

2024-2026 Accessibility Plan

June 1, 2024

for

Gosfield Communications
Co-operative Limited



Table of Contents

1.0 General	
1.1 Statement of Commitment	3
1.2 Contact Information and Feedback Process	3
1.3 Alternative Formats	3
1.4 Executive Summary of this Plan	5
1.5 Definitions	5
1.6 Seven Priority Areas of A.C.A	5
1.7 Budget and Resources	6
2.0 Consultations	7
3.0 Areas Described under Section 5 of the ACA	
3.1 The Built Environment	7
3.2 Employment	8
3.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)	9
3.4 Communication, other than ICT	9
3.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services & Facilities	11
3.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services	11
3.7 Transportation	11
4.0 Conclusions	13
<u>Appendices</u>	
Appendix A: What is a Disability	14
Appendix B: Respectful Language	16
Appendix C: Consultation Questions	17

1. General

1.1 Statement of Commitment:

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for all stakeholders, including customers, employees, job applicants, suppliers, and any visitors who enter the premises, access information provided by the company, or use the company's goods and services.

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited has prepared this accessibility plan in accordance with the Accessible Canada Act (A.C.A.) and supporting regulations including the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (C.R.T.C) Accessibility Reporting Regulations. Our accessibility program considers requirements under the Employment Equity Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It also respects subsections of the Telecommunications and Broadcasting Acts.

Accessibility Statement

Gosfield Communications wants to engage with our employees, co-op members and customers suppliers in an inclusive when it comes to accessibility. We are committed to helping realize the A.C.A.'s goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040 through the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities. We welcome opportunities for meaningful consultation with individuals and groups from various accessibility communities, our employees and with the greater public. We value any and all feedback that will assist us in our efforts. Our Joint Health and Safety Committee will continue to monitor and update our Accessibility Plan as issues arise.

1.2 Contact Information and Feedback Process

The company welcomes any feedback from the general public. Any feedback or questions regarding this plan or requests for copies of the Accessibility Plan in an alternative format can be addressed to the following designated company representative:

Don Casemore, General Manager
519-519-839-6363
128 County Rd 34 W, PO Box 130, Cottam ON, NOR1B0
don.casemore@gosfieldtel.ca

Feedback can be provided anonymously if desired. Feedback can be received in the following formats:

- Telephone: 519-839-4734
- E-mail: info@gosfieldtel.ca

- Mail: 128 County Rd 34 W, PO Box 130, Cottam ON, NOR1B0
- Website: <https://www.gosfieldtel.ca/terms>

1.3 Alternative Formats

This Accessibility Plan is offered in any of the following formats upon request:

- Regular Print: withing 15 days
- Large Print: within 15 days
- Braille: within 45 days
- Audio: We can provide an audio copy (an audio file with a person's voice reading the text) of this plan within 45 days

1.4 Executive Summary of this Plan

At Gosfield Communications, we are fully committed to enhancing accessibility across Canada by 2040. Our primary objective is to identify, eliminate, and proactively prevent barriers that hinder individuals with disabilities. We are dedicated to engaging with our employees, cooperative members, customers, and suppliers to collectively achieve this important goal.

Feedback is integral to our approach, and we actively seek consultation with diverse accessibility communities to ensure our efforts are comprehensive and effective. Oversight and continuous improvement of our Accessibility Plan are managed by our Joint Health and Safety Committee, ensuring it remains responsive to evolving needs and challenges.

Developed by the Gosfield Health and Safety Committee through collaborative consultative processes, our plan is a testament to our unwavering commitment to inclusivity and accessibility for all.

1.5 Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this plan:

Disability: Any impairment, or difference in physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, or communication ability. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or can change over time.

Barrier: Anything that might hinder people with disabilities' full and equal participation. Barriers can be architectural, technological, attitudinal, based on information or communications, or can be the result of a policy or procedure.

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies and rules in a way that allows all people, including people with a variety of disabilities, to access them.

1.6 Seven Priority Areas of A.C.A

The A.C.A. identifies the following priority areas where accessibility barriers exist that hinder a person's full and equal participation in society:

1. Employment
2. The built environment
3. Information and communication technologies (I.C.T.)
4. Communication, other than I.C.T.

5. The procurement of goods, services, and facilities
6. The design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation

1.7 Budget and Resources

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited will continue to work to identify and remove barriers, and prevent new barriers, for persons with disabilities across the seven areas. To achieve this purpose, the company has allocated resources to ensure that ongoing feedback, consultations, improvements, and implementation of short- and long-term goals occur to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities.

In addition, the company has allocated the following resources to ensure accessibility improvements:

- The Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) will continue to monitor accessibility issues indefinitely.
- The Board of Directors has committed to ensure that accessibility issues are resolved in a timely manner wherever possible.

