Access Communications Co-operative Limited

2024 Accessibility Plan June Report

2023/2024

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Foreword - Message from – Carole Sauer, Sr Manager HR & Safety

I am pleased to share with you our latest report on our ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility within our organization. As a cooperative, we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where all employees, customers, volunteers and members can thrive.

Our commitment to accessibility aligns with broader societal goals, including Canada's aim to become barrier-free by 2040. By prioritizing accessibility, we not only support the needs of our communities but also contribute to the larger vision of creating a more inclusive society.

We invite you to review the report and welcome your feedback. Your feedback is important in helping us refine our strategies and action to better enhance accessibility. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our employees, customers, and volunteers to contribute to the realization of a barrier-free Canada.

Best regards,

1. General

The Access Accessibility Committee (AAC) is responsible for reporting on the progress made to enhance accessibility from the feedback received from our Accessibility Plan in accordance with the regulations under the Accessible Canada Act.

To provide feedback or request a copy of this report, or require an alternative format, please use the following contact options:

1.1 Contact Information & Feedback Process

You can submit feedback anonymously about accessibility or this report by

contacting:

Senior Manager Human Resources & Safety

accessibility@myaccess.coop

306-565-5344

2250 Park Street

Regina, SK

S4N 7K7

Information how to submit feedback to is also available on our public website at

the following link: https://www.myaccess.ca/accessibility/accessibility-feedback

1.2 Alternative Formats

You can request alternative formats of this plan, and a description of our feedback process by contacting us as described in the feedback section above.

An electronic version (that is compatible with assistive technology) of this plan can be downloaded immediately from our website at:

https://www.myaccess.ca/accessibility/accessibility-plan

We will provide the following alternative formats within 15 days of the initial request:

- Print
- Large print (increased font size)

We will provide the following alternative formats within 45 days of the initial request:

- Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
- Audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud)

1.3 Executive Summary

Following the enactment of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA) in July 2019, Access Communications, as a federally regulated entity, is mandated to adhere to its principles aimed at fostering inclusivity for all Canadians, particularly those living with disabilities, with the ultimate vision of achieving a barrier-free Canada by 2040. The ACA emphasizes seven core principles, including the right to full and equal participation in society without barriers and the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the development of laws, policies, and services. As a not-for-profit cooperative serving numerous communities and vast rural areas in Saskatchewan, Access Communications has long prioritized accessibility across its operations. This commitment is evidenced through initiatives like integrating accessibility features into recent office renovations and ensuring inclusive HR practices. Collaborating with Left Turn Right Turn Ltd. (LTRT), a specialized consultant,

Access Communications conducted surveys and engaged stakeholders to ensure alignment with federal legislation while addressing identified accessibility barriers. The ACA identifies seven priority areas relevant to Access Communications, including employment, the built environment, information and communications technologies (ICT), procurement, program delivery and consultation.

This plan outlines the identified barriers within these priority areas, strategies implemented and ongoing to remove existing barriers, prevent new ones, and sets forth a roadmap, demonstrating our ongoing dedication to accessibility and inclusivity.

1.4 Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this plan:

Disability: Any impairment, or difference in physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, or communication ability. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or can change over time.

Barrier: Anything that might hinder people with disabilities' full and equal participation. Barriers can be architectural, technological, attitudinal, based on information or communications, or can be the result of a policy or procedure.

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies, and rules in a way that allows all people, including people with a variety of disabilities, to access them.

2. Areas Described under Section 5 of the ACA

2.1 The Built Environment

In Regina the co-operative has a combined head office and retail location, while also maintaining a separate warehousing facility. In addition, Access Communications operates retail and office locations throughout Saskatchewan in Estevan, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Weyburn, and Yorkton. The objective is to ensure everyone

(staff/public) who enters the organization's locations/offices have barrier-free access to full and equal participation.

Access Communications reviewed all its offices, retail locations, and buildings in Saskatchewan to identify built environment barriers. The locations are used by employees, volunteers, and customers.

