

AIR CANADA'S ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023 - 2026

Summary

Air Canada has long tried to make air travel as accessible as we can. Our Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) takes us further in that direction. We want to enhance accessibility for employees and customers with disabilities because dignified and safe air travel and meaningful employment are important for all Canadians.

We did not design our Plan alone. To help us, we talked to customers and employees with disabilities, we asked their views about accessibility at Air Canada, and we used their feedback.

Our Plan outlines how we will over the next three years, act on our commitment towards accessibility. For us, "accessibility" means removing barriers to safe and

dignified travel and employment, helping more people have access to the services and opportunities we offer.

Working with all stakeholders, we will focus our efforts in the following areas:

1. How we train our employees on accessibility, helping them deliver their best for our customers.
2. Website and app accessibility for customers and employees.
3. Making it easier for customers to know about our accessibility-related products and services and to let us know which ones they need.
4. Safe handling of mobility aids by everyone involved.
5. Transfer to and from aircraft seats.
6. Mobility and guidance assistance through the airport.
7. How to make our buildings more accessible.
8. How we incorporate accessibility when we source products and services, including aircraft.

9. How we recruit and hire new employees, and how to make employment with us more accessible and the employee accommodation process easier.
10. Supporting employee resource groups and creating an accessibility advisory committee.

In these areas, we will look for feasible ways to improve our actions and strategies towards greater accessibility or to assess what needs to be done to meet that goal.

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1. GENERAL

1.1. Our mission

Air Canada is the largest provider of scheduled passenger air travel services in the Canadian market, the Canada-U.S. transborder market, and in the international market to and from Canada. Our mission is to connect Canada and the world. We are committed to offering a high level of customer service and providing a dignified, positive and safe flight experience for all passengers. As Canada's flag carrier, we recognize the role we play in advancing accessibility, and have long tried to make air travel as accessible as we can.

We are committed to the inclusion of employees, customers and others of diverse abilities, and to treating everyone in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

We have prepared our Plan as contemplated by the *Accessible Canada Act* and taking our obligations under the *Canada Transportation Act* into account. We will be guided by these in the implementation of our Plan.

1.2. Our commitment

Our President and Chief Executive Officer, Michael Rousseau, has confirmed our commitment in our Accessibility Policy, which reflects three main areas of continuing focus:

- **Culture:** We listen to our customers and employees to better understand their needs, and to foster a culture of respect and dignity.
- **Leadership:** We integrate accessibility into our decision-making and partnerships so that we can improve the customer and employee experience.
- **Training:** We provide enhanced training and tools needed to serve our customers and employees.

1.3. Some of the things we've done and will continue to do

We have acted on our commitment to accessibility for many years. Our own achievements include:

- We were the first airline nine years ago to develop in-flight entertainment systems having a fully accessible mode allowing customers managing vision issues to navigate purely through audio cues, which we have since then steadily added to new aircraft.
- We took a leadership role at an international industry level to develop an effective framework to promote the safe carriage of mobility aids around the world, including through IATA's Mobility Aids Action Group.
- We have a best-in-class training programme that includes testimonials from customers with disabilities about their real-life experiences, helping us to increase awareness among our employees.
- We work with international, industry or accessibility organizations, aircraft and mobility aid manufacturers, and safety regulators to develop safe solutions that reduce barriers to air travel. These include organizations such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Airlines for America (A4A), and the National

Airlines Council of Canada (NACC). We aim that way to help improve and promote consistent standards worldwide, which is a key part of improving accessibility in air travel.

1.4. About the air transportation system

Air travel requires the close collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including airport authorities, ground and baggage handlers, customs and security agencies, and aircraft manufacturers. Each plays a critical role in the complex global ecosystem that makes up air travel. Airlines like Air Canada are among many such participants who must work together to deliver end-to-end dignified and safe air travel.

Improved accessibility therefore often requires industry-wide changes and broad collaboration. Their feasibility and timing are dependent on many factors, including operational or financial considerations and safety regulations, some of which are outside the control of any single participant in our industry. These may include design, manufacturing or supply chain issues, safety

considerations, testing and other regulatory requirements, and technological limitations. For example, the design, development and manufacture of aircraft is a complex multi-year process involving manufacturers, suppliers, and regulators.

