

# **Northern Pipeline Agency**

## **Accessibility Plan 2022-2025**

**December 2022**

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## Message from the Commissioner

I am proud to present the Northern Pipeline Agency's inaugural Accessibility Plan, a three-year plan that will guide us in embedding accessibility into the fabric of the Agency and in better serving Canadians.

Although the Agency is in a ramped down position, this plan presents how we will work, in collaboration with persons with disabilities, to proactively identify, remove, and prevent barriers in the workplace and in our programs and services. This plan extends broadly to those persons working within the Agency, as well as the those from other government departments that interact with the Agency. In addition, the plan includes consideration of the energy industry, including Foothills Pipe Lines Ltd., and the public directly affected by the Agency's regulatory coordination and oversight of the Alaska Highway Natural Gas Pipeline project, including Indigenous peoples.

I invite all persons involved directly or indirectly with the Agency to adopt and live out the principle of collective leadership by taking personal responsibility in creating a more accessible Agency. The foundation that we are building together will serve and guide us for years to come. I am confident that the Agency will create an environment that is accessible by default, celebrating and valuing contributions of persons with all different abilities in the work we do for all Canadians.



John Hannaford  
Commissioner

# General

## How to Seek Information and Provide Feedback

We invite both members of the public and all members of the public service who interact with the Northern Pipeline Agency (Agency) and our staff to provide us with feedback on accessibility barriers. This includes feedback on:

- the manner in which we are implementing our accessibility plan; and/or
- the barriers encountered by our staff or people who interact with the Agency.

We will also provide a copy of this accessibility plan in alternate formats, including print, large print, Braille, audio and electronic, when requested. We will respond to these requests within the required timelines outlined by the *Accessible Canada Act*<sup>i</sup>, and its regulations.<sup>ii</sup>

### Members of the public:

- Phone feedback: Call 1-613-995-1150
- Electronic feedback can be submitted [by email](mailto:info@npa-apn.gc.ca) (address email to: info@npa-apn.gc.ca)

### Agency staff and other government agencies and departments:

- Phone feedback: Call 1-613-995-1150
- Electronic feedback can be submitted [by email](mailto:info@npa-apn.gc.ca) (address email to: info@npa-apn.gc.ca)

### Feedback by mail:

Please address mail feedback to the following:

Northern Pipeline Agency  
Attention: Designated Accessibility Person  
470 - 588 Booth Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0Y7

We invite the public, Agency staff and other government organizations to contact the Agency using the most convenient method of their choice.

The Agency can receive feedback anonymously by mail.

## **Feedback processes**

We endeavour to acknowledge receipt of all non-anonymous feedback within 15 business days. We also will send this acknowledgement through the same means by which we received the feedback.

Please note that all feedback will be considered equally. Both anonymous and non-anonymous feedback will all be included in progress reports and in regular updates for internal discussion. However, we will not respond directly to anonymous feedback under any format.

For additional information on how feedback will be used, please consult the Implementation and Monitoring portion of this plan.

## **Designated Person**

Wayne Marshall  
Director of Operations

The Designated Person can also provide information on obtaining the Agency's Accessibility Plan in an accessible format, as well as an accessible description of the Agency's feedback processes for its Accessibility Plan.

## About the Agency

The Agency has a mandate to carry out federal responsibilities with respect to the planning and construction of the Canadian portion of the Alaska Highway Natural Gas Pipeline (AHGP) project by the project proponent, Foothills Pipe Lines Ltd. (Foothills), as set out in the *Northern Pipeline Act* (the Act).<sup>iii</sup> The Agency plays a key role in supporting efficient and expeditious regulatory approval, while ensuring environmental protection and social and economic benefits for Canada.

In 2013, the project proponent, Foothills, notified the Agency that it was pausing the planning of the AHGP project and would await further commercial interest before recommencing its efforts. As a result, the Agency is currently in a ramped down position, with a total of one full time equivalent (FTE), in response to the level of activity on the AHGP project. The Agency's current priority is to fulfill Canada's ongoing obligations as set out in the Act, and maintain the state of federal readiness should Foothills proceed with the construction of the remaining northern portion of the AHGP project.

Given the Agency's ramped down position, service agreements with government departments and agencies including Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), and the Canada Energy Regulator (CER) ensure the Agency is well supported to fulfil Canada's ongoing obligations. The Agency intends to leverage, as applicable, and benefit from many actions outlined in the 2022-2025 NRCan Accessibility Action Plan.

Should the need to ramp up arise resulting from the re-commencement of the AHGP project, the Agency will re-examine, within three months, its accessibility plan in light of the requirements of the current legislation and regulations.



