

The Accessibility Plan for Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL): Annual Progress Report 2023 to 2024

Summary

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), a federal Crown corporation, works to advance Canada's interests through leading edge nuclear science and technology and environmental protection initiatives. This includes combating climate change, pioneering new treatment methods for cancer and other diseases, and accelerating Canada's projects for environmental remediation.

At AECL, accessibility for people with disabilities is a priority to us. Though it is important that all information we distribute to the public is accessible, we do not often work directly with the public. Because of this, our primary focus is improving accessibility for AECL employees. We adopted an Accessibility Plan in December of 2022, which outlines activities to complete to become more accessible by 2025. This is our first Annual Progress Report on what we have done so far.

1. General

1.1 Statement of Commitment

At AECL, we are committed to being accessible and barrier free for everyone, including people with disabilities. A barrier is anything that prevents people with disabilities from fully and equally participating in society. Our commitment to removing accessibility barriers is reflected in this report.

1.2 Description of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited

AECL's role is to act as an agent of the government of Canada, to support governmental nuclear policy, and to oversee the development of our sites, which are operated by Canadian Nuclear

Laboratories. Reporting to the Minister of Natural Resources, AECL leverages the full potential of Canada's expertise in nuclear science and technology to benefit Canadians. An example of this benefit is removing nuclear waste from past nuclear energy projects in Canada. We also provide information about Canada's nuclear energy to all Canadians.

1.3 Process for Feedback and Contact Information

You can provide feedback to AECL about our Accessibility Plan, this report, or accessibility in general and remain anonymous. We will use feedback to help us improve accessibility and to inform our progress reports. Any feedback provided will be kept on file for seven years.

To give AECL feedback about accessibility, you can contact the Communications Analyst at AECL in the following ways:

- Email at accessibility@aecl.ca
- Phone at 1-888-220-2465
- Mail at 286 Plant Road, Station 508 A, Chalk River, Ontario, K0J 1J0

1.4 Alternative Formats

If you require this Progress Report in a different format, email accessibility@aecl.ca or phone 1-888-220-2465 to make a request.

We can provide the following alternative formats of this report upon request:

- Large Print: You can request a large font printed copy of the report. We can provide this within 15 days of when you make your request.
- Braille: You can request a braille copy of the report. We can provide this within 45 days of receiving your request.
- Audio: You can request an audio version of this report. We can provide this within 45 days of receiving your request.

1.5 Context

Our goal at AECL is to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities.

As a federal Crown corporation, AECL abides by the Accessible Canada Act, which is a law that was passed in 2019 with the goal to make Canada barrier free by January of 2040. In following with this act, we published our first Accessibility Plan in December of 2022. AECL established an Accessibility Committee to create, monitor, and complete our Accessibility Plan and to ensure it meets the Accessible Canada Act. The Committee also coordinates accessibility related activities with Canadian Nuclear Laboratories.

Under AECL's Accessibility Plan, we have set activities to reach our goals and are monitoring our progress. In this report we will provide an update about our plans and the progress we have made to improve accessibility at AECL.

Goals are organized under seven priority areas, which fall under Section 5 of the Accessibility Canada Act:

1. Built Environment
2. Employment
3. Information and Communication Technologies
4. Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies
5. Procurement
6. Design and Delivery of Programs and Services
7. Transportation

Priority 1: Built Environment

Overview

AECL has three main offices. They are in Chalk River, Ontario, Ottawa, Ontario, and Pinawa, Manitoba. Most employees work at AECL's head office in Chalk River or at the office in Ottawa. Our goal is to ensure each office is as accessible as possible for all employees, including those with disabilities.

Goal 1.1: Renovation of Chalk River Office

By the end of March 2025, AECL will relocate its head office in Chalk River to another building on the Chalk River site. We will renovate the new office space to ensure it is accessible. There will be barrier free access to all common areas.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL has selected a building on the Chalk River site to host our new office. Accessibility has been included in the design and planning documents for the office. We will be working with consultants to ensure accessibility requirements are met both inside and outside the building where the office will be located. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.

Goal 1.2: Emergency Evacuation Plans for Chalk River Office

AECL will work with Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to develop, publish, and circulate emergency evacuation plans for people with disabilities for the new office in Chalk River.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: Canadian Nuclear Laboratories published an Accessibility Plan, which identifies barriers in the Built Environment. These barriers need to be addressed to ensure emergency response plans include and are accessible for people with disabilities. The following actions are needed:

- Ensure all emergency response plans account for assisting those with disabilities in each building and location.
- Ensure all written materials on emergency response plans meet current accessibility requirements.
- Assess existing alarms for accessibility concerns, such as whether alarms target multiple senses.