Accessibility Built Goals

- Access Communications will review and update, as necessary, all required accessible signage at every location to identify what is accessible.

- Access Communications will review and evaluate feedback from the survey and implement improvements to the built environment to remove and prevent barriers.

- Access Communications will continually review the built environment to identify ways to implement accessibility best practices, where possible.

- Access Communications will continue to proactively incorporate accessibility considerations into plans for future renovations and/or in acquiring new space.

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

- ➢ Renovation plans are complete and vendor is scheduled to upgrade our main floor bathrooms to be fully accessible at 2250 Park Street in September 2024.

- ➢ In 2024, we upgraded our North Battleford's office bathrooms to be wheelchair accessible and gender neutral.

2.2 Employment

Addressing employment barriers aligns with Access Communications' commitment to the ACA's principles, ensuring equal opportunities for all. With diverse indoor and outdoor positions, including customer-centric roles, certain positions may offer hybrid work options. Access Communications will assess consultation feedback to eliminate hiring, onboarding, training, and well-being barriers. Managers play a pivotal role in the

accommodation process and undergo Mental Health in the Workplace training, showcasing the company's responsiveness to employee needs.

Accessibility Employment Goals

- Access Communication employees will receive training on the fundamental principles of accessible communications, which includes understanding alternate formats and their responsibilities in accommodating such requests. This training will ensure that our employees have the knowledge and skills to effectively meet the needs of individuals who require accessible communication formats.

- Access Communications will review its recruitment and hiring process to find and remove accessibility barriers for job applicants.

- Access Communications will publish and share guidelines on how employees and applicants with disabilities can request accommodation.

- Access Communications will include information in job postings about how applicants can request and receive accommodation during the hiring process. Access will also remind job applicants they can request accommodation when contacted for an interview.

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ In 2023, Access engaged Saskatchewan Abilities Council to employ workers to build out winter kits for all our vehicles across Saskatchewan.

➢ Access has reviewed and updated our external job posting site with an accessibility commitment statement and information for employees to request alternative formats.

➢ A question has been added to the phone screen process to ask all candidates if they require any alternative formats or accommodations.

➢ The self-declaration form has been updated to include a Diversity Equity & Inclusion commitment statement and an accessibility and confidentiality statement to enhance self-identifying with new and existing employees.

➢ We have provided accommodations for employees with respect to specific workspace equipment for physically visually impaired employees. Adjustments to workspaces

were also made for employees with light sensitivity 2023. In addition, our Work from Home (WFH) Policy allows for 50/50 hybrid options. We are currently accommodating employees to WFH 100% due to acute and permanent disabilities.

➢ Our Community Engagement department has ongoing mentorship, internship, and work placements with Saskatchewan Abilities. This past year we mentored an individual from the Mentor Ability Saskatchewan program taking him on location filming live sport games, shows and working in the recording studio.

2.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Addressing ICT-related barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA's principles. Ensuring that Access Communications' internal and external technology tools, including our internal and external websites, are accessible will help employees and customers have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society.

Accessibility ICT Goals

• Access Communications will research, evaluate, and review its communication equipment and technologies to identify barriers and make plans to make them accessible.

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ Our Internal Support department is currently reviewing our standardized headsets for those who require additional accessible headsets for accommodation purposes.

➢ Access has completed an evaluation of our external website and added enhancements to the accessibility page of options with respect to our products and service offerings on the site as well as an Accessibility Feedback Form for employees, customers and volunteers to submit requests.

2.4 Communication, other than ICT

Tackling communication-related barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA's principles. It will ensure that all people are treated with dignity and have meaningful options and the freedom to make their own choices, with support if they desire.

Access Communication's employees and customers communicate in several different ways, from reviewing our internal/external websites, in-person, over the phone, via online chat, and email. A review was done of all internal and external communications, besides ICT, to identify barriers and solutions.

Accessibility Communication Goals

- Access Communications will provide awareness training to its staff for alternate forms of accessibility communication and how to accommodate such requests.

