
2023/24 Ministerial Annual Report

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act



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**Manitoba
Accessibility
Office**

Manitoba 

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the Manitoba Accessibility Office and Manitoba's Accessibility Compliance Secretariat are located on Treaty 1 Territory and that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations.

We acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

We acknowledge that northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people as we walk the shared path of truth, reconciliation, collaboration and to make Manitoba more inclusive and accessible for everyone.

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Minister's Message



As the Minister responsible for accessibility, I am delighted to present the 2023/24 Annual Report on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This report highlights and celebrates the achievements and initiatives undertaken by the Manitoba Accessibility Office and Manitoba's Accessibility Compliance Secretariat between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024. Today according to Statistics Canada, almost one in three Manitobans aged 15 and older has a disability. As our government builds one future for one Manitoba, we truly believe in the importance of accessibility. We are working toward taking steps to eliminate

barriers and make Manitoba a barrier-free province for all.

During this year, The Accessibility for Manitobans Act was reviewed as part of the requirement to review the act every five years. The findings from this independent review were shared publicly in December 2023, on the tenth anniversary of when the act was created. Manitoba was one of the first provinces to adopt accessibility legislation under the NDP in 2013, and our government looks forward to working to implement the recommendations presented in this report as we work towards being a leader in accessibility once again. Another notable achievement from 2023/24 was the enactment of the Accessible Transportation Standard Regulation under our government in late 2023. This standard addresses aspects of accessible public transportation, including access to transportation required for going to work, school, shopping and other aspects of daily life. The standard comes into force and will take effect in 2027.

I am happy to report that the Manitoba Accessibility Fund has successfully wrapped up a third intake. This fund not only helps organizations to improve accessibility, but also helps to build an inclusive society that is free of barriers.

The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat also continued to work closely with many Manitoba organizations to promote, educate and track compliance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its regulated standards.

As this report celebrates accessibility achievements, it also serves as a tool to recommit this government to further serve the needs of all Manitobans by removing barriers. Our work is far from complete, but I encourage you to read this report and take some time to reflect on the successes.

Miigwech,

Honourable Nahanni Fontaine Minister of Families, Minister responsible for accessibility and Minister responsible for women and gender equity

2023/24 and 2024/25 Minister's Annual Plan – Achievements

Every two years, the Minister responsible for accessibility presents the Minister's Annual Plan on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This plan outlines initiatives and activities to support The Accessibility for Manitobans Act over the next two years. In the most recent plan, [the Minister's Annual Plan 2023/24 and 2024/25](#), 25 commitments were identified. The following highlights the achievements completed in 2023/24.

Accessibility Standards, Development and Implementation Commitments:

- ✓ The Manitoba government shared the findings from the 2023 Five-Year Review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act with the public in December 2023.
- ✓ The Manitoba government held a public consultation on the proposed standard for the Accessible Transportation Standard in spring 2023 and enacted the standard in late 2023.
- ✓ The Manitoba government took concrete steps in 2023/24 to implement the twenty-two recommendations identified in the Accessibility Advisory Council's 2021 Five-Year Review of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation. Quarterly progress reports and annual ministerial updates were published on AccessibilityMB.ca.

Compliance Commitments:

- ✓ In 2023/24, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat established partnerships and collaborated with professional and other types of associations and unions to raise awareness and promote compliance among many member organizations.
- ✓ In 2023/24, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat conducted targeted reviews and audits of policies, practices and measures, as required under accessibility standards. Organizations identified as non-compliant through audits received tailored Achieving Compliance Plans, with tools and resources to comply, and a deadline by which the Secretariat would follow up with the organizations to assess compliance.
- ✓ The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat received complaints, concerns and questions from members of the public regarding an organization's compliance with accessibility standards and provided organizations guidance related to specific accessibility provisions in Manitoba.
- ✓ The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat sent notices to organizations, associations and stakeholders to inform them about upcoming compliance deadlines.
- ✓ The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat collaborated with the Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) to develop and refine tools and resources to assist organizations to be compliant with the legislation.

2023/24 Ministerial Annual Report: The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

- ✓ The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat worked with public sector organizations across the province to promote accessibility planning, in accordance with the legislation.

Tools and Training Commitments:

- ✓ New resources were developed to support The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) and its standards. Resources are available on [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://accessibilitymb.ca) as accessible PDF documents.
- ✓ Work continued to improve the integration and optimization of the MAO's training modules into external organization's Learning Management Systems.
- ✓ A new Accessible Information and Communication Standard training module was introduced and is now available on the [AMA Learning Portal](#).

Manitoba Accessibility Fund Commitments:

- ✓ The Manitoba Accessibility Fund grant program continued to support community, business and non-profit sector initiatives with ongoing engagement and outreach in 2023/24, as well as supported a program review to ensure maximum impact of this fund.

Public Awareness Commitments:

- ✓ The Manitoba government continued to proclaim celebrations for Manitoba Access Awareness Week (MAAW), Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM), Indigenous Disability Awareness Month (IDAM), and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).
- ✓ The Manitoba government continued to promote public awareness of accessibility to Manitobans using traditional, digital and social media campaigns to raise awareness of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards.
- ✓ The monthly newsletter, [Accessibility News](#), is sent to subscribers and continues to provide readers with key public awareness and educational information on accessibility, the AMA and the five standards.
- ✓ The refreshed [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://accessibilitymb.ca) website was launched in 2023. This refreshed website focuses on accessibility, easy access to information and an enhanced user experience.
- ✓ The Manitoba Accessibility Office attended various association tradeshow and conferences to promote The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, the standards and the work of the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat.

Procurement Commitments:

- ✓ The Manitoba government continued to work towards creating a procurement selection checklist to raise awareness of accessibility among existing and potential government vendors.

Pan-Canadian Approach to Accessibility Commitments:

- ✓ The Manitoba Accessibility Office actively participates on the Pan-Canadian Forum on Accessibility Standards. It collaborates with senior leaders from federal, provincial, and territorial governments to develop accessibility guidelines for northern and remote communities and explores the harmonization of accessibility standards.

Accessibility Advisory Council



The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) is a law that requires creating and implementing standards to identify, prevent and remove barriers. The Accessibility Advisory Council (the council) develops these accessibility standards and recommends them to the Minister responsible for accessibility, who then turns them into a regulation under the AMA. The Manitoba Accessibility Office supports the council by serving as its secretary and providing support as required.

Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the council held ten meetings. During this period, the council focused its efforts on providing comments in response to the feedback received during the Accessible Transportation Standard consultations, reviewing and providing feedback on the independent 2023 five-year AMA review recommendations and planning and preparing for the council's first five-year review of the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation. The council members received regular updates on the standard development of the Accessible Outdoor Spaces Standard and other activities such as the Manitoba Accessibility Fund program. The council also met with the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat to review compliance activities. As required under the AMA, the council met with the Minister responsible for accessibility in person on February 20, 2024.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and Accessibility Standards



The 2023 Accessibility for Manitobans Act Five-Year Review

The first review of [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act \(AMA\) occurred in 2018](#). As required by the AMA, reviews must occur every five years. In early 2023, Sarah Lugtig Riezebos, a lawyer with a background in human rights, was appointed to conduct the second independent five-year review of the AMA. The reviewer's focus was to consult with the community, including people with disabilities and organizations obligated under the AMA. The objective of this review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the law and make recommendations for improvements.

As required under the act, the review's consultation process was extensive. The review included meetings with the public at focus group sessions held in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and one virtual online session. Targeted meetings with government departments, businesses, organizations and groups representing the various disability communities were also held. In addition, documents relating to the AMA were reviewed and an online public survey was posted on EngageMB.

On July 12, 2023, Sarah Lugtig Riezebos presented her final report to the deputy minister and the Minister of Families. This final report includes the findings on the impact of the AMA and presents recommendations and suggestions for future legislative reviews. A total of 55 recommendations were presented in the report. In December 2023, the final report was tabled, as required by the AMA, and made publicly available on [AccessibilityMB.ca](#).

The Accessibility Advisory Council thoroughly reviewed all recommendations in the spring of 2024 and provided their recommendations for priorities to the government. The Manitoba government is now in the process of creating an implementation plan and project tracker. The Manitoba government plans to report annually on the status and timeframe of the implementation of actions resulting from the recommendations.

The 2021 Accessible Customer Service Standard Five-Year Review

[The Accessible Customer Service Standard](#) was the first regulation under [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) to be enacted on November 1, 2015. Providing accessible customer service is the keyway Manitobans, regardless of abilities, access and receive goods and services.

In 2021, the Accessibility Advisory Council completed a mandatory five-year review of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation, a requirement outlined under the AMA. [The final report was posted online in fall 2021.](#)

The Manitoba government developed an implementation plan to respond to the Accessibility Advisory Council's 22 recommendations identified in the report. An internal working group, coordinated by the Department of Families, acted on all recommendations. The last [Minister's Annual Update 2023: Implementing Recommendations from Accessibility Advisory Council's Five-Year Review of the Accessible Customer Service Standard](#) was published in December 2023. By March 31, 2024, the Manitoba government had completed 17 out of the 22 recommendations.

Four recommendations are currently in progress. These projects include:

- ensuring communication and services are consistently accessible to all members of the public;
- providing materials and information in American Sign Language (ASL) and the development of the government's policy on ASL;
- measuring and reporting on the impact that the Accessible Customer Service Standard has on improving accessibility; and
- ensuring Manitoba's commitment to accessibility is adequately administered.

All organizations in Manitoba with one or more employees are required to comply with relevant provisions of the Accessible Customer Service Standard. However, only those organizations with 50 or more employees are required to document their Accessible Customer Service policies and make them publicly available. It was recommended that this threshold be lowered to 20 employees or more. This recommendation will be revisited in 2024, as part of the work to implement recommendations from the 2023 AMA 5-Year Review.

The interdepartmental working group anticipates all 22 recommendations will be underway by the end of 2024. Progress will continue to be reported through the

Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan. Progress reports will also be included as part of the larger reporting on the implementation of recommendations for the more recent 2023 AMA 5-Year Review.

The Accessible Information and Communication Standard Implementation

[The Accessible Information and Communication Standard](#) was the third standard enacted under [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#), becoming law on May 1, 2022. Under this standard, organizations need to consider how Manitobans interact with or access information, including on websites, to develop measures, policies and practices to provide barrier-free information and communication.

Currently, the Manitoba government, public sector organizations and large municipalities must be compliant with this standard. Private sector organizations, non-profits and small municipalities will be required to comply with the standard as of May 1, 2025. The compliance requirements of this standard include making websites accessible, providing training on the standard and creating policies, procedures and measures related to accessible information and communication.

In the spring of 2023, the Manitoba Accessibility Office developed a module on the Accessible Information and Communication Standard, which can be accessed through the [AMA Online Learning Portal](#). This module assists affected organizations with meeting the requirements of the standard. The module is also available to download for organizations who wish to include it as a part of their internal corporate training programs.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office has also developed several resources to assist organizations in understanding the requirements of the standard. These new resources include plain language documents, an overview of the standard, a standard handbook, checklists, frequently asked questions and tips on the creation of accessible documents.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office in partnership with the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat attended several conferences and events to present on the requirements of the Accessible Information and Communication Standard. These included the Manitoba School Boards Association, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and the Advertising Association of Winnipeg. Presentations to Manitoba government departments and Chartered Professionals in Human Resources also took place. The Manitoba Accessibility Office also met with Manitoba Crown Corporations, Authorities and Commissions to provide a series of presentations on the web requirements of this standard.

The Accessible Transportation Standard Implementation

[The Accessible Transportation Standard](#) was the fourth enacted standard under [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#). Everyone should be able to have access to accessible transportation. It is a vital part of ensuring that people with disabilities can participate in all aspects of daily life, be it work, education, attending medical appointments or socializing with friends and family.

The Accessible Transportation Standard aims to build on current advancements in making both public transit and paratransit accessible. This standard also includes requirements for vehicles for hire and school transportation.

A 60-day public consultation on the Accessible Transportation Standard took place from February to April 2023. During this consultation, Manitobans were asked to share their experiences with the current state of Accessible Transportation, including what is working well and areas that may require improvements. As part of this consultation, a survey was posted on EngageMB in both English and French. This survey was also available in alternative formats by request. An email was sent out to the 67,000 registered users of EngageMB asking them to participate in this consultation. The Manitoba Accessibility Office also promoted the consultation by emailing its contact list of over 3,000 professional associations and organizations.

In addition to EngageMB, the Manitoba Accessibility Office held a webinar on March 22, 2023. During this webinar, participants from the disability community, municipalities, public sector, businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals from across Manitoba were asked to share their feedback on the standard. Some of the main themes presented in the consultation included:

- building a compliance framework;
- targeting public education;
- providing resources and support for municipalities; and
- having meaningful consultation.

Any feedback received that did not directly relate to the Accessible Transportation Standard was sent to the appropriate areas of government including feedback on funding and policy development. Other comments were shared with the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat and the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations.

[The Accessibility Advisory Council](#) reviewed the feedback received as part of this consultation process, before providing its final recommendations to the government in a report in June 2023. The Accessible Transportation Standard was presented to the Executive Council of Manitoba in November 2023. The Accessible Transportation Standard was registered on December 15, 2023, and will come in force starting on January 1, 2027.

