



Ministerial 2017/18 Annual Report

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

Available in alternate formats upon request

Please contact the Disabilities Issues Office at DIO@gov.mb.ca or 204-945-7613 or toll free at 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7613

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Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present the 2017/18 Annual Report, as required under subsection 19(1) of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA). This report outlines activities that the Manitoba government and the Accessibility Advisory Council undertook to advance accessibility from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

The AMA speaks to the development of accessibility standards in five areas, including customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation and the built environment (design of public spaces). Significant work took place in 2017/18 to advance accessibility. This report highlights key activities in the following important and interrelated areas:

- Development of Accessibility Standards
- Government and Public Sector Leadership
- Awareness Raising and Training
- Compliance
- Accountability

Going forward, we will continue to work with stakeholders in the public, private and non-profit sectors, to explore ways we can make Manitoba a more accessible province for everyone. Accessibility brings about great opportunities for people with disabilities and communities across the province. I look forward to advancing accessibility with all Manitobans affected by the AMA.

Sincerely,

Original signed By Heather Stefanson

Honourable Heather Stefanson
Minister of Families



Accessibility Standard Development

Standards are the AMA's building blocks to achieve accessibility. Manitoba is committed to developing five regulatory standards in essential areas of everyday life:

- customer service
- employment
- information and communications
- transportation
- the built environment (design of public spaces)

The [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service \(Regulation\)](#) came into effect in 2015 and dedicated work is underway to develop other standards.

Manitoba's [Accessibility Advisory Council \(Council\)](#) is made up of members of the disability community and stakeholders affected by the AMA, including representatives of businesses, municipalities and other organizations. The council consults with community and government stakeholders and makes recommendations to the minister regarding accessibility. The council can establish committees to work on the development of accessibility standards.

Accessible Employment Standard

Employment represents an area where long-standing barriers in recruitment, selection and retention practices have disadvantaged persons with disabilities. This results in their underrepresentation in the workforce and labour market. Manitoba is finalizing the draft Accessible Employment Standard, which will identify the steps that employers need to take to remove barriers across the employment cycle.



In 2017/18, Manitoba Families supported the council in developing its proposal for an Accessible Employment Standard. In April 2017, following a review of written submissions and public feedback, the council submitted its recommendations for an Accessible Employment Standard to Scott Fielding, then minister of families. Using the council's recommendations as the basis for a draft standard, the government released a proposed Employment Standard for a second round of public comment. I anticipate that Cabinet will approve an Accessible Employment Standard as a regulation in 2018/19.

Information and Communications Accessibility Standard

As part of its mandate, the Accessibility Advisory Council established an Information and Communications Standard Development Committee. In 2017/18, members of this committee were very busy in their efforts to research, discuss and develop recommendations for accessibility in a field affected by ever-changing technology. In January 2018, the committee held an input session and invited Manitobans with disabilities to help it determine priorities for the prevention and removal of barriers in information and communications. As the minister responsible for the AMA, I look forward to reviewing the committee's work, as approved by the Accessibility Advisory Council.

The council and the committees it establishes are integral in the development of standards. I would like to thank council and committee members for their dedication and time towards making Manitoba a more accessible and inclusive province.

Government and Public Sector Leadership

Although accessibility standards apply to the public, private and non-profit sectors, the Manitoba government and public sector organizations provide leadership in identifying and addressing accessibility barriers. During 2017/18, the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) within Manitoba Families, worked with other government departments to enhance accessibility policies and practices. Government activities included:

- Ensuring that [accessibility plans](#) were completed and posted online for the Manitoba government as a whole and for large public sector organizations. This includes regional health authorities, school divisions, post-secondary institutions, Crown corporations and the province's 10 largest municipalities.
- Holding the first ever, fully accessible budget consultation process in October 2017.
- Working with smaller municipalities, as well as agencies, boards and commissions tied to government, to assist them in completing and posting their accessibility plans.
- Updating [The Manitoba Government Service Policy](#), which instructs the quality of interaction between government employees and people disabled by barriers, when providing information and customer service to the public.
- Undertaking accessibility upgrades to the Legislative Chamber of the Manitoba Legislative Building, demonstrating that accessibility can be achieved without sacrificing historical architectural integrity (please see photos below).



Awareness Raising and Training

In addition to assisting the council with the development of standards and advancing public sector leadership in accessibility, the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) works hard to promote positive attitudes about disability and help make Manitoba a more inclusive society. In 2017/18, the DIO responded to over 2,500 general telephone inquiries and approximately 1,000 electronic inquiries regarding the AMA and accessibility in general.

