



THE APPEAL COMMISSION
THE WORKERS COMPENSATION ACT OF MANITOBA

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2018 - 2019

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

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Part 1: Baseline Report

Overview of programs and services

The Appeal Commission is established under *The Workers Compensation Act* (the WCA) to hear appeals arising from decisions made by the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba. The Appeal Commission is the final level of appeal in the workers compensation system in Manitoba.

The Appeal Commission also hears appeals under the *Government Employees Compensation Act* and *The Victims' Bill of Rights*.

The Appeal Commission is composed of representatives of workers, employers and the public interest, who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The Appeal Commission occupies leased premises at 330 St. Mary Avenue in Winnipeg.

Statement of Commitment

The Appeal Commission is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for all people, regardless of their abilities. The Appeal Commission is committed to the removal of barriers that are experienced by injured workers and their families, employers, and our employees. The Appeal Commission is committed to treating every individual in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

Our commitment includes meeting the needs of individuals who face accessibility barriers by identifying, removing, and preventing these barriers and by meeting the requirements of *The Accessibility of Manitobans Act* and the associated standards.

Accessibility Achievements

Customer service at the Appeal Commission can occur in person at our office in Winnipeg, through our website, over the telephone, or through written communication.

In Person Accessibility

The building and office space is generally accessible for all people with elevator access, automatic doors, accessible washrooms and wide hallways.

Any Request for Proposal for renovations to be done in the Appeal Commission's office space includes the following clause:

The Contractor must provide all space planning options in consideration of future requirements and obligations anticipated by enactment and proclamation of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. The Contractor must plan with a goal to achieving accessibility by preventing and removing barriers that disabled people may encounter from interaction with the Appeal Commission in respect to (o) employment; (ii) accommodation; (iii) the built environment including facilities, buildings, structures and premises; (iv) delivery and receipt of goods, services and information; and (v) any other prescribed activity or undertaking that may occur in relation to the Appeal Commission's physical operations.

Website Accessibility

The Appeal Commission's website is fully "A" compliant with W3C standards, and is close to fully compliant with the "AA" W3C standards. The website is generally accessible for people with screen readers.

Telephone Accessibility

The Appeal Commission has access Text Telephone (TTY). This device assists with the communication needs for persons who have difficulty using a traditional telephone.

Written Communication Accessibility

The Appeal Commission utilizes communications guidelines to enhance accessibility and service by addressing language, culture, and literacy needs. Some of these guidelines include the use of plain language, simple graphics, and easy-to-read fonts.

Accessibility Barriers

To better understand the barriers to accessibility still present, an internal survey of Appeal Commission staff was conducted. The Appeal Commission also undertook a comprehensive review and analysis of the results of a joint crown agency survey of disability organizations in Manitoba that focused, in part, on workers compensation.

The following sections list some of the barriers to accessibility and potential opportunities to reduce the barriers.

Attitudinal

There are different levels of staff awareness regarding accessibility practices and procedures. There are opportunities to increase the understanding, knowledge, and capability of staff to provide service to individuals with accessibility needs.

Physical and architectural

Some challenges exist with the Appeal Commission's physical environment, including:

- Accessible washrooms limited to 1st and 2nd floor of 330 St. Mary Avenue
- Automatic doors not available on entry to Appeal Commission's office space
- Service counter height not wheelchair accessible
- No designated parking for easier access to the building
- Elevator door closes quickly for people with mobility issues
- No flashing smoke alarms for people hard of hearing

Information and communication

A few barriers to effective communication are present, including:

- Signs in the building are small with limited contrast, which can be difficult to read for persons with a visual impairment
- No staff are trained in American Sign Language
- Not all communications material provide notice the document is available in alternate formats

Technology

Technological solutions have been implemented but barriers remain, including:

- Not all staff trained on how to use TTY phone
- Alternate means of communication - e.g. Skype, online chat - are not available

Systemic

Systemic barriers include:

- Inconsistent processes for addressing accessibility requests
- Reliance on highly verbal behaviour-based interviews, which are essential to hiring and promotion but may hold back individuals with a verbal impairment
- Leased premises require coordination and approval from the landlord to remove potential barriers

Part 2: Accessibility Plan

Overview

The Appeal Commission is committed to meeting the needs of individuals who face accessibility barriers. The Appeal Commission will do this by taking all reasonable steps to ensure that barriers are removed.

Awareness

Not all staff are fully aware of what barriers individuals face when accessing service from the Appeal Commission.

Baseline training will be provided on accessibility for all new and existing staff. Staff will also be provided opportunities to participate in on-going training.

Awareness about accessibility issues will be addressed through regular channels including internal communications and staff meetings.

Communications

The Appeal Commission will follow communications guidelines to enhance accessibility and service for all individuals. Some of the guidelines include the use of plain language, simple graphics, and easy-to-read fonts.

Language, translation, TTY and hearing impaired solutions are already available but not all staff are fully aware of how to access them. The Appeal Commission will ensure staff are aware of these options by including them in our training and awareness activities.

Policies and Practices

The Appeal Commission will review its existing services and any new initiatives to enhance accessibility. Information will be made available in an accessible format or provide communication supports to individuals with disabilities in a way that considers their disability.

Physical Environment

Several areas were identified where enhancements to the physical environment could increase accessibility. The Appeal Commission will consider how we can address the barriers within our control and will consult with our landlord on other barriers.

Evaluation

The Appeal Commission encourages feedback about its Accessibility Plan and any feedback related to accessibility. During the term of this plan, the Appeal Commission will designate a staff resource to be the central contact for any accessibility issues that arise and to work with the Appeal Commission to address any barriers that are identified.

Contact

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Conclusion

The Appeal Commission's objective is to make its environment and services fully accessible. The Appeal Commission appreciates the opportunity provided by *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* to more fully understand and remove all barriers to accessibility.

December 20, 2017

The Appeal Commission