Our employees must also work in this ecosystem performing a broad range of physically and cognitively demanding tasks.

2. CONSULTATIONS

2.1. Nothing about us without us

Air Canada's approach is guided by the "*Nothing about us without us*" principle, which means our Plan was developed with the benefit of direct consultations with persons with disabilities, including our employees. An independent consulting firm helped design and conduct these consultations to allow customers and employees with disabilities to give their feedback confidentially, to encourage greater dialogue, and to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences.

2.2. Who we consulted

Customers

We consulted persons with disabilities in four ways: advisory panels, working groups, air travel customers, and direct testing, adding to our understanding of their journeys. In direct testing, all aspects of our customer journey – from booking to end of travel – were experienced and reported on over several months by persons with different types of disabilities, including people with limited vision, hearing, or mobility, various cognitive disabilities, or neurodiversity or mental health issues. Some of them travelled with mobility aids such as power wheelchairs, while others travelled with service dogs.

Employees

We consulted employees who self-identify as having a disability through focus groups and a survey. Focus groups included employees from geographic locations across Air Canada, from different roles within the organization and with different levels of work experience. A separate survey

about accessibility, barriers, and experiences at Air Canada was also sent to all employees worldwide. In addition, we gathered feedback from the members of our employee-led Diverse Abilities Employee Resource Group (ERG).

Other stakeholders

We engaged with government agencies, regulators and other stakeholders in our industry about accessibility.

2.3. What we will do next

We are committed to ongoing consultations during the reporting cycle and to actively seeking feedback from the public, our customers, various organizations, and our employees to establish priority areas. Guided by *Nothing about us without us*, this will include:

- Consultations with the Diverse Abilities ERG and other ERGs within Air Canada.
- Strengthening existing partnerships with community-based organizations focused on building an inclusive labour force and promoting workplace accessibility.

- Enhancing our customer feedback channels and metrics, and actively soliciting feedback to elevate the customer experience.
- By the end of 2023, establishing an advisory group of customers with disabilities, which will help inform Air Canada's Elevating the Customer Experience programme, whose goal is to reimagine and re-engineer our customers' experience.

We will publish annual reports under the *Accessible Canada Act* which will include updates on our Plan and our progress towards achieving our accessibility goals.

3. KEY AREAS

Our Plan reflects barriers experienced by persons with disabilities identified as part of our consultations, and details the strategies and actions we will take to identify, prevent and remove them, or to assess what needs to be done to meet that goal. These will unfold in three phases:

- Ongoing

- Near-term actions
- Long-term actions

Our initial actions will focus on the areas outlined in the sections below. We will provide updates on our progress annually and adapt our plans as we identify new barriers and learn from our progress.

4. DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Our customers' journeys involve many phases, such as booking a reservation, getting from the check-in counter through the airport to the gate, getting on and off the aircraft, and traveling on the aircraft. Air Canada has several policies and processes in place to facilitate our customers' journeys throughout these phases, supported by significant accessibility training for our employees.

4.1. Identified barriers

Customers

- Need for additional training for our employees and third-party contractors to enhance certain services, including their delivery, such as boarding and deplaning assistance, safe handling of mobility aids, and individualized briefings to customers managing vision or hearing issues.

Employees

- Importance of making information accessible during each phase of the employment journey, from candidacy, to hire, and throughout the employment relationship.
- Opportunities to improve awareness of barriers during the employment process, to create a better understanding of the value of workplace accommodations, and to adapt programs and services to employees with diverse needs.

4.2. Actions and timelines

4.2.1.1. Ongoing

- Significant initial and recurrent accessibility training to our customer-facing employees and third-party contractors.
- Accessibility training to all employees who make decisions or develop policies or procedures related to accessibility.
- Training and support to management employees on workplace accommodations.
- Continue to support accommodation questions and requests through our Workplace Accommodation Office (“WAO”).