From June 4 to 10, 2017, the DIO organized Manitoba Access Awareness Week. Almost 200 individuals attended a half-day accessibility symposium and many more Manitobans participated in events hosted by organizations eager to share their accessibility practices. The DIO also helped organize Disability Employment Awareness Month in October 2017.



[Accessibility News](#) was launched in December 2017. By March, the online newsletter provided over 290 subscribers with information on the latest tools to assist with the development of accessibility policies, accessibility events and answers to frequently asked questions.

The DIO also made resource and navigation improvements for businesses and non-profit organizations visiting www.AccessibilityMB.ca. This site, which acts as a central repository for accessibility information in the province, was visited over 28,000 times during the year. To raise awareness about accessible customer service, the DIO developed and added new resources and tools to the website's [resource list](#), such as posters, Access Offer signs and various accessibility related guides.

Accessible customer service means that organizations provide goods or services in a flexible and barrier-free manner to people of all abilities. Often, this can be done by making simple changes at no cost. In summer 2017, the DIO reached out to approximately 3,000 business and non-profit associations by email, informing them about the legislation and inviting them to workshops or presentations.

To encourage requests for accessible services, government printed 2,000 “How can we help?” bilingual signs with four disability icons. A detailed explanation helps an organization provide accessible service, while the broad distribution of the sign creates accessibility awareness.



As public awareness about accessibility grows, so does the demand for training. In 2017/18, the DIO delivered presentations and training to 2,906 people. Among the organizations that took advantage of this opportunity were:

- Abilities MB
- Tourism Winnipeg
- Sunrise School Division
- Manitoba Library Association
- Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- Credit unions
- Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations
- Manitoba Child Care Association
- Jewish Federation of Winnipeg
- Volunteer Manitoba
- Folklorama

The DIO continues to offer workshops, presentations and webinars for businesses and non-profit organizations on understanding and creating accessible Customer Service Standard policies. Work is also underway to create free online basic training on how to offer accessible customer service.

Compliance and Enforcement

In 2017/18, under the guidance of the AMA Director, Deputy Minister Jay Rodgers, Manitoba Families began to work on the development of a compliance and enforcement framework.

To monitor compliance with the AMA, significant targeted outreach was done to connect with organizations that were required to comply with the AMA and to assist them in developing accessibility plans. When organizations are found not in compliance, the government strives to work closely with them to ensure they are provided tools, resources and support to come into compliance.

As the November 1, 2018 deadline approaches for businesses and non-profit organizations to comply with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, we will continue to support organizations with an emphasis on educating into compliance. A compliance and enforcement framework will be developed in 2018/19, with information on fees and sanctions where educating into compliance falls short. Compliance will become increasingly important in Manitoba as additional accessibility standards come into effect.

Accountability

One important measure of accountability is the requirement to have mandatory and recurring reviews of accessibility legislation. Section 39 of the AMA requires the minister to appoint an individual to conduct an independent review of the AMA's effectiveness, within four years after it first comes into force.

The AMA was enacted in 2013 and in January 2018, Ms. Theresa Harvey Pruden was appointed to undertake the legislative review. The review's [Terms of Reference](#) are publicly available. Ms. Harvey Pruden's final report will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in 2018/19 and will be available to the public.

Looking forward

Our goal under legislation is to identify, prevent and remove barriers by working with public, private and non-profit sector organizations on long range plans to ensure accessibility. Valuable progress was made in 2017/18. This critically important work will continue. The next year promises to be very busy as we continue to fulfill our mandate and implement a vision for an accessible and inclusive Manitoba.

In 2018/19, we will:

- ✓ Continue to make progress on the development and implementation of Accessibility Standards.
- ✓ Develop and widely distribute tools and resources on the existing Customer Service Standard.
- ✓ Ensure Manitoba's Accessibility Employment Standard comes into force.
- ✓ Finalize the Terms of Reference for two new standards related to Transportation and the Built Environment.
- ✓ Develop a draft Communications and Information Standard, for public input.
- ✓ Continue to provide ongoing training sessions on accessibility.
- ✓ Implement a framework for monitoring compliance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.
- ✓ Explore accessible procurement practices in the public sector.
- ✓ Update the existing Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan.
- ✓ Receive and review the findings and recommendations from the four-year review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Contact information

If you have any questions, require this information in an alternate format, wish to subscribe to [Accessibility News](#), or are interested in attending a training workshop, please contact the Disabilities Issues Office.

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