The Accessible Outdoor Spaces Standard Development

The Accessible Outdoor Spaces Standard will address barriers found outside within the community, such as accessible paths of travel, playgrounds, pedestrian crossings and other areas of the exterior built environment.

The Department of Families is working with an intergovernmental working group and subject matter experts on the development of the standard, which is currently in the drafting phase.

In the fall of 2024, the Manitoba Accessibility Office plans to launch a survey on EngageMB to consult with Manitobans regarding the accessibility of outdoor spaces. Public engagement and consultations are an important step in the development of a new standard. Feedback from the fall 2024 engagement will be used by the council to make recommendations for the final draft of the standard.

The Accessible Outdoor Spaces Standard is expected to be passed in late 2025.

Manitoba Government Accessible Procurement Practices

The Manitoba Accessibility Office has been working in collaboration with the Procurement Centre of Excellence in the Department of Consumer Protection and Government Services on establishing accessible procurement practices. Together these departments are taking positive steps forward by exploring how to best include accessibility in the Manitoba government's Procurement Administration Manual (PAM).

A draft of the government's new Procurement Administration Manual has been completed and reviewed. This new manual provides direction on procurement policy to all employees and organizations involved in procurement. It applies to the end-to-end procurement process. The new version will raise awareness of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards. It will identify accessibility considerations during the procurement process and outline accessible tendering requirements as a policy section.

A procedure page is being developed to assist all PAM users to understand the requirements of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and how the act should be a consideration in the procurement process.

The new PAM is expected in 2024/25.

Manitoba Accessibility Compliance Secretariat

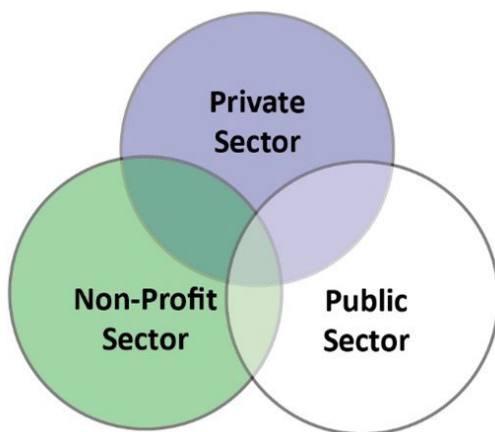


The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) is provincial law, with accessibility standards acting as regulations under the law. As each new accessibility standard is introduced, there are new requirements and deadlines which affected employers, organizations and businesses must comply with.

Manitoba's Accessibility Compliance Secretariat (the secretariat) works with organizations to raise awareness about accessibility and enforce compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. The secretariat also handles concerns and questions from the public regarding accessibility legislation.

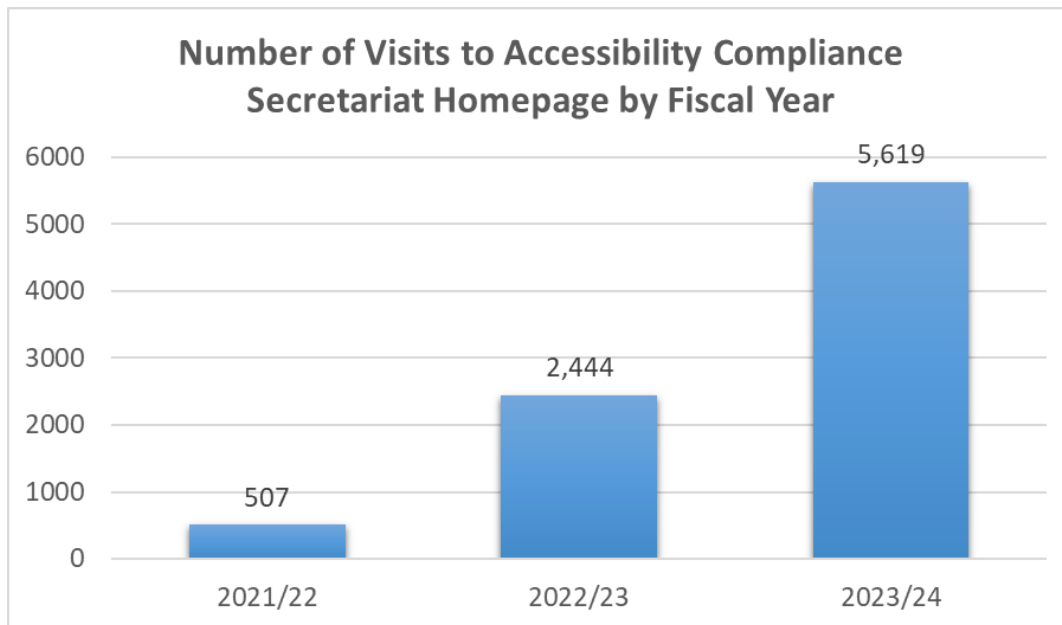
To date, Manitoba has passed four accessibility standards. When they come into force, the regulated standards require most organizations to meet specific conditions to make Manitoba a more accessible province. The regulated standards that have been passed are about accessible customer service, accessible employment practices, accessible information and communication supports and accessible transportation. There is also a standard regarding accessible outdoor spaces that is currently under development. As new standards are passed, more conditions will apply to organizations. Some rules differ across sectors and by the number of employees that an organization has, and some sectors, such as non-profit organizations, have more time allotted to implement accessibility rules than others.

Before a new accessibility standard comes into force, the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat sends notices, delivers presentations, and responds to questions to make organizations aware of their compliance date and what actions they must take to follow the law. After an accessibility standard is in force, the secretariat conducts audits to assess organizations' level of compliance. The office communicates with organizations when they are not in compliance with one or more of the requirements of the standards, and staff work to educate organizations about the regulations and help them to comply with the law.



Online Activity

In 2023/24, [the secretariat's homepage](#) received 5,619 visits, an increase of 3,175 visits (or 230 per cent) from the previous year.



Outreach and Compliance Presentations

In 2023/24, the secretariat had one-on-one contact with over 1,000 organizations, providing them with accessibility-related resources, advice, guidance and information. This is slightly more than double the support provided in comparison to the previous fiscal year. In addition to these outreach activities, in the summer of 2023, the secretariat sent written compliance notices to 127 towns, villages and rural municipalities regarding updated accessibility plans that were due January 1, 2024.

In addition, in the fall of 2023, the secretariat sent compliance notices to over 820 entities to raise awareness of the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation. These notices were sent to organizations that had a May 1, 2024, deadline to comply with the regulation, and included:

- Manitoba's ten cities;
- Manitoba's seven health authorities, including Shared Health and Cancer Care;
- educational institutions, including the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, adult learning centres, private vocational institutions, public schools, and universities and colleges (approximately 750 organizations); and
- municipal and regional libraries (56 of them).