4.2.2. Near-term

Customers

- Assess current equipment and available options to help with transferring customers with disabilities to/from aircraft seats in Canada.
- Reinforce awareness and continued implementation of our internal accessibility policies.

- Identify and empower accessibility champions within Air Canada departments.
- Assess ways to promote employee awareness regarding accessibility.

Employees

- Provide tailored unconscious bias training to all internal recruiters and Air Canada's primary external recruiting firm.
- Streamline workplace accommodation requests through appropriate channels.
- Increase the awareness of WAO and its role in the workplace accommodation process.
- Mandatory training on the workplace accommodation process to all management employees.

4.2.3. Long term

Customers

- Enhanced training to customer-facing employees, management, as well as third-party contractors, and enhanced hands-on training to employees providing physical assistance and safe handling of mobility aids.
- Improve the transfer of customers with disabilities to/from aircraft seats in Canada and the safe transportation of their mobility aids.
- Analyze accessibility compliance results and assess for potential policy improvements.

Employees

- Implement recurrent workplace accommodation training for employees.
- Promote awareness of existing policies and procedures.

5. TRANSPORTATION

Air Canada has a wide variety of accessibility-related interactions with our customers throughout their journey. They review information on our website, book reservations, engage at the check-in counter and the gate, get on and off one or more of our aircraft, and travel with us or with other airlines. As we explain in section 1.4, safe and accessible air travel requires the coordinated contributions of a wide variety of stakeholders and service providers. We are focused on working with manufacturers and all stakeholders in order safely and feasibly to make new aircraft increasingly accessible, including to improve the safe transportation of mobility aids.

5.1. Identified barriers

- Efficiency and comfort of mobility and guidance assistance through airports.
- Facilitating advance, dignified and safe boarding for customers with disabilities, including quicker and simpler transfers from mobility aids to and from aircraft seats.

- Providing additional assistance with storing luggage in overhead bins.
- Safely transporting mobility aids.
- Standardizing acceptance process of service dogs, including owner-trained service dogs.
- Various features of the aircraft cabin could be improved, such as washroom layout, independent access to call buttons and in-flight entertainment, space to transfer in and out of aircraft seats, and mobility aids storage in the cargo hold.
- Transporting large power mobility aids on smaller aircraft, including on aircraft operating flights to/from the United States.

5.2. Actions and timelines

5.2.1. Ongoing

- As part of fleet management, reviewing access to washrooms for persons with reduced mobility on wide-body aircraft, installing tactile row markers, and

facilitating the use of in-flight entertainment system for persons managing vision issues.

- Continue to implement practices to improve the safe handling of mobility aids during transportation by keeping them fixed and isolated from baggage wherever possible.
- Newly implemented post-flight customer survey allowing for targeted customer satisfaction tracking from those who have self-disclosed disabilities, and further guiding improvement opportunities.

5.2.2. Near-term

- Improve our process to allow the safe stowing of foldable manual wheelchairs in the cabin.
- Assess effectiveness of safely transporting mobility aids fixed and isolated from baggage, wherever possible, and identify further possible improvements.
- Assess and analyze improvements to the process for resolution of damaged/delayed mobility aids.

- Implement, where feasible, new guidance published by IATA's Mobility Aids Action Group for airlines and handling agents on the safe and coordinated transport of mobility aids and improve the travel experience for customers traveling with mobility aids.
- Improve disclosure of boarding options on our website, and engage with customers with disabilities traveling with mobility aids to better understand their preferred methods of transfer to/from aircraft seats.
- Engage with organizations with expertise in training and certification of service dogs to broaden the availability of certification for service dogs, including owner-trained dogs.
- Improve communication of accessibility features and enhance training to our cabin crew on features such as washrooms, call buttons and in-flight entertainment systems.

- Conduct an assessment of current equipment and available options to assist in transferring customers to/from aircraft seats in Canada.
- Assess how to improve the transportation of large power mobility aids on routes operated by smaller aircraft.

5.2.3. Long term

- Engage with airport authorities to improve facilities and comfort of waiting areas before security at Canadian airports.
- Engage with airport authorities to assess the establishment of waiting areas after security at Canadian airports.
- Assess how to reduce wait times and number of transfers during mobility and guidance assistance at airports.
- Enhance customer independence while still receiving assistance based on their needs and preferences.

