



# **Accessibility Plan**

## **2018-2020**

Last draft update: October 31, 2018

Available in alternate formats upon request.

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## Table of Contents

Part 1 - Baseline Report.....	4
Overview: Who We Are .....	4
Our Leadership: Elected Board, Committees .....	4
Services We Offer .....	4
Barrier Identification Methods.....	5
Membership Accessibility Survey .....	5
Physical Audit of MGEU Offices.....	5
Our Accessibility Achievements.....	5
Communications and Public Relations .....	6
Events and Meetings .....	6
Member Education and Training .....	6
Member Services.....	7
Staff and Human Resources .....	8
Offices and Operations .....	8
Accessibility Barriers .....	8
Communications and Public Relations .....	8
Events and Meetings .....	9
Member Education and Training .....	9
Member Services.....	9
Staff and Human Resources .....	9
Offices and Operations .....	10
Part 2 - Accessibility Plan.....	11
A. Our Statement of Commitment .....	11
B. Our Policies, Procedures and Practices .....	11
C. Multi-Year Actions.....	11
Appendix A – Glossary of Terms and Definitions .....	14

# Message from MGEU President Michelle Gawronsky

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It is an honour to present the **Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union** Accessibility Plan on behalf of our 40,000 members, Board of Directors, and staff.

I am proud that the MGEU is a leader in the labour movement as we continue to take steps to provide accessible services to our members. We know that the labour movement has been a strong advocate for accessible and inclusive policies in our workplaces and we must continue to improve our own organizations to create a culture where access is open and all members feel welcome.

The MGEU has supported the efforts of Barrier-Free Manitoba, a community driven initiative, that has been advocating for the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) for many years. The implementation of the AMA and the Customer Service Standard is a significant achievement on the path to improved accessibility. However, it is our goal to do better than the guidelines outlined in the AMA. As an organization that models itself on inclusivity, we are committed to going beyond our obligations and planning for a future that removes obstacles for people disabled by barriers.

The MGEU was pleased to partner with the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities (MLPD) to assist in completing an accessibility review of MGEU offices and services. MLPD facilitated the drafting of the Accessibility Plan after conducting an online membership survey to identify barriers to accessibility and improve access to MGEU services.

**The establishment of the MGEU's accessibility plan and policies will ensure that we** celebrate our achievements and establish a roadmap that will advance our shared goals and build a union that we can all be proud of.

In the coming years, we will be pushing the government to implement the remaining accessibility standards (Employment, Information and Communication, Transportation and Build Environment) to improve accessibility for all Manitobans. We know that Manitoba is stronger when everyone has a better understanding of accessibility and the **MGEU will continue to do our part in "Putting People First"**.

# Part 1 - Baseline Report

## Overview: Who We Are

The Manitoba Government and **General Employees' Union** is a progressive, democratic Union committed to improving the working conditions and lives of all of its diverse members and all Manitobans.

We accomplish this through an active, informed membership and professional expertise in **bargaining solid collective agreements, serving member's needs, bringing new unorganized members into the Union and influencing government policy.**

**MGEU is leading the way in "putting people first" by promoting good jobs for Manitobans, stressing the importance of quality public services, and helping to build stronger communities.**

The MGEU represents over 40,000 Manitobans who live and work throughout Manitoba **in a wide variety of workplaces — roughly 14,000 are employed directly by the Province** of Manitoba and others work in crown corporations, universities and colleges, health care, social service agencies as well as arts and cultural organizations.

The MGEU provides services across Manitoba through our head office in Winnipeg and seven (7) regional offices in The Pas, Thompson, Dauphin, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk and Steinbach.

## Our Leadership: Elected Board, Committees

The MGEU is a democratically-run organization.

Members elect their fellow members as stewards, table officers and convention delegates. At the MGEU Convention held every two years, a member-based board of directors works with elected delegates to make decisions regarding overall union policy, direction and goals.