In addition, several virtual and in-person presentations focusing on accessibility requirements were delivered during the fiscal year to a range of groups and associations and their members. These included presentations to:

- municipal officials from across the province;
- The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials;
- Restaurants Canada;
- Safety Services Manitoba;
- The Manitoba Library Association;
- private vocational institutions; and
- adult learning and literacy centres.

The presentations were well-received and brought about important questions from attendees who became aware of the office's functions and supports.

In 2023/24, the secretariat also began contributing to Accessibility News, an electronic newsletter published by the Manitoba Accessibility Office which helps keep Manitobans informed on accessibility initiatives across the province. Each issue's "Compliance Corner" article provides information about regulatory requirements and compliance-related topics.

Establishing Partnerships to Enhance Compliance

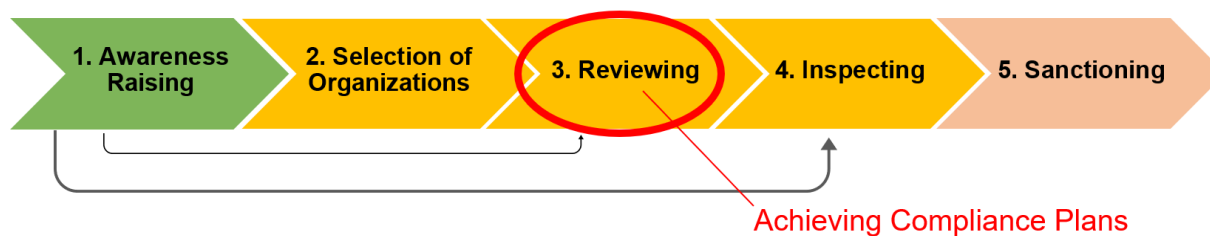
In 2023/24, the secretariat worked to establish new strategic partnerships and seek out opportunities for collaboration with professional associations and other Manitoba government branches. These partnerships serve to enhance compliance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act by increasing the secretariat's reach and ability to provide information about legal requirements. For example:

- The secretariat worked with the Public Libraries Services Branch, the Private Vocational Institutions Branch, the Education Administrative Services Branch, the Independent and International Education Unit within the Manitoba government and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to notify public libraries, private vocational institutions, public school superintendents and board chairs, the heads of independent schools and city officials of their forthcoming requirement, in May 2024, to comply with the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation. These channels of communication ensured that these groups received relevant information and resources to assist with compliance.
- The secretariat also partnered with the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to establish channels of communication to ensure towns, villages and rural municipalities in Manitoba received relevant compliance information and resources ahead of biennial accessibility plan updates.

- In February 2024, the secretariat sent thirty-three unions in Manitoba correspondence about Manitoba’s Accessible Employment Standard Regulation. Letters, sent on behalf of the deputy minister of the department, who is also the statutory director under the AMA, noted that unions are uniquely situated to promote accessible employment practices among their members, including being involved in the development of employees’ individualized accommodation plans in the workplace.
- In February 2024, the secretariat signed an information-sharing protocol with the Manitoba Accessibility Office. The information that will be shared will facilitate the secretariat contacting and sending compliance correspondence, including Achieving Compliance Plans, to organizations with responsibilities under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The secretariat is also working on developing similar information-sharing agreements with other branches of the Manitoba government.
- The secretariat consulted with the accessibility compliance units of other jurisdictions at the federal level, and in Ontario and Nova Scotia, to learn about their practices and approaches for accessibility compliance programming.

Achieving Compliance Plans

The activities of Manitoba’s Accessibility Compliance Secretariat are guided by [the provincial accessibility compliance framework](#), which includes a range of actions from awareness raising to more traditional monitoring and enforcement activities, such as conducting audits and issuing formal orders to comply. One tool used in Manitoba’s accessibility compliance program is called an Achieving Compliance Plan. The use of these plans fits into the “reviewing” element of the accessibility compliance framework.



What is an Achieving Compliance Plan?

An Achieving Compliance Plan is a written notice from the secretariat that identifies an organization’s areas of non-compliance with the law. The notification package includes a formal letter explaining what the secretariat does, and the compliance issue identified, as well as a form that specifies the date by which the office will follow up to assess compliance.

The letter in the package notes that guidance is available by secretariat staff to help the organization meet compliance. In addition, the secretariat includes in the package a

copy of the law and checklists that have been developed to help organizations understand the rules that exist.

The Achieving Compliance Plans that were issued in 2023/24 served the dual purpose of:

- ✓ informing large organizations in Manitoba about their legal obligations to document their accessibility measures and practices in policies, and make those policies publicly available; and
- ✓ facilitating the secretariat's review of those policies to assess their compliance with standards under the AMA.

In 2023/24, as it has in previous years, the secretariat continued to issue Achieving Compliance Plans to large companies regarding accessible customer service requirements. The secretariat also expanded its work to include issuing Achieving Compliance Plans in relation to accessible employment policies.

Upon receipt of a policy by an organization, the secretariat reviews the document to evaluate compliance with relevant standards under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The secretariat then provides feedback to the organization about required revisions to the policy, and/or the organization's measures and practices, to achieve compliance with the standards. The secretariat asks that revisions be incorporated into the documents by a specified date.

Example feedback provided to organizations to improve compliance:

