Accessibility Plan – Symcor

VERSION 1.0

May 2023

1. General

Introduction

Symcor is pleased to publish its Accessibility Plan in accordance with Canada's Accessible Canada Act (ACA) legislation, which provides a proactive and systemic approach for realizing a Canada without barriers for persons with disabilities by January 1, 2040.

With more than six million Canadians aged 15 and over identifying as persons with disabilities,[1] realizing an accessible world is critical. Symcor continues to focus on identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility for employees, clients and visitors.

As part of Symcor's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy, we are committed to fostering a workplace environment that allows employees to feel a sense of belonging – uninhibited by barriers and comfortable to be their authentic selves – to bring their best selves to work every day.

Symcor's approach to DEI and accessibility extends beyond the walls of the workplace; Symcor strives to ensure a seamless experience for clients as they conduct business exchanges and utilize Symcor's solutions.

Key areas for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility identified under the ACA are:

1. Employment
2. The built environment
3. Information and communication technologies
4. Communication, other than information and communication technologies
5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities
6. The design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation

Symcor's policies, programs, practices and services in relation to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in these areas are elaborated upon in section 3.

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[1] Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2019, December 3). *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017: Data Visualization Tool*. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019035-eng.htm

Symcor's Commitment to Accessibility

Symcor recognizes the value of a diverse workforce, particularly one that reflects the communities in which we operate. We are committed to building an inclusive environment, ensuring equality for everyone and allowing employees to feel confident in bringing their authentic selves to work. The elimination and proactive prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities is a key component to realizing our commitment.

Feedback Process, Requesting Alternative Formats, and Contact Information

Communication and feedback are the foundation on which Symcor's Accessibility Plan was developed. Ongoing input is key to upholding our commitment to accessibility and creating a barrier-free environment at Symcor.

To share thoughts or suggestions on the way Symcor is implementing its Accessibility Plan and/or the barriers encountered by Symcor's employees, clients and other persons that engage with Symcor, use the following channels to get in touch with us:

Position: Director of Employee Experience

Email: access@symcor.com

Mail: 1 Robert Speck Parkway, Suite 400, Mississauga, ON L4Z 4E7

Telephone: 905-273-1096

Feedback can be provided anonymously or with an individual's contact information. Symcor will send an acknowledgement of receipt to feedback received unless the feedback is provided anonymously. Anonymous feedback will be treated equally to feedback submitted by an identified person.

Feedback provided to Symcor will be taken into consideration during the preparation of our annual progress reports on the implementation of Symcor's Accessibility Plan and updated versions.

To request a copy of Symcor's Accessibility Plan or a description of the Feedback Process in print, large print, Braille, audio format, or in an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology intended to assist persons with disabilities, contact us using any of the methods outlined above.

2. Consultation

Accessibility Advisory Committee

To develop an Accessibility Plan that meaningfully addresses accessibility at Symcor and to ensure the Plan's successful execution, it was vital to engage employees for their input. As such, via an open call for participation, an Accessibility Advisory Committee (Committee) was formed. The Committee's membership includes employees who identify as persons with disabilities, as well as those who have insight or experience working with persons with disabilities. Committee representation includes employees from various levels and locations of Symcor.

Consultations were conducted with each of the Committee members to help identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility at Symcor. Approaching the consultations with privacy and confidentiality in mind, Symcor established a safe and respectful space for members to express their feedback by ensuring individual needs or preferences were identified prior to the consultations. This setup was critical to enable the open and candid expression of Committee members' experiences and perspectives.

Through virtual one-on-one consultations, the Committee acquired valuable information that was used to identify how Symcor can improve and address current gaps in accessibility and inform the Accessibility Plan.

Employee Consultations

In addition to the Committee consultations, barriers to accessibility and recommended actions were identified through feedback from employees. Examples of employee feedback include:

- Ensure organizational awareness of Symcor's accessibility mandate
- Provide training to all employees on accessibility to foster a workplace culture of accessibility and inclusion
- Continue to involve persons with disabilities in Symcor's accessibility work
- Clearly communicate the process for employees with disabilities to obtain workplace adaptations and/or the tools they need to perform their job
- Ensure that accessibility is prioritized when developing Symcor's new Intranet

Accessibility Assessments

To identify, prevent and eliminate barriers to accessibility, Symcor also conducted an accessibility assessment of our systems and technology, as well as an in-depth accessibility review of locations across Canada.