Canadian Nuclear Laboratories has established an Accessibility Steering Committee for this work. The first meeting is expected in November 2023, where the committee will review all current emergency response plans and update them to include and be accessible for people with disabilities.

AECL has established a regular connection with the Accessibility Steering Committee. This ensures our collaboration in the development, publication, and circulation of updated emergency response plans for people with disabilities.

Goal 1.3: Accessibility at the Ottawa Office

AECL currently leases an office space in Ottawa, where the lease will expire in March 2026. If we decide to keep this office, we will develop plans to improve its accessibility. If we decide to close it and relocate, we will ensure the new office in Ottawa is accessible.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL has recently completed renovations at our office in Ottawa. During these renovations, we added automatic doors with push buttons to access offices and washrooms.

Goal 2: Employment

Overview

AECL has a workforce of nearly fifty employees. Since 2020, many employees have worked from home on a hybrid or full-time basis. The goals outlined below will help us improve accessibility for all AECL employees, especially those with disabilities.

Goal 2.1: Accessibility Training

By March 2024, AECL will provide training on accessibility and disability awareness to all employees. This training will include guidance on how to make communications materials accessible.

Status: Complete

Description of progress: AECL completed training for employees in October 2023 through the Canada School of Public Service. Training focused on addressing inclusion, disabilities, and barriers to accessibility.

Goal 2.2: Review of Hiring and Recruitment Process

By March 2024, AECL will review our hiring and recruitment process to find and remove accessibility barriers for job applicants.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL has recently hired a firm to complete a review of our hiring and recruitment process to ensure it is accessible. This firm employs people with disabilities to conduct the reviews and to provide their recommendations.

This review is underway, and we should receive recommendations in December of 2023. Once we receive recommendations, we will make changes to our hiring and recruitment process to ensure it is more accessible for people with disabilities.

Goal 2.3: Accommodations for Employees

By March 2024, AECL will develop, publish, and share guidelines on how employees with disabilities can request and receive accommodations.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL has recently hired a firm to help develop these guidelines. This firm employs people with disabilities to assist in the creation of these guidelines.

Draft guidelines should be completed and submitted to us by the end of January 2024. The guidelines will then be circulated to some AECL employees for review. Once the guidelines are finalized, all employees will be notified of them and how to access them any time.

Goal 2.4: Accommodations for Recruitment

By March 2024, AECL will include information about how job applicants can request and receive accommodations during the hiring process, in our job postings. We will also remind job applicants that they can request accommodations when we contact them for an interview.

Status: Complete

Description of progress: Information has been added to all job postings, which details AECL's commitment to accessibility. Information on how to request accommodations during the recruitment process is also provided.

Priority 3: Information and Communication Technologies

Overview

Our public website is the main technology that members of the public interact with. It has some accessibility features, but we are aware that some barriers remain. We are dedicated to removing barriers to accessibility on our public website and in our internal technology systems.

Goal 3.1: Website Accessibility Barriers

By the end of 2024, AECL will address and remove the accessibility barriers that were found on our website through consultations with people with disabilities. These changes include:

- Improving color contrast and text size.
- Making sure the format and layout of our web pages are consistent.
- Improvements to help make sure that people who are using screen readers can read the information on our website. A screen reader is technology where a voice reads the text from a website.

Status: In progress – This goal will be extended into 2024. In addressing the changes that need to be made to AECL’s website for accessibility, we have recognized that it may be best to re-design AECL’s website at the same time.

Description of progress: AECL will review the feedback about accessibility barriers on our website. We will then investigate options for a service to remove the accessibility barriers that were found. At the same time, we are currently reviewing our website to determine what a complete re-design, including accessibility, will entail.

Goal 3.2: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

By the end of 2024, we will determine whether our website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines are a set of international standards that can help us determine how accessible our website is.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL is investigating options for a program to assess Web Content Accessibility Guidelines on the AECL website.

Goal 3.3: Website Reviews

By the end of 2024, we will have annual reviews of the AECL website to ensure it remains accessible. We will also ensure that people with disabilities who use adaptive technologies are part of these reviews.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL is investigating options for a service to perform reviews of our website. We will ensure that people with disabilities who use adaptive technologies are a part of these reviews.

Goal 3.4: Text-Only Version of Website

By the end of 2025, AECL will publish a text only version of our website to ensure that the information we publish is fully accessible for everyone.