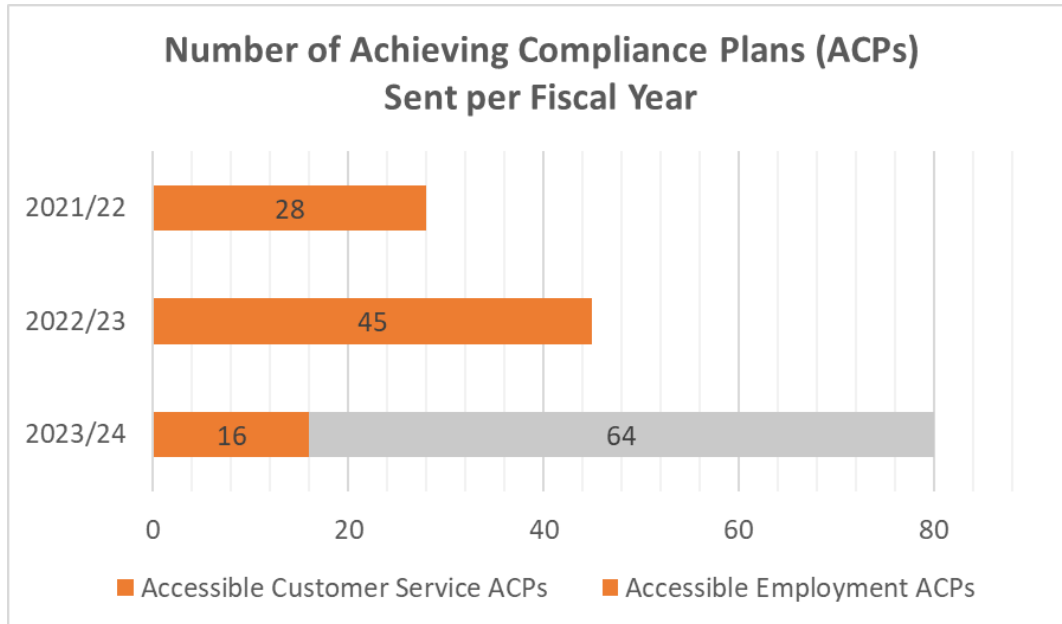
- “One requirement under the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation which appears to be missing from the policy, is the requirement for employers to provide written reasons for their decision if a request for an individualized accommodation plan is denied. Please make an addition to [name of organization]'s accessible employment policy to include this requirement of the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation and send me a copy of the updated policy for our records by [due date].”
- “Please note that organizations are required to document their actions resulting from their process for receiving and responding to feedback about the accessibility of their goods and services. That documentation must be available upon request as per section 10 of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation.”
- “Please note that a summary of training content, and when training is to be provided, should be included in policy documentation as per section 7(4) of the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation ... the Manitoba Accessibility Office's online module on accessible employment satisfies the training content requirements under the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation.”

Organizations were appreciative of the feedback provided by the secretariat on their policies, demonstrating a commitment to developing meaningful documents to guide the removal of barriers for their customers and employees.

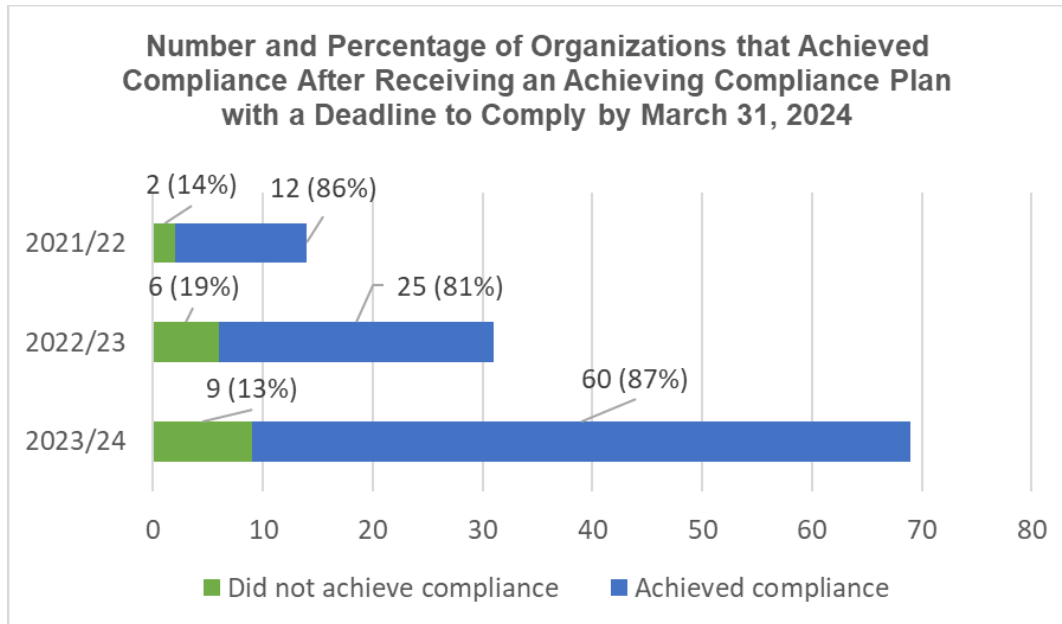
Example responses from organizations to the secretariat’s feedback:

- “We appreciate the government’s diligence in overseeing regulatory matters, and we are committed to ensuring full compliance with all applicable regulations.” – A company from the retail sector
- “This email is to confirm that we are reviewing the gaps identified in your email with the appropriate team and any gaps in the website will be rectified on a priority basis. We will share the updated policy with you before the deadline [specified in the Achieving Compliance Plan]. In the meantime, we can confirm that [the organization] does, in practice, comply with the sections identified in your email.” – A company from the restaurant industry
- “Thank you for your assistance through the process.” – A company from the restaurant industry
- “Thank you for sharing your feedback with regards to the individualized accommodation plans and the training prerequisites for our Accessible Employment Policy... We look forward to further discussion and working together to ensure our Accessibility Policy aligns with best practices.” – A company from the financial sector
- “Thank you for reviewing the documents. This is very much appreciated! I will make the revisions and inclusions as identified and have them back to you by [date].” – A health authority.

In 2023/24, the secretariat issued 16 formal Achieving Compliance Plans to organizations regarding the requirement to document their accessible customer service policies. The secretariat also issued 64 formal Achieving Compliance Plans to organizations regarding accessible employment policies. In total, this equates to 80 Achieving Compliance Plans being issued in 2023/24, an increase of 35 additional plans than the previous year.



Of the 80 Achieving Compliance Plans that were issued from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, 73 were considered within scope. This is because seven organizations informed the secretariat that they had fewer than 50 employees and, as such, were not required to have written accessible customer service or employment policies. In addition, four Achieving Compliance Plans were issued with a compliance date beyond March 31, 2024. Therefore, compliance with Achieving Compliance Plans as of March 31, 2024, was assessed based on 69 out of the 80 plans that were sent in 2023/24. 60 out of 69 (or 87 per cent) of these organizations achieved compliance by their compliance deadline, a similar rate of compliance as was reported in the previous two fiscal years.



Accessibility Planning

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act requires designated public sector organizations to develop written accessibility plans. These documents, which must be updated every two years, outline measures organizations have taken and will take to identify, remove, and reduce barriers to accessibility. As opposed to accessibility policies, which are regulation-specific means for organizations to document how they are addressing barriers through compliance, accessibility plans are living documents that provide an overview of accessibility and highlight ongoing improvement opportunities that are unique to each organization and that may fall beyond the scope of existing regulations (e.g., describe significant accessibility upgrades to the inside of a building, in line with Manitoba’s Building Code).

Large public sector organizations in Manitoba include the provincial government, post-secondary institutions, crown corporations, provincial health authorities, school divisions and the ten cities in our province. As of March 31, 2024:

- All 69 (or 100 per cent) of large public sector organizations had developed an accessibility plan;
- 56 out of 69 (or 81 per cent) of large public sector organizations had updated accessibility plans for the 2023 and 2024 compliance cycle. This is a 12 per cent increase in compliance with the requirement to update plans from last year.