- Improve, where feasible the efficiency and availability of preboarding processes and transfer methods for customers with disabilities.
- Add a website tool so customers can independently check if their mobility aid will fit on the aircraft scheduled to operate their flight.
- Engage aircraft and other relevant manufacturers to explore design options for washrooms accessibility for narrow-body aircraft.
- Engage aircraft and other related manufacturers to identify possible improvements to cargo holds, loading, and securing mechanisms that enhance the safe transportation of mobility aids of varying sizes, weights and types in all aircraft types.

6. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Air Canada's built environment is wide-ranging, including office buildings, aircraft hangars, and airport terminals. We did not include aircraft in this section, which we discuss in Section 5 Transportation.

6.1. Identified barriers

Customers

- Mobility and guidance assistance through airports.
- Additional accessibility features to help independently and comfortably navigate through the airport, particularly over long distances, or to manage sensory/information overload.

Employees

- Not all owned or operated spaces and built environments meet recent accessibility standards due to the age and/or design of buildings/environment.

6.2. Actions and Timelines

6.2.1. Ongoing

- Engage with airport authorities and ground handlers to ensure that adequate mobility and guidance assistance is provided through the airport segment of the customer's journey.

6.2.2. Near-term

Customers

- Engage and work with airport authorities, CATSA and CBSA to assess and develop possible improvements to the process of receiving mobility or guidance assistance in the airports.
- Engage and work with airport authorities to explore possible enhancements to independent navigation.
- Engage and work with airport authorities to ensure availability of service dog relief areas after security.
- Engage and work with airport authorities to identify possible tailored spaces that can accommodate

customers with disabilities related to sensory/information processing.

- Direct customers to airport authority websites for accessibility features and curbside assistance, through our Medical Assistance Desk, email communication and our website.

Employees

- Improve employee awareness about existing emergency procedures to assist employees with disabilities and include specific sections for employees with disabilities.
- Establish an audit plan and hire expert consultants to undertake an assessment of built environment owned or operated by Air Canada.

6.2.3. Long term

Customers

- Assess and analyze possible built environment changes that would improve assistance through airports, in consultation with airport authorities, CATSA and CBSA.

Employees

- Start built environment audits and establish a timeline for their completion.
- Establish and prioritise a list of built environment improvements.
- Assess the availability of emergency procedures in accessible formats and how to provide or improve them.

7. EMPLOYMENT

As of March 31, 2023, Air Canada had 37,619 employees, with 35,981 employees based in Canada, working in 80 locations in Canada, and 104 locations across the United States and internationally.

Air Canada is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and aims to create a healthy, accessible, and rewarding work environment which highlights and respects employees' unique contributions to our company's success. Key policies are interwoven to ensure a workplace where employees are confident that they have the right to equal treatment and a harassment-free environment.

The Workplace Accommodation Office was established in 2019. It is a centralised team in the global human resources branch and supports workplace accommodation requests across all branches of the company, including job applicants, candidates, and employees throughout all stages of the employment journey.

7.1. Identified barriers

- Uneven awareness of workplace accommodation processes.
- Uneven communication to candidates about our commitment around appropriate accommodations.
- Incomplete job descriptions about our responsibilities or requirements to allow reasonable accommodations and how to seek one.
- Training formats that could be improved.

7.2. Actions and timelines

7.2.1. Ongoing

- Continue to provide awareness of and training on the Employee Accommodation Policy and Process to managers across Canada to promote a better understanding of their role in the accommodation process.
- De-stigmatizing disability in the workplace:

- Relaunch a voluntary self-identification campaign to remove stigma about self-identifying, to increase awareness of accessibility and acceptance toward disabilities, and to create a culture of inclusion where everyone's voice counts.
- Unconscious bias training for Air Canada talent recruiters and Air Canada's primary external recruiting firm.
- Training on micro-aggressions and allyship for all employees.