## Consultations

The Agency held an all-staff meeting to seek input and concerns related to accessibility. As noted above, the Agency is in a ramped down position with one FTE, consisting of three part-time staff. To ensure their privacy, details on accessibility and disability types and levels within the Agency will not be addressed specifically in this plan.

In addition, the Agency engaged its single regulated company, Foothills, to seek input and concerns.

The Agency also participated in five virtual meetings and discussions with other federal agencies and departments, including NRCan, the CER, and Employment and Social Development Canada. These events were held virtually throughout the summer and fall of 2022, including managers and staff with disabilities. At these events, the audience was invited to submit written comments and feedback, to ensure that the process did not create barriers for participants who wished to provide their feedback in other formats and at their own pace.

Lastly, the Agency received useful insights from consultations performed by NRCan. NRCan provides a number of services to the Agency under a service level agreement between the two organizations. The Agency also benefited from research and consultations performed by other government departments previously, including research from the Office of Public Service Accessibility<sup>iv</sup>.

### What we heard and Barriers that were identified

The consultations carried out by the Government of Canada that led to the promulgation of the *Accessible Canada Act* found that the following barriers existed:

- many persons with disabilities report that they do not receive equal quality of service;
- there are numerous barriers to communication, such as documents in formats that are not accessible; and
- persons with disabilities would like more opportunities to report service issues and suggest improvements.

Although accessibility is a universal need, and benefits all, participants indicated during the 2022 consultations that:

- people want to have information and tools to improve accessibility;
- people want to have organizations that are more inclusive of persons with different abilities;
- people want to improve their understanding of accessibility but are not sure where or how to focus their efforts for improvements at the workplace;
- people want to be able to find information more easily about the Agency on its website;
- with a return to in-person work, people want to make sure that accessibility matters are incorporated into both internal and external processes; and
- people wanted learnings and gains achieved during the past two years of remote work experiences to be incorporated into both internal and external processes.

## Our 2022-2025 Commitments

In accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act*, this plan includes an overview of current activities and our commitments in the following seven areas:

1. employment
2. the built environment
3. information and communication technologies (ICT)
4. communication, other than ICT
5. the design and delivery of programs and services
6. the procurement of goods, services and facilities
7. transportation

We recognize the following commitments are just the start, and this plan is an ongoing commitment.

### Employment

#### Current State:

As noted previously, the Agency has 1 FTE, which consists of three part-time staff, and is supported by additional resources from other government agencies and departments, including NRCan. In addition, the Agency remains in a ramped down position with limited new employment opportunities.

#### Desired State:

In addressing employment barriers, the Agency will aim to recruit and retain a diverse workforce that is representative of Canada's population. This will support the government-wide goal for [recruitment of persons with disabilities](#)<sup>v</sup>.

#### Actions:

Should recruitment opportunities arise within the Agency, the Agency will seek to find qualified individuals with consideration for persons with disabilities.

### The Built Environment

#### Current State:

The Agency office is co-located with NRCan at 588 Booth Street, Ottawa. This building is owned and managed by Public Services and Procurement Canada. The Agency leverages these two departments in regard to accessibility of the built environment.

During consultations, concerns were raised with respect to accessibility to the Agency office should the need arise to have physical meetings with the regulated company, or with stakeholders, other government departments, and Indigenous peoples.

The Agency recognizes that in addition to the physical building, staff and visitors may have invisible disabilities, such as environmental sensitivities. In 2019, NRCan adopted the departmental Directive on Scents in the Workplace. This was an important step in recognizing the impact of scents in the workplace, and how environmental factors are an essential part of a workplace's accessibility.

**Desired State:**

Recognizing the comments received during consultations, the Agency seeks to provide accessible and barrier-free work locations.

**Actions:**

The Agency commits to consider and modify in-person meetings or events as needed to address accessibility barriers.

Should additional measures be implemented at the Ottawa office location by NRCan, these measures will be adopted by the Agency, as appropriate.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

**Current State:**

Accessibility in the area of ICT has benefits for everyone and is recognized as a vital necessity for many people with disabilities. In a digital age where every person relies on technology to access information or complete their work duties, inaccessible ICT is a significant barrier to inclusion and productivity for persons with disabilities.

Through a service level arrangement, the Agency relies on NRCan to provide various ICT support and services to the three Agency staff. As a result, the Agency benefits from the advances, including the adoption of Microsoft 365 tools in 2022.

**Desired State:**

The Agency seeks to increase capacity and confidence in obtaining ITC to meet staff's needs regardless of their ability, work location and career status.

**Actions:**

The Agency commits to explore opportunities to leverage Microsoft 365 tools to improve the Agency's internal documentation and record systems, leading to higher productivity.