Small public sector organizations in Manitoba include 127 towns, villages and rural municipalities across the province. As of March 31, 2024:

- 105 out of 127 (or 83 per cent) towns, villages and rural municipalities had developed an initial accessibility plan.
- 29 out of 127 (or 23 per cent) of towns, villages and rural municipalities had updated plans for the 2024 and 2025 compliance cycle.

This is a 9 per cent decrease in compliance with the requirement to update plans from last year. Part of the reason for this decrease may be that a new compliance cycle began for these organizations in January 2024, three months before data for this annual report was gathered. As of July 15, 2024, the compliance figure had risen to 39 out of 127 municipalities (or 31 per cent) meeting compliance with the requirement to update their plans for 2024 and 2025.

To assist communities to update their accessibility plans, the secretariat collaborated with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to issue a notice, in August 2023, to all towns, villages and rural municipalities across Manitoba, and offered two virtual workshop opportunities for municipal officials to learn more about the process of updating their accessibility plans. Attendees from 41 communities participated in the workshops delivered by staff from the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat.

Report of the Second Review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

The report of the second independent review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act was released to the public on December 5, 2023. The report identifies a range of recommendations to improve accessibility in Manitoba, many of which will impact the work of the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat.

In 2023/24, the secretariat began to conduct research to inform the implementation of recommendations from the review that are relevant to compliance with the legislation, such as making a regulation to support the application of administrative penalties and establishing data-sharing agreements between the secretariat and other regulatory schemes.

Accessibility Concerns & Questions

The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat receives and responds to calls and emails from members of the public who have concerns about organizations that may not be meeting the legal requirements under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its regulations. Staff carefully review each concern. The information shared with the office is recorded and used to inform compliance activities, such as the practice of contacting organizations directly with information about the law and the issuing of Achieving Compliance Plans. In addition to specific concerns, the secretariat also receives

questions from organizations that need guidance to understand the laws and their specific provisions.

The secretariat received 154 concerns and questions in the 2023/24 year. The number of calls and emails the secretariat responded to on matters related to compliance continues to increase as the public and obligated organizations become more aware of the functions of the office and their rights and responsibilities under accessibility legislation.

Total number of contacts by fiscal year:

- 33 inquires in 2020/21
- 65 inquiries in 2021/22
- 85 inquiries in 2022/23
- 154 inquiries in 2023/24

Of the 154 contacts made with the office in 2023/24:

- 101 (or 66 per cent) were questions related to accessibility legislation
- 53 (or 34 per cent) were specific concerns related to compliance

Of the 154 people who called or emailed the office with a question or concern:

- 62 (or 40 per cent) were representatives from public sector organizations
- 53 (or 34 per cent) were members of the public, or a third party on behalf of a member of the public
- 19 (or 12 per cent) were representatives from non-profit organizations
- 19 (or 12 per cent) were representatives from businesses and fee-for-service providers in the private sector
- 1 (or 1 per cent) was from the federal or other provincial governments

Of the 154 questions and concerns that were received in 2023/24:

- 47 (or 30 per cent) contacts related to provisions of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation
- 38 (25 per cent) contacts related to provisions of the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation
- 24 (16 per cent) contacts did not relate to legislation in scope of the AMA or related accessibility standard regulations
- 17 (11 per cent) contacts related to provisions of the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation
- 15 (10 per cent) contacts related to provisions under multiple standard regulations
- 12 (or 8 per cent) contacts related to provisions of the AMA or general inquires about accessibility legislation in Manitoba

- 1 (0.65 per cent) contact related to the Accessible Transportation Standard Regulation

Of the 53 concerns related to alleged non-compliance with accessibility legislation:

- 34 (or 64 per cent) were within the scope of accessibility legislation

Of the 34 concerns within the scope of accessibility legislation:

- 19 (or 56 per cent) of the concerns within scope related to organizations in the private sector
- 10 (or 29 per cent) of the concerns within scope related to organizations in the public sector
- 3 (or 9 per cent) of the concerns within scope related to organizations in the non-profit sector
- 2 (or 6 per cent) of the concerns within scope were general concerns about accessibility legislation (compliance and enforcement, and service animals)

Trends observed through the analysis of concerns and questions received in the 2023/24 year:

Related to the questions and concerns that dealt with accessible customer service, the secretariat most often provided guidance about:

- the legal right for service animals to accompany their handler when accessing goods and services;
- the responsibility for organizations to receive and respond to feedback (including complaints) about the accessibility of goods and services;
- the requirement that organizations maintain existing accessibility features in the built environment, such as automatic doors and elevators, and provide notification if an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable; and
- the provision of accessible communication supports, such as Sign Language interpretation.

Most concerns and questions about accessible employment related to barriers encountered while employed, as opposed to requirements that are in place to remove barriers during hiring processes. The secretariat most often provided guidance on the requirement among employers to develop individualized accommodation plans with employees experiencing accessibility barriers in the workplace.

The Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation is now law in Manitoba. Requirements are being phased in and will become enforceable for all sectors on May 1, 2025. Most contacts related to accessible information and communication were from organizations that were preparing to comply with the regulation. The secretariat provided guidance to organizations on requirements for

accessible web content and accessible web-based applications, mandatory training, and how to respond to requests made by customers and employees for accessible information.

Of the questions and concerns that were deemed out of scope for the secretariat, most related to matters that are under the authority of the Manitoba Building Code, such as the installation of new accessibility features in the built environment. Several concerns were deemed out of scope due to federal jurisdiction over the sector alleged to be non-compliant with accessibility legislation.

The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat will continue to monitor accessibility concerns and questions received from members of the public and organizations. It is expected that the number of questions and concerns will rise in coming years as more Manitobans learn about the role and support offered by the secretariat.

Public Awareness



AccessibilityMB.ca

In July 2023, the Manitoba Accessibility Office launched the newly designed [AccessibilityMB.ca website](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca). This new website features improved navigation, flow and easy access to essential information on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards. The website is accessible, meets WCAG 2.1 level AA guidelines and complies with the new Accessible Information and Communication Standard.

Accessibility was at the forefront of this project and great consideration was given to ensuring accessibility at each project checkpoint. The Manitoba Accessibility Office worked closely with a digital accessibility expert to audit the website at every stage of the project. This included an evaluation of the website wireframe and two touchpoints during the build-out of the website.

The site is compatible with a wide variety of communications support devices and technologies. It features accessible PDF documents, easier to read, larger fonts, improved colour contrast and descriptive text on photo elements, among several other accessibility features.

Ensuring websites remain accessible is an ongoing project. The Manitoba Accessibility Office continues to review the website and make improvements. The Manitoba Accessibility Office also plans to conduct a post-launch audit of the website in 2024/25 to ensure that the site remains accessible and compliant with the Accessible Information and Communication Standard.