7.2.2. Near-term

- Appoint a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Sourcing Manager to help link our Talent Acquisition Team and potential candidates in underrepresented groups and communities.
- Launch a new mandatory Workplace Accommodation training module for management employees explaining the Employee Accommodation Policy and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

- Develop department and team-specific accommodation processes so that the process remains consistent, yet relevant to each department/team.
- Initiate the automation of the accommodation process to facilitate gathering relevant information and processing requests in a timely and consistent manner.

7.2.3. Long term

- Work to promote accessibility as integral to the employment experience from job application, hire, career development, to end of employment.
- Promote de-stigmatization of disability such that decisions, policies, and procedures integrate accessibility as the normal course of business.
- Visit work locations to provide in-person training on the accommodation process.
- Develop workplace accommodation training for front-line employees.

- Complete the automation of the accommodation request process.
- Develop a plan to conduct physical and cognitive demands analyses for main operational positions to facilitate future workplace accommodations.
- Assess how to provide accessible training across multiple locations, training types, and formats.

8. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)

Air Canada has integrated accessibility into every stage of its website and app development life cycle, and was a pioneer in accessible in-flight entertainment. We can achieve greater digital accessibility by addressing information and communication technology-related barriers. We seek to continuously improve by keeping pace with innovations in technology.

8.1. Identified barriers

Customers

- Our website and apps are sometimes not easily usable by customers who call on assistive technology or who are neurodivergent.
- We have not always made persons with disabilities aware of the accessible modes with audio commands of our kiosks and in-flight entertainment on newer aircraft.

- Our baggage tags can be difficult to read for customers managing vision issues.
- Baggage carousel information is not accessible.
- Our boarding and in-flight announcements could be made more accessible for customers managing hearing issues through integrated digital tools.

8.2. Actions and timelines

8.2.1. Ongoing

Customers

- Maintain accessible in-flight entertainment.
- Maintain the accessible telephony system, making use of tools like teletypewriter (“TTY”) and video relay.
- Continue to improve website booking flow.
- Continue the integration of accessibility into every stage of the website and app development cycle, including design review, development, quality assurance,

integrated testing, production, user testing, and issue handling.

- Maintain our Center for Excellence in digital accessibility to ensure continuous improvement in accessible web design.
- Maintain accessible software for kiosks and work with airport authorities across Canada to ensure that kiosk hardware and software work together to provide an enhanced accessible experience.

8.2.2. Near-term

Customers

- Work to enhance user experience for website and app for customers using assistive technology and/or neurodivergent customers, focusing on customer experience.
- Expand the use of notifications by text, such as for zonal boarding announcements.

- Enhance communication to customers managing vision issues regarding accessible in-flight entertainment availability.
- Add a digital accessibility statement on website, indicating best combinations of browsers/screen readers, and establish a simple feedback mechanism for digital accessibility issues on the website or the app.

8.2.3. Long term

Customers

- Develop accessible bag tags, such as on the app/by text.
- Explore methods to notify customers in an accessible fashion, such as on the app/by text, at which carousel they can find their bags upon arrival.
- Assess and analyze how to improve use of captioning and/or sign language on-board the aircraft.
- Assess and analyze the possibility of facilitating access to the accessible in-flight entertainment mode for customers managing vision issues.

Employees

- Assess how to better incorporate digital accessibility into ICT projects at their outset.
- Add a digital accessibility statement on our intranet, indicating best combinations of browsers/screen readers, and establish a simple feedback mechanism for digital accessibility issues.

9. COMMUNICATION (OTHER THAN ICT)

Air Canada has centralized accessibility related information through its Medical Assistance Desk and a dedicated accessibility tab on its homepage. We can improve accessibility in communication by ensuring that information is easily available through multiple channels and in accessible formats and that communication processes are efficient.

9.1. Identified barriers

Customers

- We have not made all customers with disabilities sufficiently aware of how the Medical Assistance Desk can assist them, how to reach it, or are transferred between the Medical Assistance Desk and Contact Centres.
- We have not made agents sufficiently aware of accessibility policies and service offerings for customers with disabilities.

