

Manitoba Hydro's Accessibility Plan 2021-2022

Part 1 – Baseline Report

Overview of Programs and Services

Manitoba Hydro's mandate is to provide for the continuance of a supply of energy to meet the needs of the province and to promote economy and efficiency in the development, generation, transmission, distribution, supply and end-use of energy. The corporation strives to be recognized as a leading utility in North America with respect to safety, reliability, rates, customer satisfaction and environmental leadership.

Manitoba Hydro operates in all regions of the province, and strives to establish cooperative relationships with all customers, suppliers and other stakeholders, aimed at achieving the Corporate Vision.

Accessibility Achievements/Accomplishments to Date

Manitoba Hydro continues to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. All public requests are tracked in an Accessibility Request Registry and over the past four years the corporation has received over 120 requests throughout the province. The feedback provided helped remove barriers in the areas of customer service, built environment, and accessible formats. From this information the corporation has taken various steps over the past four years to integrate accessibility into our organization and workplace, including:

- Collaborating with customers and members of the public on a case-by-case basis to respond to their individual accessible needs. The Corporation has successfully accommodated requests related to accessible formats & communication (in both official languages); mobility requirements; public event accessibility requests; and customer service procedures such as meter reading and customer billing.
- Manitoba Hydro has a cross-functional Accessibility Working Group to ensure compliance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) requirements. The working group is responsible to identify policies, programs, practices, and services that cause or may cause barriers to people with disabilities within their respective corporate or operating groups.
- Manitoba Hydro created three online training modules to educate employees on the AMA, The Human Rights Code and Accessible Customer Service Standard. As of December 11, 2020, AMA training has been taken by 100% of Manitoba Hydro employees and the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board members.
- All new employees are required to complete the online AMA training within their first month of employment with the company. Records of completion are retained by Manitoba Hydro's online training portal.

- Manitoba Hydro released a new version of its online Outage Map available to customers through desktop or mobile devices. This information is available in accessible digital platforms that increase access for customers who have accessibility challenges contacting Manitoba Hydro via phone.
- Manitoba Hydro released a new customer online account portal through desktop and mobile devices. The new state-of-the-art customer self-service portal is in compliance with Manitoba Accessibility standards and provides greatly expanded digital platform for customer engagement and service that increase access for customers who have accessibility challenges contacting Manitoba Hydro via phone.
- Manitoba Hydro created a process for meter reader handheld devices to identify customer accessibility requirements by address.
- Manitoba Hydro has developed a process to accommodate customers in rural (self-read) areas that cannot read their meter due to a visual disability, by ensuring the meter is read regularly by a Manitoba Hydro staff member (or contractor) at no cost to the customer.
- Manitoba Hydro updated its procurement procedure to include AMA requirements for all contracts that would have interaction with the public on behalf of the corporation.
- Manitoba Hydro created an internal webpage dedicated to Accessibility at Manitoba Hydro. This webpage includes multiple resources to assist employees with accessibility requests: guidelines on interacting with people with disabilities; accessible format standards and checklists; and respectful language and terminology.
- When Manitoba Hydro hosts public events, the planning process includes consideration of accessibility needs.
- Manitoba Hydro reviewed and documented the accessibility features of buildings that have public access to enhance employee's awareness of accessible features.
- Manitoba Hydro has developed a standard Accessibility Audit process for reviewing current building conditions against Accessibility Codes and Standards. The building specific audit report is used to prioritize Accessibility related capital upgrades.
- Accessibility audits were conducted at multiple locations. Capital building projects to improve accessibility included upgrades to access ramp; grade-level access; installed multiple auto door operators; and renovated a washroom to be accessible.
- A signage template has been created to notify public when accessible features of the building are not working.
- Manitoba Hydro has created a link on its external website that shows accessibility features of various buildings.
- Manitoba Hydro has compiled a set of automated accessibility testing tools to help identify and correct accessibility issues with Manitoba Hydro's external website.
- Manitoba Hydro continues to inform candidates during large recruitments that reasonable accommodations are available upon request during any phase of the assessment and recruitment process.
- Manitoba Hydro has created individual Emergency Response Plans for employees with disabilities and developed a process, when consent granted, to share the information on these Emergency Response Plans with emergency response personnel.

Accessibility Barriers

To better understand the barriers to accessibility encountered at Manitoba Hydro, a process was created to gather public feedback about accessibility via email, in person or phone. The information is tracked in a registry. Most barriers identified by the public have been addressed and ones that require a longer-term solution are identified in our accessibility plan.