- Access Communications will establish internal standards for plain and inclusive language and incorporate them into internal and external communications whenever possible.

- Access Communications will ensure information in alternative formats is available upon request where possible.

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ We have created a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) dedicated section on our Internal Website with a commitment statement and detailing what programs are currently in place. The site will include all reporting, communication, education, forms, and links. Human Resources has incorporated a module dedicated to DEI into our Orientation to guide employees to the site and understand our commitment.

➢ A communication plan is in place and we have begun to educate and provide tools and resources to staff about accessibility features and how to implement and use the features on software programs used in the company.

➢ Our Marketing and Customer Care department have implemented a process and procedure for employees to follow when an accessibility request is received for alternative formats.

2.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities

Addressing procurement-based barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA's principles. It will help make sure that all persons have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society.

Access Communications buys various products and services to support our work and employees. We use a system of rules and guidelines to ensure we buy competitively priced products, and services for the best value for money. We are dedicated to ensuring the products and services we buy are as accessible as possible. The following goals will ensure accessibility is considered when we make a new purchase.

Accessibility Procurement Goals

- Access Communications will include a review for accessibility considerations for the build environment within its final approval processes to avoid barriers and align with ACA principles where possible. Access Communications will provide awareness training for individuals responsible for procurement within the build environment. receive training and information about how to include accessibility requirements in procurement activities.

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ In 2024, Access is in the process of developing a Procurement Policy that will ensure that accessibility assessment is a requirement with respect to all vendors chosen and inventory procured.

2.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Access Communications provides TV, Internet, and Security products and services to customers as well as local television programing within Saskatchewan through AccessNow TV that includes awareness, celebration and collaboration with designated groups.

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ Refer to Section 2.4 for communications related to products and services.

➢ New to the design and delivery of programs and services is AccessNow TV's focus on the people of Saskatchewan, offering local programs such as It Matters, Discover Ability, and Planting Seeds to raise awareness and eliminate barriers related to various types of disabilities.

3. Consultations

Access formed an internal working group and enlisted Left Turn Right Turn (LTRT), an independent consultant, to identify and address accessibility barriers. LTRT surveyed customers and employees, consulted individuals with disabilities, and provided expertise in accessibility policy development and disability law. They helped analyze survey feedback and implement initiatives to remove existing barriers and prevent new ones. Access continues to collaborate with LTRT and participate in seminars and forums. Access has since formalized the Access Accessibility Committee (AAC) with representatives from across the organization.

On a go-forward basis, Access Communications will continue to consult people with disabilities annually.

3.1 Internal Consultations

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ Consultations with employees are conducted continuously through the Accessibility Committee, via internal communication requests, and by postings on our internal website. Employees are encouraged to submit suggestions for improving our accessibility either through the ticketing system or by directly contacting a member of the committee by email, requesting a face to face consultation or via video meeting. To date, there have been no requests.

3.2 External Consultations

Completed and In Progress 2023/2024

➢ The Access external website at www.myaccess.ca/accessibility is a dedicated page hosting our Accessibility Plan and request for feedback form.

➢ External Communication request for accessibility feedback is posted on our Community Calendar asking customers, volunteers and staff to submit their suggestions to further improve accessibility at all of our locations across the province. This airs on AccessNow TV and is available to view.

4. Conclusion

This accessibility plan identifies successes, barriers, and next steps to remove barriers and prevent new ones based on the feedback received through the internal and external consultation phases. Our report reflects our progress in year one.

Access Communications is committed to implementing this plan to achieve a solid foundation and a fully accessible Canada by 2040.

APPENDIX – The Principles of the ACA

The Principles of the ACA are set out at section 6 of that Act. They are:

a. all persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities;

b. all persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities;

c. all persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities;

d. all persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities;

e. laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons;

f. persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and

g. the development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Access Communications considered these principles in preparing its accessibility plan report.