The consultations and accessibility assessments allowed Symcor to evaluate the organization's maturity level on accessibility, develop a roadmap that will lead to the goal of full accessibility, and identify steps to enhance the culture of inclusion – all of which are referenced in this Accessibility Plan.

Future Consultation Efforts

As Symcor's 2023 Accessibility Plan is primarily the result of employee feedback, future plans will build upon this work by collaborating with organizations who specialize in accessibility, such as but not limited to:

- Canadian Hearing Society
- Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
- Autism Canada
- CNIB Foundation
- Sun Life
- Rick Hansen Foundation

3. Detailed Action Plan – Areas described under Section 5 of the ACA

At Symcor, we continuously review opportunities to enhance the work environment to make it accessible and inclusive. Many ongoing projects related to accessibility enhancements have been identified in the short-term and long-term.

The planned projects include improvements in accessibility for Employment, the Built Environment, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Communications other than ICT, Procurement of Goods and Services, and Design and Delivery of Programs and Services. Symcor will work collaboratively, both internally and externally, with employees, clients, vendors and advisory groups to make meaningful changes that have a long-lasting impact.

Current State

Current practices and measures in place at Symcor to support accessibility include:

- **Symcor's Public Website:**
    - Symcor.ca is in conformance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) at Level AA.

- **Workplace Policies & Accommodation:**
    - Symcor is committed to providing an accessible workplace at all stages of the candidate and employment lifecycle.
    - Symcor regularly reviews its workplace policies, rules, practices and procedures to ensure that they do not create unintended barriers to inclusion and accessibility.
    - In accordance with obligations under the human rights legislation and Symcor's Employment Equity & Accommodations Policy, Symcor will work with employees to provide accommodation in a manner that respects their dignity and provides the opportunity for every employee to reach their full potential.

- **The Work Symcor Does:**
    - As part of the COR.CCX (Customer Communications and Experience) solutions, Symcor offers its clients the ability to create accessible communications that enables seamless and inclusive customer experiences.

Employment

Areas for Development

- Build organizational awareness of Symcor's commitment to accessibility through employee training and other measures.
- Clearly communicate the process for employees with disabilities to obtain workplace adaptations and/or the tools they need to perform their job.
- Expedite access to assistive technologies and workplace adaptations for employees with disabilities.

Short Term Commitments (2023 – 2024)

Symcor strives to ensure accessibility in its employment practices. To further enhance the candidate and employee experience, Symcor will:

- Showcase the commitment to being an equitable employer that strives to provide a barrier-free workplace through communications to employees, in job postings, and through workplace policies and practices.
- Provide enterprise-wide inclusion and accessibility awareness training for all employees, including at the time of onboarding, with tailored training for the following groups:
  - o Leadership
  - o Accessibility Steering and Advisory Committee members
  - o Facilities
- Enhance Symcor's existing accommodation processes and procedures to ensure that the needs of candidates and employees with disabilities are identified and met promptly throughout the hiring and employee lifecycle.
- Continue working with employees through surveys, focus groups, discussions with employee resource groups and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to obtain feedback and ensure the workplace is inclusive of persons with disabilities.
- Ensure managers and leaders are aware of their accountability in fostering an inclusive culture at Symcor.

Long Term Commitments (2025 – 2027)

Symcor plans to engage organizations that have expertise in accessibility to improve processes and enhance support for employees with disabilities, such as:

- Canadian Hearing Society
- Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Autism Canada
- CNIB Foundation
- Sun Life

The findings gathered through consultation with experts will assist in the development of Symcor's updated Accessibility Plan for 2026.

Accessibility training is a critical piece to weaving accessibility into the fabric of the organization. Symcor will therefore continue to evaluate and redesign the training, as necessary, to continue nurturing a culture of accessibility. It is important that employees are aware of their role in creating an inclusive, respectful and accessible environment for everyone.

The Built Environment

Areas for Development

Based on Symcor's in-depth accessibility review of its sites across Canada, along with the consultations with employees, areas to enhance accessibility in the built environment for employees and clients were identified.

In some cases, Symcor is one of several tenants in a landlord-managed building, such as an office tower. In other cases, Symcor is the lessee of an entire site. Symcor has developed a plan to update and standardize the aspects of the locations within its control, while working with the landlords to update site features in components of the buildings with shared tenants. Symcor values its employees and will prioritize addressing employee feedback.