Throughout the year, the Provincial Officers provide direction for the union along with the rest of the Board of Directors, who are elected from specific Locals and each provincial Area. As well, Standing Committees, chaired by a board member plus one member elected from each provincial Area, work throughout the year to forward progressive policies and benefits on behalf of their fellow members.

## Services We Offer

The MGEU was the first union in North America to establish a Resource Centre (RC) staffed by five full-time representatives. The Resource Centre is the centralised intake and first line of assistance for members needing information or answers to any questions. Members can contact the Resource Centre by phone, email or fax.

MGEU “activists” elected from the membership work closely with professional MGEU staff to:

- Bargain with employers to achieve better wages, benefits and working conditions;
- Assist members when they have concerns about their workplace or feel they've been treated unfairly;
- Monitor and influence policy that will affect members' interests and concerns.

## **Barrier Identification Methods**

The process of identifying and understanding barriers encountered when accessing our physical locations and member services is on-going. MGEU continues to rely on internal expertise in working with members disabled by barriers, as well as collaborating with external stakeholders. Representatives from the disability community were actively consulted in the preparation of this Accessibility Plan.

## **Membership Accessibility Survey**

The MGEU developed an Accessibility Survey, which was distributed to members between December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The survey was completed by 1,480 MGEU members who were asked to provide feedback on MGEU services and operations. The feedback identified barriers experienced by MGEU members which will allow us to improve the services we provide. The survey also recognized our achievements in providing accessible services and highlighted the areas where we excel at providing accessible services.

## **Physical Audit of MGEU Offices**

The MGEU partnered with the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities (MLPD) and Enabling Access to complete Customer Service Accessibility Screenings (CSAS) at three MGEU offices. The offices in Winnipeg, Brandon and Selkirk were audited by Accessibility Professionals, Occupational Therapists and User Testers with lived experience facing barriers. They provided a report on the accessibility of the MGEU offices related to the Customer Service Standard. The findings from the report will inform recommendations regarding our service and physical environment going forward.

## **Our Accessibility Achievements**

- In 2018, an Accessibility Coordinator was appointed and Accessibility Working Group established with a wide representation of staff dedicated to Accessibility Plan development, implementation and review.
- We are beginning to implement the Customer Service Standard. An Accessibility Policy has been drafted to ensure accessible services for members. Accessible customer service training will be given to all MGEU staff and the Board of Directors. The training will also be made available to all activists.

- We have policies that encourage inclusion and respect – for example our Respectful Workplace Policy.
- Responses from the recent MGEU Member Accessibility Survey were overall very positive. Seventy-four percent of members disabled by barriers completing the survey reported that they always felt treated with dignity and respect when interacting with MGEU.

## **Communications and Public Relations**

- Our website is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI).
- Alternate formats of publications are available by request.
- We utilize many different communication methods and platforms (social media, website, YouTube) to get our messages out.
- Over 75% of members disabled by barriers participating in our Accessibility Survey reported that they have not experienced barriers when using our websites or social media feeds.
- 79% of members surveyed did not experience barriers when receiving information or communicating with the MGEU.

## **Events and Meetings**

- Meetings are encouraged to take place at accessible (and unionised) locations.
- Our scent-free policy is included in all meeting notices.
- Our Convention and conferences are held in accessible locations and are scent-free and nut-free.
- Meeting notices for large events include requests for accommodations and/or supports in advance.
- Event and meeting organisers try to accommodate all reasonable requests whenever possible, including last minute requests.
- About 84% of members disabled by barriers participating in our Accessibility Survey reported that they have not experienced barriers to participating fully in our events or meetings.