Aligned with this, and as our understanding of accessibility grows, the Agency will ensure that Agency staff are provided with opportunities for learning and gaining confidence in the use of Microsoft 365 accessibility tools, including the development of corporate templates.

### **Communication, other than ICT**

**Current State:**

Every person, either within the federal government or the Canadian public, stands to benefit from concise and easy to understand communications. During consultations, comments were raised on the ease of using the Agency website in order to obtain information.

**Desired State:**

The Agency seeks to ensure equal access to information for all Agency staff and the Canadian public.

**Actions:**

The Agency commits to:

- centralizing accessibility information for its staff to easily locate resources and services; and
- examining and updating its external facing website with key consideration given to improving the ease of locating information.

### **The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

**Current State:**

The Agency has a unique external program area involving the regulatory oversight of a proposed project that is awaiting further commercial interest. Despite the ramped down position, the Agency is contacted on occasion regarding regulatory and oversight matters, which require action and a response to external parties.

The Agency also has a broad range of internal programs that require regular reporting. The majority of these reports, plans and information requirements are obligations for public reporting and transparency.

**Desired State:**

The Agency's unique external programs and services should be inclusive by design, providing equal, barrier-free access to all Canadians interacting with our agency.

The Agency seeks to deliver workplace and internal programs and practices that are accessible and inclusive by design fostering a healthy, safe, and fair work and internal program delivery environment.

**Actions:**

We commit to centralize our information and clarify our processes related to our programs and services. As a result, Agency staff and the public will have fewer difficulties in finding information related to programs and services, especially those that may pertain to persons with disabilities.

### **The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

**Current State:**

The Agency is supported in its procurement function by NRCan, as set out in a service level agreement with NRCan. Given the ramped down position of the Agency, currently, the Agency has very limited procurement activity with external business owners, with no active contracts in place. The Agency does not anticipate a significant change in its level of procurement activity for products and services in the three year horizon.

**Desired State:**

The Agency seeks to facilitate and streamline procurement of accessible products and services, while supporting and educating business owners in their responsibility regarding accessible procurement

**Actions:**

Due to the limited procurement activities anticipated in the next three year forecast, the Agency will gather data during this period involving procurement best practices, accessibility of potential products and services, and options for purchasing products and services.

### **Transportation**

**Current State:**

As a regulator, the Agency has operational needs related to transportation and travel. Travel for meetings, conferences or events may require transportation involving commercial flights, vehicle rentals and accommodations. In addition, there may be operational needs, even in a ramped down position, for travel and field work to remote regions. Therefore, it is important for the Agency to consider transportation.

**Desired State:**

The Agency seeks to ensure transportation for Agency related work is accessible and barrier-free to the extent permitted.

**Actions:**

The Agency commits to developing and documenting best practices and procedures, including checklists to ensure that travel situations can be managed without negatively impacting persons with disabilities.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

The Agency will take a phased approach to implement the stated actions given the Agency's ramped down position. This will allow the Agency to continue working towards positive outcomes and leveraging the ongoing and new initiatives, and to incorporate progress and learnings based on the efforts of NRCan.

The Agency will monitor and evaluate progress throughout the year. The Agency's Designated Person will convene meetings with staff and other groups to review feedback and progress made to date. As required, the Designated Person will also recommend new actions and shifting prioritization based on feedback received.

Annual progress reports on the Accessibility Plan will be prepared collaboratively with staff and be posted on the Agency website<sup>vi</sup>. These progress reports will present an honest and transparent description of obstacles encountered in implementation and celebrate the progress made to date as the Agency pursues greater accessibility in the delivery of its mandate and service to Canadians.

## **Conclusion**

Although the Agency is in a ramped down position, persons with disabilities who work for, with or are served by the Agency need to see change, and be involved in making the change. This plan is a starting point in creating a workplace where persons with disabilities are increasingly respected, considered and can flourish. We recognize that true accessibility and inclusion requires action and commitment on an individual level and we look forward to creating an Agency that is accessible by default, celebrating and valuing the contributions of persons with all different abilities in the work we do for all Canadians.

## **Additional Information**

### **Glossary**

**Barrier:**

Anything — including anything physical, environmental, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

**Disability:**

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.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> *Accessible Canada Act*, , <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/page-1.html>

<sup>ii</sup> *Accessible Canada Regulations*, <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2021-241/index.html>

<sup>iii</sup> *Northern Pipeline Act*, <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-26/>

<sup>iv</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Office of Public Service Accessibility, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/corporate/organization.html#opsa>

<sup>v</sup> Recruitment of persons with disabilities, <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/accessibility-public-service/accessibility-strategy-public-service-toc/accessibility-strategy-public-service-employment.html>

<sup>vi</sup> Northern Pipeline Agency website, <https://northern-pipeline.canada.ca/>