- We can make improvements to facilitate timely communication of key information with customers who are deaf, or manage hearing issues, or who are blind, or manage vision issues.
- Customers with disabilities are often asked to repeat information multiple times during their travel, such as to the Medical Assistance Desk, to agents they encounter in the airport, and to flight attendants on board.

Employees

- Sign language, captioning and accessibility tools are not available for meetings and events.

9.2. Actions and timelines

9.2.1. Ongoing

Customers

- Continue to provide guidance and accommodations through our Medical Assistance Desk, a long-standing service specialized in assisting customers with disabilities.

- Continue communications that take into account the disability of customers with disabilities in a variety of ways, including through accessibility services on our website, our Medical Assistance Desk, providing alternate forms of documents, and making accessible gate and boarding announcements.

Employees

- Automated closed captions are enabled for employee meetings held on Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Air Canada provides sign language interpreters during interviews, training, and meetings, on request.

9.2.2. Near-term

Customers

- Improve communications regarding role of the Medical Assistance Desk to identify it in a manner that is more inclusive of and attractive to customers with disabilities.

- Assess and analyze the need for sign language interpreters and/or captioning, such as for Annual General Meetings and investor day events.
- Embed accessibility-related information into relevant pages of website and app, with references to main accessibility page.

Employees

- Examine how to make meetings, townhalls, and employee events more accessible.
- Develop a toolkit for how to hold accessible and inclusive meetings.

9.2.3. Long term

Customers

- Assess and analyze how to expand services offered by and access to the Medical Assistance Desk.
- Assess and analyze how to improve the communication of accessibility-related information provided during

booking to our employees and other service providers at each stage of the travel journey.

- Develop and send targeted emails with useful information for customers with documented accessibility-related requests, such as available services and pre-travel reminders.

Employees

- Assess how to make communication with employees more accessible.
- Assess the feasibility of providing sign language training for teams where employees who are deaf or managing hearing issues work.

10. Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Air Canada has multiple suppliers worldwide, for everything from catering to aircraft fuel to employee uniforms to website development.

Accessibility in the air transportation industry often largely turns on the accessibility of the aircraft we procure. Air Canada will continue to support the study and development of safe and feasible aircraft accessibility features that broaden air travel opportunities for passengers with disabilities. See also sections 1.4 and 5 of our Plan.

We seek to ensure our procurement practices address accessibility procurement barriers, and encourage the use of suppliers who are part of our supplier diversity program. We communicate our accessibility expectations and requirements to new and existing suppliers.

Our ability to influence suppliers will vary, particularly where there is little to no competition, which is the case in certain international or remote destinations.

10.1. Identified barriers

- Existing procurement practices and suppliers may not consistently meet accessibility requirements.

10.2. Actions and timelines

10.2.1. Ongoing

- Continue to evaluate current procurement policies, processes, and tools to improve accessibility.
- Continue to embed digital accessibility requirements in requests for proposals and contracts.

10.2.2. Short term

- Identify suppliers who can provide accessibility services (for example, plain language writers/editors/translators, Braille, digital, audio, captioning, descriptive video, and sign language interpretation).
- Assess and analyze new opportunities to embed accessibility requirements in requests for proposals and contracts.

10.2.3. Long term

- Engage with airport authorities, security and customs in Canada to identify opportunities for synergies in accessible sourcing.

11. CONCLUSION

At Air Canada, we are committed to removing barriers and advancing accessibility in air travel and employment. We are committed to delivering on the goals set out in our Plan, to collaborating with all stakeholders within the aviation ecosystem towards a more accessible air travel experience, and to listening to our customers and employees, guided by *Nothing about us without us*.

We will publish an updated Accessibility Plan every three years and communicate updates on our progress every year until then.

12. GLOSSARY

- Airport authority – Organisation responsible for managing the airport's operations.
- Ground handler – Third party company that performs tasks at the airport, such as checking in customers, assisting customers through the airport, or safely loading mobility aids.
- Teletypewriter (TTY) is a device that enables people who are deaf, managing hearing loss or have speech impairments to use the phone by typing messages.
- Video relay enables people who are deaf/managing hearing loss who use sign language to communicate over the phone through video camera. A sign language interpreter joins the call to relay messages.