## **Member Education and Training**

- In-person training sessions take place in physically accessible locations.
- Reasonable accommodation and supports are requested in advance and regularly provided.
- Learning Together with Respect guidelines are reviewed at the beginning of every course. They include the following two points:

- *It's hard to learn when you are physically uncomfortable. Let the facilitator know if you find the room too hot/cold, take a washroom break when needed, get up and stretch if your back is sore...*
- *Due to increasing sensitivities and allergies to strong scents, all MGEU events, including Membership Education courses, are scent-free.*
- We currently offer multiple courses that directly raise and discuss issues related to disability and accessibility. These include all of our Workplace Safety and Health courses as well as Return to Work, Workers Compensation and Respectful Workplace.
- The Membership Education Calendar includes instructions on special requirements (dietary, allergy, mobility, visual, hearing etc.) as a course participant, to indicate on the course application form the accommodations requested. This information can also be updated on THE SOURCE on the "Make Changes" tab.
- Course registration acceptance letters include the "Special Requirements" section: *Please contact the MGEU Resource Centre if you have dietary, allergy, mobility, visual, hearing or other requirements. We will do our best to accommodate your needs.*
- Learning materials have been provided electronically in advance by request.
- Some Videos are available online for courses.
- Documents have been provided in alternate formats by request. For example, Steward/Local Table Officer Course binders use larger 14-point font and have been produced with an even larger font upon request.
- Almost 41% of members disabled by barriers participating in our Accessibility Survey had not experienced barriers to participating fully in our MGEU Member Education Courses or other training sessions. Roughly 53% of those polled had not attended our courses or training before.

## **Member Services**

- We have a centralized contact process for members. The Resource Centre can be contacted by phone, email or fax and provides prompt and friendly assistance for our members.
- Staff representatives ensure accommodations are provided and meeting locations are physically accessible.
- Approximately 61% of members disabled by barriers that participated in our Accessibility Survey did not experience barriers when contacting our Resource Centre. About 35% of those surveyed had not contacted our Resource Centre.



## **Staff and Human Resources**

- We are committed to being an accessible employer, and have implemented accessibility practices, policies and procedures for reasonable accommodation. We will review these regularly, including once the Employment Standard has been released to make improvements as necessary.
- We are currently developing accessible customer service training options for staff education.
- Staff from our IT and Communications departments have received additional training on accessible information and communication requirements.

## **Offices and Operations**

- We pride ourselves on balancing accessibility principles with the safety of our workers.
- Maintaining an inclusive, barrier-free path of travel at all of our locations remains a top priority.
- Scent free policy enforced at our offices.
- Many of our offices are leased locations, which presents limitations in our ability to make changes to the physical environment of these properties. We continue to encourage landlords to improve accessibility in our locations.
- When renovating our locations, MGEU strives to consider accessibility features that exceed the current required standards.
- Accessible parking is available at almost half of our locations and continues to be increased.
- We have installed automated doors at three of our office entrances (Winnipeg, Brandon and Selkirk). Other rural office entrances can be unlocked and the door opened by staff.
- Accessible washroom facilities are available at all of our office locations.
- 49% of members disabled by barriers that took our Accessibility Survey had not encountered barriers when visiting our office locations. 47% of members polled had not visited an MGEU office location.

## **Accessibility Barriers**

### **Communications and Public Relations**

- We require a formal process to provide alternate formats of communication materials, including information regarding accessible document requirements.
- Our current website is not compliant with the highest accessibility standards – up to WCAG 2.1 currently in development by the W3C – and will be updated once the provincial Information and Communications Standard is released.

- On a go-forward basis, all MGEU video content on YouTube, social media channels, and the website will be captioned.
- Ensuring we always add alt-text and descriptive images to pictures.
- Members are not currently notified regarding temporary barriers. A process is being established to provide notice regarding temporary disruption of services in our draft Accessibility Policy and is currently in beginning stages.
- A process is required to notify members of temporary disruptions that may cause barriers to member services. For example, if an elevator is out of service. This is required under the Customer Service Standard.

## **Events and Meetings**

- While attempts are made to book meetings and events at accessible locations, this is not always possible. For example, in a small rural community without many location options.
- Teleconferencing options should be explored, to allow members to call in or attend virtually.
- We should standardize meeting notices for accessibility requests, to ensure consistency.

