

**REPORT OF THE
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES
TO THE MGEU 66TH CONVENTION 2021**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Area 2 Veronica Boychuk

Area 4 Ed Miller

Area 7 Pam Narynski

Area 8 Valdine Flaming

Chair Diane Arksey

Staff Andy Regier, Research Analyst

Betty Harrison, Administrative Assistant

Sandy Ironside, Administrative Assistant (retired)

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the MGEU appointed an Accessibility Coordinator and the Accessibility Working Group was established with a wide representation of staff dedicated to Accessibility Plan development, implementation, and review.

In 2018, the MGEU Convention passed a resolution directing the Board of Directors to form a committee to address disability issues, which was established as the Ad Hoc Committee on Accessibility Issues and continued the function of the Working Group.

The Committee's mandate includes providing advice to the Board of Directors and Senior Staff on organization policies, communications and public relations, member education and training, events and meetings, member services, staff and human resources, and offices and operations. We have highlighted our achievements in these areas below, but recognize that the workplaces our members work in, our Union, and society in general, has much more work to do in creating a barrier-free and truly inclusive world.

POLICIES SUPPORTING INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

An Accessibility Policy has been adopted to guide accessible services for members and have implemented policies that encourage inclusion and respect - for example, our Respectful Workplace Policy.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

○ **Campaigns**

- The MGEU launched the "Healthy Minds at Work" campaign in October of 2020 to address attitudinal stigma and invisible barriers faced by our staff and members. The campaign aims to engage MGEU members on workplace mental health, raising awareness of mental health as a workplace issue, helping members have conversations about mental health, connecting members with mental health resources and supports, and providing members with tools and information to advocate for employer action on mental health and wellness at work.
- We partnered with UFCW in the "Not Just a Job" campaign to increase the profile of the important services and supports provided by our members to people living with disabilities.

○ **Advocacy**

- Members of the Committee took part in the government's consultation on the implementation of AMA's (Accessibility for Manitobans Act) Customer Service and Employment Standard.

- The MGEU submitted feedback to the province on the Design of Public Spaces Standard review urging the government to improve physical accessibility for all.
- **Communications**
 - The MGEU website is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). The mgeu.ca site was updated to enhance contrast in colours to improve visibility of content. As guidelines are updated, we are committed to ensuring our website is compliant when the site is updated or refreshed.
 - An Accessibility tab was included on the website where our policies are published and to include contact information for the Accessibility Coordinator.
 - 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.
 - We have a process to notify members of temporary disruptions that may cause barriers to member services. For example, if an elevator is out of service we post the information prominently on our website and consider social media posts when appropriate as required under the Customer Service Standard.
 - Video captioning on our YouTube videos, social media, and website is provided when they include dialogue.
 - We add alt-text and descriptive images to pictures that are included in web stories and online publications.

MEMBER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Nearly 200 activists have received the online Customer Service training module provided via the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities (MLPD). We are planning to offer a similar online training module for the Employment Standard.
- The Board of Directors received in-person training on the AMA and the Customer Service Standard by MLPD.
- The Ad Hoc Committee on Accessibility Issues has participated in webinars exploring disability issues and have invited guest speakers to provide additional opportunities to hear different perspectives and stimulate discussion.
- 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.
- We 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 can be provided electronically in advance by request.
- Documents have been provided in alternate formats by request. Steward/Local Table Officer Course binders use larger 14-point font and have been produced with an even larger font upon request.

EVENTS AND MEETINGS

- Meetings are encouraged to take place at accessible (and unionized) locations whenever possible.

- Event and meeting organizers try to accommodate all reasonable requests whenever possible, including last minute requests.
- Due to increasing sensitivities and allergies to strong scents, all MGEU events, including Membership Education courses, are scent-free.
- Our Convention and conferences are held in accessible locations and are scent-free and nut-free. Our 2021 Convention will be held virtually due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Our organization will continue to include an active offer on registration forms for delegates requiring accommodations.

MEMBER SERVICES

- We have a centralized contact process for members. The Resource Centre can be contacted by phone, email, or fax and provides prompt assistance for our members.
- Staff Representatives ensure accommodations are provided and meeting locations are physically accessible whenever possible.
- Translation services are provided, when requested, to assist in communication between members and staff.

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 have developed accessible customer service training options for staff education through in-person and online training.
- Customer service training has been included in the onboarding process for new hires through MLPD.
- Accessible customer service training has been provided to MGEU staff through one two-hour in-person training session and staff have completed an online training module, both provided by MLPD.
- Staff have received training on how to appropriately support members disabled by barriers, including hidden disabilities such as mental health issues. Most recently, staff have been provided training on Mental Health/Mental Illness and services available for support through the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). MGEU leadership has also completed Mental Health First Aid training to support staff and members in crisis.
- Staff from our IT and Communications Units have received additional training on accessible information and communication requirements.

OFFICES AND OPERATIONS

- Maintaining an inclusive, barrier-free path of travel at all of our locations remains a top priority.
- Many of our offices are leased locations, which presents limitations in our ability to make changes to the physical environment of these properties. We will work with landlords to improve accessibility when possible.
- When renovating our locations, MGEU strives to consider accessibility features that exceed the current required standards.
- Signage has been updated to be accessibility compliant to current Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines.

In Solidarity,

Ad Hoc Committee on Accessibility Issues