AMA Online Learning Portal

The [AMA Online Learning Portal](#) continues to be a hub that Manitoba organizations can use to learn more about The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards.

The Online Learning Portal is available for free on [AccessibilityMB.ca](#) and features courses on the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Accessible Employment Standard and the newly launched Accessible Information and Communication Standard.

The newest module on the Accessible Information and Communication Standard was added to the portal in late March 2024. This training module provides an overview of the standard, outlines compliance obligations and includes knowledge checks and a facilitator's guide. It also features a video explaining the importance of the standard. This video features three individuals with lived experiences who share their stories in an emotional, informative video. Anyone who completes the training module can download a certificate of completion. The module is presented in plain language and includes a narration tool, allowing module participants to listen to the content of the module. It's available in both English and French.

Manitoba organizations can integrate the AMA Online Learning modules into their internal learning management systems by downloading the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) files. [The SCORM files are available in two formats on AccessibilityMB.ca](#). This option was first introduced in December 2023. A total of 149 organizations have downloaded the SCORM files to integrate the modules into their systems.

The Accessible Employment Standard module is also in the process of being updated. This includes reviewing the course material to ensure it is still relevant and updating module resources, website links and materials. This project is expected to be completed by June 2024.

Accessibility News

Accessibility News is the Manitoba Accessibility Office's monthly electronic newsletter. Between April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, 12 editions of the newsletter were published and sent out to subscribers. The newsletter features updates on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and standards, disability and accessibility-related content, notifications about events, funding opportunities and information about new resources. Anyone can [sign up to receive Accessibility News on AccessibilityMB.ca](#). It also features updates from the Manitoba Accessibility Fund and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat. Over 1,800 subscribers receive Accessibility News each month.

Communications Strategy

The Manitoba Accessibility Office is responsible for developing and conducting public education activities to increase awareness of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards. Each year the office conducts several awareness campaigns and initiatives.

In January 2024, the Manitoba Accessibility Office published a print advertisement in the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Partners in Prosperity Magazine. This advertisement promoted awareness of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards. The publication was mailed directly to over 10,000 Manitoba Chamber of Commerce members, including businesses, organizations and non-profits.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office has increased its social media presence by taking advantage of the Manitoba government's various social media channels. In 2023/24, featured campaigns included promotions of each of the celebrated disability awareness months, including Manitoba Access Awareness Week, Disability Employment Awareness Month, Indigenous Disability Awareness Month and International Day of Persons with Disabilities. A social media campaign also ran in March and April 2024 to raise awareness about the Accessible Information and Communication Standard and upcoming compliance obligations for public sector organizations. During this same period, another campaign ran to promote general awareness of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office took part in further outreach opportunities by attending speaking engagements at various conferences throughout 2023/24. Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the Manitoba Accessibility Office presented to the Advertising Association of Winnipeg, Safety Services Manitoba, Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Western Practitioners Recreation Association, University of Manitoba medical students, CPHR Manitoba HR Conference and the Manitoba Bar Association's Mid-Winter Conference. Presentations focused on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the standards. Each presentation was tailored to the unique needs of the audience. The Manitoba Accessibility Office also hosted tradeshow booths at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Commitment to Opportunity, Diversity and Equity (CODE) Conference. At each tradeshow, a member of the team was present at the booth to answer questions on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and standards. Materials and resources were also available at the booth.

In 2023/24, the Manitoba Accessibility Office connected with a few organizations to publish accessibility-related articles in their newsletters. This expands reach by taking advantage of organizations' own subscriber lists. Connections were made with the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Brandon School Division, Volunteer Manitoba, Age Friendly Manitoba and the Thompson Seniors Community Resource Centre.

Disability Awareness Celebrations

Manitoba Access Awareness Week (MAAW)



Manitoba Access Awareness Week is recognized annually by the Manitoba government during the last week of May, first week of June. This weeklong celebration is also recognized on a national level with the celebration of National AccessAbility Week.

Manitoba Access Awareness Week aims to raise awareness of the importance of increasing accessibility for all Canadians.

In celebration of the week, the Manitoba Accessibility Office hosted a webinar, titled “Reducing Barriers to Web Accessible Information and Communication” on June 1, 2023. The webinar included short presentations from four recipients of the Manitoba Accessibility Fund, who’s projects focused on enhancing web accessibility and experiences for end-users. Presenters and presentations included:

- **Andrew Boardman (Manoverboard)** provided an overview on the Make-it-Accessible website and resources for Manitobans.
- **Krystal Stokes (Victoria Lifeline)** discussed the Victoria Lifeline web refresh project, which supported the development of new content and resources for Manitoba’s senior and disability communities.
- **Lisa Snider (Access Changes Everything)** presented the findings from her digital accessibility survey.
- **Cindy Titus (Marymound Inc.)** shared details about the process to develop Marymound’s new accessible website.

Over 400 attendees logged on to watch the Manitoba Access Awareness Week webinar.

In addition to the webinar, a series of social media posts were published on the Manitoba government’s social media channels. These posts recognized the weeklong celebration and invited the public to attend the Manitoba Access Awareness Week webinar.

Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM)



Disability Employment Awareness Month celebrates the positive contributions people with disabilities make toward developing a more diverse and inclusive workforce for all. During the month of October, employers are encouraged to highlight the positive contributions that employees with disabilities make within their businesses. The Manitoba government recognizes Disability Employment Awareness Month annually.

To promote accessible employment, the Manitoba Accessibility Office attended the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Conference on October 24, 2023. The presentation, titled “Accessible Employment Matters” provided a brief overview of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and presented further details on the Accessible Employment Standard.

To further celebrate Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Manitoba Legislature lights were changed to purple and blue on the evening of October 19, 2023. This initiative was part of a national campaign, Light it Up! Many prominent buildings across Canada are part of this project, which aims to remind Canadians of the importance of creating a barrier-free work environment, while supporting disability inclusion in the workplace.

A social media campaign also ran on the Manitoba government’s social media channels to support awareness of Disability Employment Awareness Month and the efforts the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation is making to remove barriers within the workplace.

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month (IDAM)

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month was first recognized by the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) in 2015, following a recommendation by the United Nations International Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, the Assembly of First Nations, and many other organizations and communities across Canada recognize this celebratory month every November.

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month brings awareness of the barriers and the issues that Indigenous Peoples living with disabilities and their families face every day. The monthlong celebration highlights the achievements of Indigenous Peoples living with

disabilities and recognizes the significant and valuable contributions they make to our communities, socially, economically and culturally.

To bring awareness to Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, the Manitoba Accessibility Office published an article in Accessibility News, posted the proclamation on AccessibilityMB.ca and ran an awareness campaign on the Manitoba government social media channels.