Status: No longer applicable

Description of progress: Since publishing our first Accessibility Plan, AECL has decided to re-design our main public website. This work will be done in 2024. When we redesign the website, we will make sure that it is as accessible as possible. Based on this new information, we no longer believe that a text-only version of the website will be necessary.

Goal 3.5: New Document Accessibility

Starting in March 2024, AECL will ensure that all documents we publish for the public are in an accessible format.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL has created guidelines to follow, to ensure that all documents we publish for the public are accessible. A meeting will be planned to train employees on these guidelines.

AECL will also ensure that new documents published for the public are in an accessible format.

Goal 3.6: Older Document Accessibility

By the end of March 2024, AECL will ensure that all priority documents previously published on our website are available in an accessible format.

Status: Not yet begun

Description of progress: AECL will determine which documents previously published on the AECL website are not in an accessible format. These documents will be made into an accessible format and uploaded to the website to replace the older, non-accessible versions.

Priority 4: Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies**Overview**

AECL is committed to providing accessible communications for people with disabilities. Our employees communicate with one another regularly through email, phone, and in person. We communicate with the public through our main website, social media platforms, and the publication of reports and other documents. The following goals will help us improve the accessibility of our communications.

Goal 4.1: Requests for Alternative Document Formats

By March 2024, AECL will have a process to meet requests for alternative formats of the documents on our website. Once this process is in place, we will provide documents in large print, braille, or audio formats, upon request.

Status: Complete

Description of progress: AECL has found a service to fill requests for alternative formats for the documents on our website. We are putting a process in place for taking and fulfilling requests.

Goal 4.2: Image Accessibility

By March 2025, AECL will ensure all images posted to our social media accounts and our website have alternative text descriptions. An alternative text description is a short, written description of an image that helps people who cannot see the image understand what it is.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL will ensure that all images posted to our social media and on our website have an alternative text description.

Priority 5: Procurement

Overview

AECL buys various products and services that support our work and our employees. We use a system of rules and guidelines to ensure we buy products and services in such a way that provide best value for money. We are dedicated to making sure that 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.

Goal 5.1: Accessibility Considerations in Procurement

By March 2024, AECL will include accessibility considerations in our procurement procedure, procurement checklists, and procurement templates where appropriate.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: The drafted updates to AECL policies, checklists, and templates are currently undergoing review and gathering feedback from stakeholders within the organization before finalization.

Goal 5.2: Accessibility Training for Procurement Employees

By the end of 2024, AECL will make sure that employees who work on procurement receive training and information about how to include accessibility requirements in procurement activities.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: AECL Procurement personnel have completed the Accessibility training offered by the Canadian School of Public Service. Companywide training will be provided once the Accessibility updates to the policies, checklists, and templates are finalized.

Goal 5.3: Accessibility in Procurement Processes

By March of 2025, accessibility will be explicitly considered in all procurement by either documenting the decision to not incorporate accessibility requirements or by including accessibility requirements.

Status: In progress

Description of progress: The updates to AECL procurement policies, checklists, and templates will incorporate accessibility considerations in all procurement processes. This will ensure that accessibility is explicitly considered, or if not, the decision to exclude accessibility will be documented.

Priority 6: Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

AECL's main activities are ensuring Canada's nuclear energy is safe and supporting research and policy activities related to nuclear energy. Though AECL shares information in relation to our activities on our website and social media, we do not deliver programs and services to the public. Therefore, we have not developed goals in this area.

Priority 7: Transportation

AECL does not run or operate any passenger transportation services. Therefore, we have not developed goals in this area.

1. Consultations

To ensure this Annual Progress Report and our plans to improve accessibility at AECL are reflective of the needs of people with disabilities, we consulted people with disabilities to develop this report.

AECL sent a copy of our Progress Report to a focus group of 8 Canadians with varying disabilities. Participants of the focus group read the report and provided their feedback in a virtual meeting. We responded to their feedback by making changes to the report, that make it more accessible for people with disabilities.

We sincerely appreciate this group for contributing their knowledge, expertise, and time to help us improve accessibility at AECL.

3. Feedback

At AECL, we launched our public feedback process related to accessibility in December of 2022. Though we have not yet received any public feedback about accessibility at AECL, we will continue to welcome feedback. AECL will report on any feedback and our subsequent response, in future Progress Reports.

4. Conclusion

AECL is taking the necessary steps to ensure we are as accessible as possible for people with disabilities. Under our Accessibility Plan, we are in the process of achieving our goals under the

priorities of Built Environment, Employment, Information and Communication Technologies, Communication and Procurement. AECL is on track to becoming accessible for all employees and Canadians in the next few years. We will remain committed to removing accessibility barriers and meeting the goals under our Accessibility Plan.