2. Consultations

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited recognizes that persons with disabilities are equal participants in all areas of life. The company is guided by the recognized principles of the *Accessible Canada Act*:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they can and want to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments, and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination persons face.
6. Persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of policies, programs, services, and structures.
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The company is dedicated to including people with disabilities in all decisions about its policies, programs, practices, and services. To prepare this accessibility plan, we consulted a focus group of 10 people with different disabilities. They shared their experiences as customers and as employees with various disabilities. The questions asked during these discussions are listed in Appendix C. Additionally, employees were asked to complete forms.

Through this consultation process, the company has learned that our customers have not identified any significant physical accessibility issues.

3. Areas Described under Section 5 of the ACA

3.1 The Built Environment

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited is committed to ensuring that the built environment, encompassing both interior and exterior elements, facilitates barrier-free access to our goods and services. To achieve this, we will develop and implement policies, programs, practices, and services aimed at identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in the built environment, both new and existing.

Following a comprehensive review of our policies, programs, practices, and services, along with valuable feedback and consultations, we have identified persistent barriers in the built environment at our company.

- a) Upgrading washrooms to be accessible.
- b) Improve key signage to include braille and font.
- c) Develop a process to accommodate customers in wheelchairs who may need to complete transactions away from the main counter due to height restrictions.
- d) Request the town of Kingsville for a designated handicap parking located in front of the main business office.
- e) Implement a temporary solution until an automatic door for the main office can be installed. Install a doorbell for customers and provide signage and communication to make customers aware that if they need assistance opening the main door, staff will assist them.

3.2 Employment

At Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited, we acknowledge the significance of improving workplace accessibility and establishing an accessible recruitment and selection process for applicants with disabilities. This commitment not only contributes to a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture but also underscores our dedication to fostering a work environment that values accommodation and inclusion for all employees.

Following a comprehensive review of our policies, programs, practices, and services, along with valuable feedback and consultations, we have identified persistent barriers in the Employment area at our company.

- a. Improve existing policies for recruitment by including accommodation in job postings.
- b. Create and deliver training and awareness programs on accessibility and inclusion. All training and development programs provided will consider an employee's barriers and abilities, and are provided in alternative formats, such as in person with a tutor, paper or electronic versions.
- c. Write policies and procedures for accommodation requests and complaints related to accessibility.
- d. Review and evaluate accessible technology.

3.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited recognizes the critical role of communication in facilitating individuals' access to our goods and services. To enhance this accessibility, we will implement the following information and communication technologies to facilitate communication with our company:

Following a comprehensive review of our policies, programs, practices, and services, along with valuable feedback and consultations, we have identified persistent barriers in ICT at our company.

- a. Review of our website to ensure its designed to be accessible to people with disabilities, including those who use screen readers or have visual impairments.
- b. Create a policy for ensuring the accessibility of our social media and advertising.
- c. Provide alternative format of this plan and other communications such as print, large print, braille, audio, and electronic format.

3.4 Communication, other than ICT

At Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited, we are confident that we have effectively addressed this compliance area due to our company's advanced technology and diverse nature. As a co-operative, we are dedicated to continuously listening to our customers' needs and exceeding their expectations. We consistently communicate with our customers using clear and concise language, ensuring that our messages are easily understood.

We understand that communication with our company can vary in form and requires a range of options to be inclusive of all individuals.

Following a comprehensive review of our policies, programs, practices, and services, along with valuable feedback and consultations, we have identified persistent barriers in Non-ICT at our company.

The company in the long term will implement the following information and communication technologies to allow individuals to communicate with the company. To help ensure compliance with these services, the company will implement policies, programs, practices, and services to identify, remove, and prevent new and existing barriers in relation to communication other than ICT.

- American Sign Language.
- Quebec Sign Language.

- Indigenous sign languages.
- And Braille print language:

3.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

At Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited, we are dedicated to ensuring that all purchases support our employees, contractors, and customers. While we acknowledge that some of our existing equipment may not meet accessibility standards, we are committed to addressing this issue.

To ensure compliance, we will implement the following policies, programs, practices, and services to identify, remove, and prevent new and existing barriers in the procurement of goods:

- a. Continuously listen to customer issues.
- b. Research alternative equipment to enhance our customers' experience.

3.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited is committed to ensuring that all its programs and services are designed in a manner accessible to all individuals. The company currently has the following methods to ensure this accessibility:

- Online requests via e-mail.
- Telephone & in person requests.
- Telephone and In-person support available seven days a week.
- Several avenues via email and online for addressing any concerns or requirements.
- All employees are expected to provide the most beneficial, courteous and relevant information possible.
- On-site installation and support from a qualified technician.
- Text communications.

Following a comprehensive review of our policies, programs, practices, and services, along with valuable feedback and consultations, we have identified persistent barriers to the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services at our company.

- a. Constantly monitor ways to improve the delivery of programs and services.
- b. Develop the necessary training and tools to provide programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities.
- c. Improve our website so that we achieve level WCAG 2.2 level A/AA compliance.