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month was also recognized by the Minister responsible for accessibility in November 2023. An accompanying news release was published to recognize the achievements and valuable contributions Indigenous Peoples living with disabilities make to communities every day, as the Manitoba government continues to work to make Manitoba an accessible and inclusive province for everyone.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)



The Manitoba government recognizes International Day of Persons with Disabilities each year on December 3. First proclaimed in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly, International Day of Persons with Disabilities promotes an understanding of disability issues and calls for supporting the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was recognized by the Minister responsible for accessibility during the November sitting of the house, marking the 10-year anniversary of the passing of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and reiterating the government's commitment to making accessibility available to all Manitobans regardless of identity, income or location.

In recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Manitoba Accessibility Office hosted a webinar on November 30, 2023. This webinar featured a presentation from keynote speaker Carly Fox, a queer, disabled, neurodivergent, disability advocate based out of Ottawa, Canada. Her presentation included a discussion to celebrate the progress towards realizing provincial accessibility legislation, reflecting on and challenging the persistence of systemic ableism and touched on how to inspire the future of accessibility.

A series of social media posts were published on the Manitoba government's social media channels to recognize the awareness of International Day of Persons with Disabilities and to invite the public to attend the free webinar.

The webinar was well received by the public, with attendance reaching 342 people. Following the webinar, attendees were asked to provide feedback. Many of the respondents found Carly's presentation both enjoyable and informative.

Manitoba Accessibility Fund



Manitoba Accessibility Fund - Second Intake (2023)

The second intake of the Manitoba Accessibility Fund (MAF) grant program was held from January 30 to March 10, 2023. During this intake, 42 project grants were awarded to organizations, totaling \$890K.

Each grant recipient demonstrated how their project met at least one, often more, of the 2023/24 objectives in support of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards:

- raise awareness about the prevention and removal of barriers;
- develop tools, resources and training to support compliance with AMA standards; and
- remove barriers to information and communication, electronically, in print and in-person.

These projects showcased an increasingly diverse array of activities and partnerships, which included delivering training events for the community, website enhancements, accessible library resources, communication boards for students who require adaptive technologies, multimedia-driven awareness campaigns, wayfinding signs and accessibility audits of organizational policies and procedures.

Throughout the year, the Manitoba Accessibility Office conducted a comprehensive review of the program, informational sessions with potential applicants, the MAF 2023 Selection Committee and sought feedback from past recipients. Successful projects were also showcased during Manitoba Access Awareness Week.

By March 31, 2024, a quarter of MAF projects had been completed while others had project extension agreements (of up to 12 months) in place. Grant recipients will continue to submit their final project reports into the 2024/25 fiscal year.

Manitoba Accessibility Fund - Third Intake (2024)

The third MAF grant program intake was held from January 8 to February 16, 2024. During this intake, a record number of applicants were received. Over 190 applications

were received, and eligible applications were sent to the MAF selection committee for further assessment.

In the third intake, minor adjustments were made to the eligibility criteria, including the introduction of a one-year pause for consecutive recipients. A new rapid re-application option was also offered to all applicants for the next intake.

Outreach and promotion efforts for MAF included targeted social media campaigns, development of promotional materials and active participation in key events, notably the Association of Manitoba Municipalities Annual Conference. These initiatives were strategically designed to attract a more diverse range of applicants throughout Manitoba.

The 2024 selection committee submitted its recommendations for proposed MAF 2024/25 grant recipients to the minister. Successful grant recipients will be announced in the new fiscal year.

Collaborating with Accessibility Partners



Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Network

The Manitoba Accessibility Office continues to work with community partners to achieve its objectives. In 2021/22, the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Network was established and renamed. The office meets regularly with members of this network including representatives from various disability community members and groups, as well as representatives from the United Way Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Public Insurance, Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba. Many of the representatives on the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Network are responsible for implementing accessibility standards within their own organizations.

Over the past year, this group has provided feedback on resources to support the implementation of the Accessible Information and Communication Standard. They guided relevant themes and topics of discussion for public events such as Manitoba Access Awareness Week and International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Manitoba Agencies, Boards and Crown Corporations

The Manitoba Accessibility Office partners with several organizations, including various non-profits, private and public sector organizations, to advance accessibility in Manitoba.

Government agencies, including boards, commissions and Crown Corporations, will be required to comply with requirements outlined under the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation on May 1, 2024.

In the fall of 2023, the office held a series of meetings with the Accessibility Coordinators from government agencies, boards and crown corporations, to assist in the implementation of the standard. Several requirements were discussed, including requirements for websites, web content, training for staff, procurement of information technology, documenting policies and providing information in alternate formats.

The meetings helped the Manitoba Accessibility Office to develop tools to assist organizations with compliance with the Accessible Information and Communication Standard. Resources were tailored to the needs of public sector organizations.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office continues to build and maintain partnerships with key organizations as we work towards the common goal of removing accessibility barriers in Manitoba.

Pan-Canadian Approach to Accessibility

The Manitoba Accessibility Office participated in the second Pan-Canadian Forum meeting, cohosted by Accessibility Standards Canada and the province of British Columbia in April 2023. This was a successful meeting that included officials from federal, provincial and territorial departments responsible for accessibility. The forum promoted sharing best practices, research and tools to promote stronger accessibility standards for all Canadians.

The Department of Families also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Accessibility Standards Canada, in May 2023, to collaborate on the development and implementation of accessibility standards. Sharing knowledge and best practices reduces and eliminates duplication while benefiting all Canadians. The harmonizing of accessibility standards seeks to ensure consistency across the country.

Improving Accessibility in Manitoba



Improving accessibility across the province doesn't stop with the implementation of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards. Accessibility plans are a pathway to identify, prevent and remove barriers. They also establish a roadmap to advancing accessibility, so that achievements can be celebrated.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act requires the Manitoba government, as well as other public sector organizations to create, maintain and update an accessibility plan every two years. [The Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan: 2023 and 2024](#) describes accessibility initiatives that the government plans to undertake over the next two years to remove barriers.

Progress to improve accessibility across the province is also celebrated in the appendix of this plan. Initiatives cover a broad range of projects and include enhancements to improve the visitor experience at provincial parks with the addition of mobility mats at beach areas, accessibility features added to playgrounds in six campgrounds and provincial parks, the development of reference guides in Manitoba Justice to assist victims and witnesses as they navigate the legal process and amending the Jury Act to ensure that persons with disabilities may be reasonably accommodated to serve on juries, were just a few of the accessibility projects completed by the province.

To view the full list of notable actions achieved, visit the [Appendix: 2021 and 2022 MGAP Achievement page of the Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan: 2023 and 2024](#).