Some of the barriers identified through the feedback mechanism were:

Attitudinal:

- Different levels of employee understanding, knowledge and awareness when providing service to customers with accessibility needs.

Physical and architectural:

- Building entrances are not accessible in all locations and some have limited accessible parking options.
- Some door handles are problematic for people with dexterity issues.

Informational and communication:

- Communication challenges for receiving information about our goods and services for people who have a hearing or visual impairment.

Technology:

- Sections of Manitoba Hydro's external website (including web documents) are not fully accessible for screen readers, such as our online application system.

Systemic:

- Continue to integrate accessibility considerations into processes and procedures to improve customer service to individuals with disabilities.

Part 2 – Accessibility Plan

Statement of Commitment

Manitoba Hydro is committed to achieving accessibility and meeting the needs and abilities of all people while ensuring their dignity and independence is maintained.

Manitoba Hydro believes in inclusion, values diversity, and recognizes the importance of improving access and removing barriers for its customers, public and employees. Manitoba Hydro is committed to meeting the requirements of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA).

Manitoba Hydro’s Accessibility Plan

Manitoba Hydro has, and will continue to, incorporate accessibility measures into its policies, procedures, training, and websites, as identified in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: 2020-2021

Accessibility Requirement	Outcomes
General Requirement	
Accessibility Policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review and update as required Manitoba Hydro Accessibility Policy and Statement of Commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide a clear message and overarching direction about accessibility at Manitoba Hydro.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the multi-year accessibility plan every two (2) years. • Provide an annual progress report on the accessibility plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify actions and priorities that will assist Manitoba Hydro in becoming more accessible. • Create employee awareness and support of AMA and Manitoba Hydro’s Accessibility Plan. • Continuously review Accessibility Plan to ensure it is up to date with current practices and technologies.
Accessibility Requests	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide documents in an accessible format upon request. • Continue to monitor customer feedback regarding ease of use for reporting accessibility requests. • Monitor and take appropriate action on requests from members of the public in the accessibility registry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure customers and employees have a clear and accessible manner in which to report and receive feedback regarding barriers and accessibility. • Provide information and communication in accessible formats. • Track accessibility requests in a corporate registry and ensure requests are dealt with in a timely manner.
Training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and monitor AMA course completions. • Review training content of AMA modules and update as new AMA standards are announced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure employees are educated on AMA legislation and standards. • Train employees to anticipate and address accessibility barriers in advance and respond to customer requests for accommodation.

Customer Service	
Barrier Free Access to Goods & Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design customized training for employees on complex accessibility requests. • Strive to improve barrier free access to goods and services. • Create processes and protocols on accommodations required when a barrier cannot be removed and develop or provide reasonable alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve customer service for members of the public facing barriers to goods and services. • Provide a consistent customer service process for members of the public making accessibility requests. • Provide accommodations and/or alternatives when a barrier cannot be removed from a facility or workplace.
Communication Supports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist and consult with customers who self-identify as being disabled by a barrier in addressing their needs. • Recognize and support customers that use assistive devices, support persons or service animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers receive equal and timely access to information, goods or services. • Employees are aware of accessible formats and communication supports to enhance customer service.
Public Events	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise processes, resources and/or checklists for employees to ensure reasonable accessibility to public events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public events are accessible to all Manitobans.

Built Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider incorporating barrier free, Universal Design principles when upgrading current and designing new buildings. • Perform accessibility audits to review current building conditions against Accessibility Codes and Standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve physical access for the public to various Manitoba Hydro buildings. • Strive to create barrier-free facilities and workplaces.
Information & Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review external website content and identify ways to improve accessibility. • Develop all new website content to comply with WCAG version 2.0 Level AA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to Manitoba Hydro information on external website.

Employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create individual Emergency Response Plans for employee with disabilities that require assistance. When consent is given, develop process to share information with emergency response personnel. • Continue to review employment programs and processes to identify and/or remove employment barriers. • Improve awareness opportunities for the candidates to request reasonable accommodations during the recruitment process. • Ensure new hires are informed about our policies for accommodating employees in the workplace. • Review reasonable accommodation policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure employees with disabilities that require assistance have individual Emergency Response Plans. • Ensure emergency response personnel have, when consent provided, access to Emergency Response Plans. • Enhance employment opportunities for members of the public disabled by barriers. • Ensure candidates are aware of the process to request reasonable accommodations during recruitment. • Ensure accommodation policy is aligned with Employment Standard.