

**Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL)
2024 Accessibility Progress Report**

Statement of Commitment

At Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, we are committed to being accessible and barrier free for everyone. 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 progress report.

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General

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) is a federal Crown corporation that 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.

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 the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories. While we have oversight over the sites operated by the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, we do not , run, or manage the sites directly. Canadian Nuclear Laboratories publishes their own accessibility plans and progress reports, and we consult with each other on our plans. Reporting to the Minister of Energy and 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.

Context

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 second Annual Progress Report on what we have done so far.

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.

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. You can request the report in either level 1 or level 2 braille. 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.

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.

You can give accessibility feedback to AECL in the following ways:

- Email at accessibility@aecl.ca
- Phone at 1-888-220-2465
 - Please ask for the Communications Coordinator responsible for accessibility or leave a message with your feedback.
- Mail at 286 Plant Road, Station 508 A, Chalk River, Ontario, K0J 1J0
 - Please address your letter to the Accessibility Committee
 - Please include in your letter that the content is related to feedback about AECL's Accessibility Plan

Main Priorities

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

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

The Built Environment

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (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

Status: In progress

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 administrative office spaces including kitchen, washrooms, conference and meeting rooms, and collaborative areas.

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 accessibility consultants and people with disabilities to ensure accessibility requirements are met both inside and outside the building where the office will be located. Construction is expected to be completed in 2025.

Goal 1.2: Emergency Evacuation Plans for Chalk River Office

Status: In progress

AECL is working with Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to develop, publish, and circulate updated emergency evacuation plans for people with disabilities for the new office in Chalk River. While there have always been evacuation plans created for individual employees with disabilities,

these new guidelines will speak more broadly to how people with disabilities should evacuate or be assisted to evacuate in the case of an emergency.

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 was in November 2023. The committee continues to review all current emergency response plans, including for AECL's new office, and update them to include and be accessible for people with disabilities.

AECL has established a regular connection with CNL's 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

Status: In progress

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.

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. AECL completed an assessment on our accessibility barriers for our Ottawa office. The assessment was performed as per the Rick Hansen Foundation accessibility requirements. This assessment identified AECL's Ottawa office as being quite accessible; it also identified areas for improvement in order to address further barriers. Based on this assessment, AECL will further improve accessibility features within our space, and this work will continue into 2025.

Employment

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) has a workforce of over 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

Status: Completed in 2023

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. This training also included guidance on how to make communications materials accessible.

Goal 2.2: Review of Hiring and Recruitment Process

Status: Completed in 2024

AECL updated its hiring and recruitment process to find and remove accessibility barriers for job applicants.

AECL hired an accessibility consultant firm to review the guidelines that we drafted and provide recommendations. This firm employs people with disabilities and experts in accessibility best practices. Based on their recommendations, AECL took the following actions:

- placed an *equitable employer* message on the employment landing page,
- updated job ads to make wording more accessible for those that use screen readers,
- highlighted inclusive benefits that AECL offers,
- and included details on why certain screening questions are asked.

Additionally, AECL now highlights that AI is not used in our recruitment process; we have made this decision to eliminate a potential source of bias in our recruitment processes.

Goal 2.3: Accommodations for Employees

Status: Completed in 2024

AECL has developed, published, and shared guidelines on how employees and job candidates with disabilities can request and receive accommodations.

AECL hired an accessibility consulting firm to help develop these guidelines. This firm employs people with disabilities, experts in accessibility best practice, and disability rights law experts.. After the initial development, the guidelines have now formed a Procedure. Some of the details in this procedure include:

- The roles and responsibilities of different vested parties, including people managers, human resources, AECL's third-party Abilities Management Provider and employees who make requests for accommodation
- The steps that employees should take when making a request for accommodation

- Accommodation procedures for job candidates during the recruitment process.

The new Procedure has been reviewed by AECL's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group to ensure it has been reviewed with a lens of inclusion and with a goal to remove barriers for current and future employees. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group is made up of employees from different departments at AECL who make sure that AECL is striving towards our diversity and equity goals.

Additionally, AECL now relies on a third-party Abilities Management Provider who supports accommodation requests as needed. With this specialized, consistent support, AECL intends to make requests for accommodations a collaborative effort while maintaining confidentiality.

Goal 2.4: Accommodations for Recruitment

Status: Completed in 2023

AECL has included a statement on their job postings informing job applicants that they can request and receive accommodations during the hiring process. Beyond that, we also added a statement about accommodations on AECL's employment section of the website and in the online application module. We also remind job applicants that they can request accommodations when we contact them for an interview.

Information and Communication Technologies

(ICT)

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL)'s 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

Status: In progress

AECL is continuing to address and remove the accessibility barriers that were found on our website through consultations with people with disabilities. These changes included:

- 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.