## **Member Education and Training**

- We could improve informing our members about accessibility initiatives and requesting feedback on any barriers encountered. For example, promoting accessibility during member orientation.
- An accessibility statement should be added to education and training course information.

## **Member Services**

- Re-examining voting process to ensure member participation while upholding the secret ballot voting method.
- We could improve informing our members about accessibility initiatives and requesting feedback on any barriers encountered. We need to develop a two-way feedback mechanism to document barriers and our response to removing or reducing those barriers.

## **Staff and Human Resources**

- Staff would benefit from on-going training related to the accessible customer service standard. Training could be included in the onboarding process for new hires.
- Staff may not be aware of how to appropriately support members disabled by barriers, including hidden disabilities such as mental health issues.

- Systematically, more opportunities could be utilized to promote staff understanding and awareness regarding reasonable accommodation, accessibility initiatives and the process to provide feedback on barriers encountered. For example, providing resources during staff onboarding.
- Employment and HR practices will need to be reviewed once the provincial Employment Standard is released.

## **Offices and Operations**

- We will promote the importance of maintaining a barrier-free path of travel and provide notice to our members concerning barriers that cannot be removed.
- Processes for providing feedback and notifying members regarding temporary disruption of barriers require development.
- Accessible parking is not available at all of our offices. We do not own all parking lots and therefore have limited ability to increase accessible parking at certain locations.
- Signage is not always accessibility compliant to current Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines. We will review accessible signage before making major updates to current signage.
- Many of our offices are leased buildings and will require coordination and approval from landlords to remove barriers.
- If possible in our office locations, we will review access to washrooms, including door locks and other potential barriers.

# Part 2 - Accessibility Plan

## A. Our Statement of Commitment

The Manitoba Government and General Employees’ Union (MGEU) is committed to improving the lives of its diverse membership and all Manitobans, including persons with disabilities. MGEU is leading the way in “putting people first” by forming this ad hoc Working Group to ensure equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in ways that allow them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion. We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face accessibility barriers. We will do this by identifying, removing and preventing barriers and by meeting the requirements of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)*.

## B. Our Policies, Procedures and Practices

We will monitor the AMA and its related standards on a regular basis to ensure accessibility compliance. We will undertake a complete review of our policies, procedures and practices from an accessibility perspective, at minimum, every 5 years. MGEU will make information available in an accessible format or provide communication supports to members disabled by barriers in a way that considers their disability.

## C. Multi-Year Actions

### Action 1 – Reinforce our commitment to accessibility and monitor our progress

Initiatives/action	Expected outcomes
Ensure all future locations consider accessibility requirements	Barriers in the built environment that may have a negative impact to customer service are addressed with appropriate solutions.
Promote accessibility when procuring or acquiring goods and/or services externally.	Barrier-free goods and services considered when procuring external vendors/agents.
Accessibility Coordinator reports regularly to Senior Management.	Provide update to leadership on Accessibility Plan and Policy and review plan every six years.

## Action 2 – Implement Customer Service Standard

Initiatives/action	Expected outcomes
Review and adopt policies, procedures and practices from an accessibility perspective.	Clear policies for identifying and removing barriers and responding to member needs for accommodation.
Maintain barrier-free path of travel at all offices.	Barriers are removed or reduced.
Develop two-way feedback process for providing notice of temporary barriers, requesting alternate formats, and responding to other accessibility-related concerns or requests.	Temporary barriers are recognized and reported in multiple ways on MGEU's social media, website and by Resource Centre. Feedback mechanism implemented to uncover barriers, solutions and other accessibility concerns.
Develop process to document barriers and response.	Barriers are documented and continue to be identified, prevented, reduced and/or removed.
Prioritize accessibility upgrades when renovating to ensure critical, high value areas - such as entrances, washrooms, signage/wayfinding and paths of travel are barrier-free or barrier reduced.	Prioritize removal and reduction of physical barriers when upgrades or renovations are made.

