for organizations to use to support compliance with this regulated accessibility standard. I understand there's a bit of a delay, but organizations can absolutely now access that learning module and, of course, organizations are also free to develop their own in-house training to meet the standard.

Participant: Okay.

Monika Bonsor: I hope that answered the question.

Maria Ferraro: There's another one here. Did you say there is comparable federal legislation in place?

Monika Bonsor: The federal government has The Accessible Canada Act and while I'm not an expert on federal accessibility legislation, I can share that the federal government is working to develop accessibility standards just like Manitoba has and there are some federally-regulated organizations or sectors that will need to comply with the Accessible Canada Act and its regulations because they fall under federal jurisdiction. But for specific questions related to The Accessible Canada Act or regulations that will be put in place by the federal government, I encourage you to contact the federal government in order to get answers to specific questions.

Participant: Great.

Maria Ferraro: And there was another question, but you've answered that, so I just put the link.

She was asking to provide all the training and learning developments to meet all of the standards, so it is on the online training portal that Monika talked about, and I just added the link again on the chat there.

Monika Bonsor Yeah, so in the future, right now, there's a module for accessible customer service, another one for accessible employment, and one for accessible information and communication and in the future, I'd expect -- I'm not in charge of developing training myself, but I'd expect there will be one for accessible transportation and accessible outdoor spaces once those regulations are in force or fully developed in the case of accessible outdoor spaces.

Maria Ferraro: Great, thanks, Monika. There are no other questions.

Monika Bonsor: All right.

Darren Macdonald: Great, Monika. You're off the hot seat.

Darren Macdonald: Thank you very much for agreeing to do the presentation and for the questions and answers. I think that's where some of this really sinks in for us, is being able to ask questions and hear your responses and indeed, we encourage everybody to come to our website and check out our training modules because they're there to take and you can print a certificate that shows you've taken the training. But for organizations that have their own training, they're also able to download our training and incorporate it into your organization's corporate training modules. So, we want to have that available to everybody and certainly, yes, Monika, we will commit to some new training modules as things --

Monika Bonsor: Okay, great. I didn't want to speak for you, Darren.

Darren Macdonald: No problem.

Monika Bonsor: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for having me, and I hope everyone enjoys the rest of the events.

Darren Macdonald: Thank you. So good reminder about the information communication standard for everybody and some of the compliance work that's going on.

Darren Macdonald: So now we're going to switch gears a little bit, and we wanted to profile a three-minute video, so it's very short, but that was produced by the Manitoba Accessibility Office on overcoming barriers to information and communication. And the video is up on our website. It is part of the training module. And it features several individuals with different types of disabilities and ways they can overcome the barriers and the challenges to information and communication. So happy to share this and it's short three-minute video.

[music and video starts.]

Scott Best (participant in the video): I think one of the most important parts of the Information and Communication Standard is that it puts everyone on a level playing field. People who don't face barriers or don't have accessibility issues maybe don't think about that.

Colleen Watters (Participant in the video): Oh, I think it's vital because then I can -- I feel inclusive, I feel equal, I feel able to perform my work duties that's the same as everybody else, and if that's not there, then that's a barrier.

Shauna Joynt (participant in the video): Well, I'm an Indigenous woman.

I am hard of hearing. And I am on a couple of government councils as well. My strength is that I wanted to become involved in the Deaf community, to advocate for the rights of Deaf people and to remove barriers. In one area of Manitoba, I visited a public school where a Deaf child was a student. While observing, I was stunned to see the interpreter was someone with only a one-on-one level of Sign Language, not a fluent signer, just one-on-one. This meant the child was missing a lot of information and this was their education, and I've been involved ever since as that impacted me profoundly. I don't want that for our youth. We need to change for our young people.

Scott Best: I'm totally blind, and I have been pretty much since the age of three.

I had about 3% vision for the first three years of my life. And then when I was three years old, I lost the rest of it to glaucoma. I'm a writer and an editor, so I write and edit a lot of public documents for the government news releases, web copy, just the fact that everything is so digital has helped a lot but there are still some things, when a document, say, is in an image format that my screen reading software won't recognize, but thankfully, it's a pretty easy fix.