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.

In 2024, AECL reviewed the feedback about accessibility barriers on our website. We are investigating 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, would entail.

Goal 3.2: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Status: In progress

As mentioned previously, AECL assessed the requirements needed to follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). We are in the process of determining next steps as it relates a complete redesign. In the meantime, we ensure that the new content made available through our website meet WCAG standards.

Goal 3.3: Website Reviews

Status: In progress

In 2024, we launched the annual reviews of the AECL website to ensure it remains accessible as per the WCAG standards. Moving forward we will continue to ensure that people with disabilities who use adaptive technologies are part of these reviews.

Goal 3.4: Text-Only Version of Website

Status: No longer applicable

Our plan to develop a text only version of the website was meant to act as a stop-gap measure while we knew that there were existing barriers on the website. We have decided to re-design our website to ensure that it is as accessible as possible. Because of this decision it was determined that publishing a text only version of our website was no longer required. This work to replace the website with a new one started in 2024. When we redesign the website, we will make sure that it is as accessible as possible based on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Goal 3.5: New Document Accessibility

Status: Completed in 2024

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

AECL has created guidelines to follow. The guidelines for accessible documents includes:

- An explanation of what accessible documents are and why we are striving to create accessible documents
- Instructions about how to use language and make text easy to read
- Instructions on how to format documents so that they can be easily read by people using a screen reader and other adaptive technology

- How to include Alt-text for images
- How to use automatic document accessibility checkers

We provided training to employees in 2024 about these guidelines and to reflect those new practices and ensure all documents we publish for the public are accessible.

Goal 3.6: Older Document Accessibility

Status: In progress

After an initial assessment of the quantity and the states of the files published on our website, it was determined that more time would be needed to fully meet this ambitious goal. As such, AECL extended the completion date from March 2024 to March 2025. AECL will ensure that all priority documents previously published on our website are available in an accessible format.

AECL was able to 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.

Communication, other than ICT

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (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

Status: Completed in 2023

As of 2023, AECL established a process to meet requests for alternative formats of the documents on our website. If requested, documents can be made available in larger print, braille, or audio formats.

Goal 4.2: Image Accessibility

Status: Completed in 2024

This year, AECL started posting all images to our social media accounts and our website with 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.

The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (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

Status: Completed in 2024

In 2024, AECL included accessibility considerations in our procurement procedure, procurement checklists, and procurement templates where appropriate.

Goal 5.2: Accessibility Training for Procurement Employees

Status: Completed in 2024

AECL employees who are responsible to execute on procurement activities and contracting received training regarding accessibility requirements in procurement activities.

AECL Procurement personnel have completed the Accessibility training offered by the Canadian School of Public Service. Companywide training has been provided in 2024 and all new procurement personnel will be trained to support the updated procurement procedures.

Goal 5.3: Accessibility in Procurement Processes

Status: Completed in 2024

The updates to AECL procurement policies, checklists, and templates incorporate accessibility considerations in all procurement processes. This ensures that accessibility is explicitly considered. In the rare occasion that it is not, the decision to exclude accessibility will be documented.

We created an Accessibility Requirement and Determination Form. This form outlines what steps must be taken in the procurement process to ensure that accessibility is being considered. The document includes:

- An overview of what accessibility in procurement means and why AECL is committed to accessible procurement.
- A list of different accessibility considerations that might need to be made for different types of procurement (for example goods vs. services)

- Instructions for employees on how to incorporate accessibility considerations into their procurement
- An accessibility Exemption Justification form which employees will use to document when they have not considered accessibility in a purchase and why (for example, if a high specific piece of software is needed but not accessible alternative exists in the market)

As such, starting in 2024, it is now a standard to include accessibility requirements in procurement activities.

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (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.

Transportation

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) does not run or operate any passenger transportation services. Therefore, we have not developed goals in this area.

Consultations

To ensure this Annual Progress Report and our plans to improve accessibility at Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (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 have included a summary of their feedback, and how we responded to it here:

- The group made suggestions of specific places where we could clarify information and make this report easier to read. They pointed out that our use of acronyms was too frequent and so we responded by removing some of the acronyms.
- The group asked for more details about some of the initiatives we took over the last year. They wanted more details about our new accommodation guidelines, document guidelines, and procurement processes. We responded to this feedback by adding more information in those sections.
- The group recommended that we should include goals in the programs and services section of our accessibility plan even though we do not operate programs or services in a traditional way. We will action this feedback by considering what could be feasible to include in this section for our next accessibility plan, which will be published in 2025.
- The group gave us positive feedback about the progress we have made over the last few years, especially for a small organization. They encouraged us to continue being ambitious in our goals and actions in subsequent plans.

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

Feedback

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) 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.

Conclusion

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (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.