## Action 3 – Improve member engagement and full participation in union activities

Initiatives/action	Expected outcomes
Promote the availability of alternate formats on request by including an "active offer" on all new publications.	All communication from March 2018 onward provide active offer of alternate formats.
Provide barrier-free meetings and events, choosing accessible locations.	Accommodations and supports provided at events and meetings as required.
Request accommodations at all events, meetings and education sessions.	Accommodations and supports provided at events and meetings as required.
Create check-lists and other resources, ensuring events are accessible.	Event organizers knowledgeable regarding accessibility resources available with access.
Ensure when website is redeveloped that it's accessible to latest web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1).	Accessible website compliant with Communications and Information Standard, once released.
Caption videos posted on YouTube, social media and website.	Ensure accessible content for social media and web platform.
Ensure alt-text and descriptive images added to pictures.	Create communications content that is accessible.
Improve wayfinding by enhancing accessible signage.	Signage and wayfinding improved in compliance with current accessibility standards.

#### **Action 4 – Promote accessibility awareness and training**

<b>Initiatives/action</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
Customer Service Standard Training for all staff, activists and the Board of Directors.	Staff, activists and the Board of Directors understand their responsibilities and support the implementation of the Accessibility Plan and Policy.
New hires trained in a timely manner during onboarding.	Accessibility information, policies and our plan are easily accessible.
Implement Accessibility Plan, including the identification, and removal of barriers	Barriers to accessibility identified and removed. Appropriate notices of temporary barriers will be provided.
Include Accessibility information in publications and communications such as the Union Bug.	Resources provided to support accessibility initiatives and action as outlined through multiple sources.
Create webpage to disseminate accessibility information and provide process for feedback regarding barriers.	Resources provided to support accessibility initiatives and action as outlined through multiple sources.
Review marketing and outreach materials to ensure diverse representation including people disabled by barriers.	Resources provided to support accessibility initiatives and action as outlined through multiple sources.
Provide advance accessibility training to select staff and include instruction on accessible formats.	Reduce stigma and misunderstanding surrounding disability, including hidden disabilities like mental health issues.

Contact the Accessibility Coordinator

Email: [resourcecentre@mgeu.ca](mailto:resourcecentre@mgeu.ca)

Phone: 204-982-6438

October 31, 2018

/sjm  
acte 1725

# Appendix A – Glossary of Terms and Definitions

## **Access**

Persons should have barrier-free access to places, events and other functions that are generally available in the community.

## **Accessibility**

giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. Accessibility refers to the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.

## **Alt Tags**

Also referred to as alt attributes, they provide a verbal description of visuals or graphs.

## **Alt Text**

Alternative text. Provides another way of conveying the information provided by an image to users that cannot see the image and use screen reader technology.

## **Alternate Formats**

Different ways of providing information beyond traditional printed material. Examples include large print, electronic text, CD ROMs, DVD's and Braille.

## **Barrier**

For a person who has a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability, a barrier is anything that interacts with that disability in a way that may **hinder the person's full and** effective participation in society on an equal basis (as found in section 3 (1) of the AMA.

## **Captioning**

Text at the bottom of the screen (television/video) allowing users to follow the oral dialogue.

## **Path of Travel**

A continuous, unobstructed way of pedestrian passage, including but not limited to walkways and sidewalks, curb ramps and other interior or exterior pedestrian ramps, clear floor paths through lobbies, hallways, corridors, rooms, parking access aisles, elevators and lifts, or a combination of these elements.

## **Screen Reader**

Technology that converts digital text into synthesized speech, enabling users to hear content and navigate with the keyboard.

## **Signage**

Displayed verbal, symbolic, tactile and pictorial information.

# Appendix A – Glossary of Terms and Definitions

## **Tactile**

Describes an object that can be perceived using the sense of touch.

## **Wayfinding**

Information systems that guide users through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space. This may include signs, maps, and other graphic or audible methods used to convey location and directions to users.