People are going to have something like that in a text format of some kind anyway, so you just post that on the website instead of the image.

Colleen Watters: I work as a Policy Analyst at the Manitoba Accessibility Office.

Well, I have no vision, so, as a result, I use a white cane and for my work, I use a screen reader. Information and communication is vital to everybody, and it needs to be accessible to everyone. Charts, particularly, the screen reader will just read blank lines.

Shauna Joynt: Well, just I would really like to see more access to interpreters.

Also, make sure the interpreter has what they need. It's important that the two of us work together to ensure that things go smoothly. You know, teamwork.

Colleen Watters: It's important and I feel positive as we move forward that if information is accessible, then the standard requirements can be met so that they can provide accessible information and make their programs and services inclusive for everyone.

Shauna Joynt: Because we are all one.

And we should all respect one another. We all have different abilities, different ways.

It's important to recognize that and respect that and try to accommodate that.

Scott Best: I think the progress that I've seen has really been in awareness. People are far more aware that they need to be thinking about accessibility. It's a really great feeling because now it's a little bit more of a level playing field. I don't have to ask for accommodations as much anymore. Accessibility is being built into the normal processes, and I think that's great because that's really the way that it should be.

Darren Macdonald: Great. And I just want to thank everybody who was involved in putting the video together and staff here at MAO for working on that video. It's always going to remind us we have a bit of a flashback to the day we filmed it was the day the Windsor Hotel was burned down a few months back in downtown Winnipeg and it was very smoky in our office that day, so we endured a lot. Staff endured a lot to make that video happen, so thank you.

Darren Macdonald: Next on the agenda, we were going to provide an update from the Manitoba Accessibility Office on a number of things we're working on and what you can expect coming in the next few months and next year. However, because of the by-election in tuxedo and our publication restrictions, we can't make as many announcements as we would like so I think I'd just like to encourage all of you to check out our website and our newsletter, accessibility news, for monthly updates. Again, our website is [accessibilityMB.ca](http://accessibilityMB.ca), and some of the updates there soon will be, many may know, there was a recent five-year review of our Act

so there will be updates related to that review and the recommendations from that review. We'll be able to talk about the fifth standard of public outdoor spaces and give an update on the outdoor spaces standard and as mentioned news about this year's Manitoba Accessibility Fund grant recipients. So, all of that will be coming soon. And I just want to thank and show our appreciation for Vern Dano, the Minister and especially to Monika for presenting today. Thank you to the MAO staff for your hard work and dedication for organizing these webinars and there are three more coming. Thanks, everyone, for taking the time to join us. Again, if you want to check out our website later, there will be a Q and A document with the questions and answers, and we'll have a recording of this. And again, events, just one more time, tomorrow, we have an event, all the events this week are starting at 1:00 p.m. And running till about 2:30.

And so, tomorrow's event will focus on an overview of accessible word documents and pdfs so if your job is writing and you draft word documents and you do pdfs for the web, it will be of interest to you. May 29th is devoted to the WCAG requirements and working with web developers to create accessible websites.

So, if you're involved in the technical side of websites or even in sort of managing websites or you write for your website, it's important to know the rules with respect to WCAG.

And then on May 30th, we wrap up the week by looking at reasons for conducting accessibility audits, what's involved, their importance for ensuring your websites and web content are accessible.

So, look forward to all of those events and many others happening for Manitoba Accessibility Awareness Week as well as the national week.

And if you have any feedback, questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us by phone or through email, again, our email is [mao@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mao@gov.mb.ca).

So happy MAAW, everyone.

Please enjoy the events throughout the week and I hope you take away a few things from today's presentation and implement it in your workplace and your home, where you volunteer, and certainly places that you go as a patron.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, ask for accessible formats, you know, it's the right thing to do, of course, now in Manitoba, it's the law.

So, we're very happy to have that on the books, and happy you all came and stayed through the presentation.

Happy MAAW and we'll see you again soon.

Bye-bye.