3.7 Transportation

Gosfield Communications Co-operative Limited strives to ensure accessibility for individuals with a disability being transported to our offices. Gosfield Communications does not provide any transportation service for customers. Our main customer building is on ground level.

Following a comprehensive review of our policies, programs, practices, and services, along with valuable feedback and consultations, we have identified persistent barriers in Transportation at our company.

- a. The company will solicit the town of Kingsville to establish a dedicated handicap parking spot in front of our office.
- b. Gosfield will clearly identify and properly mark handicapped parking spaces at our three offices.
- c. Developing an accessibility policy that includes guidelines for ensuring accessibility in vehicles, seating arrangements, routes, and communications.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Gosfield Communications is deeply committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can access our goods and services without encountering barriers. Our corporate policies underscore our dedication to promoting inclusivity and ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals.

By implementing and upholding these policies, we not only fulfill our legal obligations but also nurture a culture of diversity and respect throughout our organization. Through the provision of accessible facilities, technologies, and services, we aim to cultivate an environment where every individual can flourish and contribute their unique talents.

Our commitment to accessibility not only enriches the experiences of our employees and customers but also bolsters our reputation as a socially responsible and forward-thinking corporation. As we continue on this journey, we will persist in evaluating and enhancing our accessibility initiatives, actively seeking feedback from stakeholders, and embracing emerging technologies to further enhance accessibility across all facets of our operations.

Together, we will create a workplace and community where everyone can thrive and succeed, embodying the principles of inclusivity and equal access for all.

Appendix A: What Is a Disability?

Understanding what a disability is, and the most respectful way of referring to people with disabilities, is an important first step when moving forward with writing your Accessibility Plan.

The World Health Organization's definition of disability is the most widely accepted:

“Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An *impairment* is a problem in body function or structure; an *activity limitation* is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a *participation restriction* is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.”

And the Accessible Canada Act defines disability as:

“any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.”

Disability is complex and many people with disabilities live with multiple, and sometimes intersecting disabilities that, if not accommodated for appropriately, impact their everyday lives. Below is a list of some visible and invisible disabilities that was developed in consultation with people with disabilities.

- Vision or seeing disabilities, including blindness, colour blindness, low vision or partially sighted, and deaf-blindness (a combination of hearing and vision loss).
- Hearing Disabilities, including Deaf people and people who are hard of hearing, meaning that they have some hearing loss.
- Mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disabilities, including muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, spinal cord injuries Parkinson's disease, and amputations and limb differences.
- Pain-related disabilities (many pain related disabilities are invisible), including arthritis, fibromyalgia and traumatic injuries like brain injuries and spinal cord injuries.
- Learning disabilities, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and dyscalculia.
- Developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD, autism), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, epilepsy, and Down Syndrome.

- Mental health disabilities, including anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia.
- Memory disabilities, including strokes, dementia, and encephalopathy.

Appendix B: A Note on Respectful Language

English is an ever-evolving language, and the terms people use to identify themselves or other people change over time.

Language to avoid	Inclusive Language
Blind people, visually impaired	Persons who are blind or low vision
Insane, psycho, mental patient, maniac, nuts	Person with a mental health disability, person with schizophrenia, etc.
Normal person, healthy person	Person who is not disabled, able bodied
Downs, Autistic, mentally handicapped, mental retardation	Person with a cognitive or intellectual disability
Hearing impaired, deaf people	Persons who are deaf
	Persons who are hard of hearing
	Persons with hearing loss
	*note people who belong to Deaf culture use a capital "D"
Victim of, suffers from, afflicted with, crippled, lame, invalid, challenged	Person(s) with a disability
Wheelchair bound, the wheelchair (when referring to the person), confined to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user

Appendix C: Consultation Questions

Communications

1. Think about the last time you had to contact your Internet, phone or TV service provider. Were you contacting them about an accessibility issue, and did you encounter any barriers in trying to get your issue resolved?
2. Tell us about a time when you had excellent customer service, the kind you wish everyone would offer.
3. Can you tell us about a time where you had terrible customer service or customer service that presented barriers and what can businesses do to avoid providing that kind of customer service?

Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

4. When you go on any website, what are barriers you encounter? And what are some features that make accessing a website easier for you? And what would be most important for a small company to do on its website if they don't have a lot of resources?
5. How would you contact a business that had no website?
6. What barriers would you be worried about encountering going to a business that didn't have a website?
7. What would you want a small business to know about how to conduct business with you if they didn't have a website?

Employment

8. Can you share any personal experiences with these providers about barriers in employment or barriers in applying for employment?
9. How would you describe a barrier free hiring process?
10. What is a nightmare hiring process, from a disability perspective?
11. How would you describe a barrier free training process?

Built Environment

12. Think of a small business that you may have interacted with, what kinds of accessibility barriers have you encountered when it comes to small businesses. with small spaces?

13. What accessibility considerations would you have before you go to a small business you've never been to?