Short Term Commitments (2023 – 2024)

Projects underway include:

- Upgrading the fire alarm systems in Symcor's older site locations: include visual alarm notifications in addition to the current sound alarm notifications.
- Upgrading security intercoms at Symcor locations: for example, add video screens to intercom systems in addition to voice exchange.
- Partnering with the Rick Hansen Foundation to obtain building assessments to supplement the site assessment work that Symcor has done to date and to identify further areas for improvement.

Long Term Commitments (2025 – 2027)

Once changes targeted for the 2023 – 2024 period are executed, Symcor will engage a third-party consultant to review the built environment, identify further areas for improvement and amend the Accessibility Plan as necessary.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Areas for Development

There has been a notable focus at Symcor on improving the accessibility of its Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in recent years. Symcor has made many improvements to enable its clients to produce PDFs that meet ISO 14289 standards for user accessibility (PDF/UA) and has upgraded its web-based applications to be more inclusive. For instance, Symcor has made its cheque fraud services and image account reconciliation web portals compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA guidelines.

Symcor plans to continue improving its web applications, work closely with vendors to ensure their products meet accessibility standards, and include web accessibility as part of the development team's best practices.

Short Term Commitments (2023 – 2024)

Key tenets of Symcor's short term ICT plan include the following:

- Formally incorporate accessibility considerations and benchmarks into Symcor's product and software development lifecycles, from conceptualization to design and testing, through to the final release.
  - o This approach will better facilitate the identification of barriers to accessibility in Symcor's offerings, allow for mitigation and improve overall product/software usability.
  - o Appropriate metrics and KPIs will be established to evaluate the adherence of Symcor's digital offerings to accessibility benchmarks, such as WCAG Level AA Success Criteria for websites.
- Include an accessibility evaluation of ICT in Symcor's regular risk assessments. This will help ensure that accessibility becomes embedded in regular business operations.

Long Term Commitments (2025 – 2027)

- Implement governance and auditing processes to ensure that relevant team members are implementing accessibility best practices and requirements throughout the product and software development lifecycles.
  - o These processes will also help Symcor identify areas for improvement on a continuous basis.
- Provide specialized accessibility training to Symcor's software developers, quality assurance analysts and other team members involved in design to make Symcor's products accessible.

Communications (Other than ICT)

Areas for Development

Symcor interacts with employees, clients, stakeholders, contractors and other partners in a variety of ways, whether through printed or digital communications, video recordings, live-streams, phone, online or in-person. To ensure that communications are inclusive, Symcor's employees at all levels of the organization would benefit from guidelines of accessible communication.

Short Term Commitments (2023 – 2024)

Symcor will work with its Accessibility Advisory Committee on the following:

- Enterprise-wide training, as described under "Employment" of Section 3, will include training on accessible communication practices and techniques.
- Begin developing and maintaining an online repository of employee resources focused on accessibility, such as guidance on accessible communication techniques, inclusive meeting practices and creating accessible documents in Word and PDF.

Long Term Commitments (2025 – 2027)

- Expand the depth and breadth of employee resources in the online repository.
- Review the accessibility features on the Intranet to ensure it is fully accessible for all employees.
- Continue to engage employees for feedback on Symcor communications.

The Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities

Areas for Development

Symcor considers accessibility requirements in its procurement of goods, services and facilities and is taking action to ensure that accessible practices and standards are formally reflected in procurement processes and applicable vendor engagements. These practices and standards will apply to all relevant procurement activities to ensure that accessibility requirements are considered and adopted to the best extent possible.

In addition:

- Symcor will communicate its commitment to accessibility with potential vendors.
- During vendor assessments, Symcor will consider accessibility standards among requirements and include accessibility assessment criteria where possible.
- Adherence with Symcor's accessibility benchmarks will be a mandatory provision in new vendor contracts, as may be applicable.

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Symcor's areas for development and commitments with respect to the design and delivery of programs and services are reflected in the discussion of other key areas in this section: Employment, Information and Communication Technologies, Communications other than ICT, and the Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities.

Transportation

Symcor does not provide public transportation and, given Symcor's business operations, has not identified any barriers under this focus area of the ACA.

4. In Summary

Symcor is committed to applying its efforts consistently throughout the organization to take meaningful steps towards universal accessibility. Symcor is focused on taking active steps to identify, remove, and prevent barriers.

This multi-year Accessibility Plan outlining Symcor's commitments and timelines will be monitored by the dedicated Accessibility Advisory Committee. Symcor is committed to the community and is guided by its vision of "Connecting for Common Good." Symcor will continue to engage its employees and external organizations to guide its work.