

Progress Report on Wasaya's Alignment with the Canadian Human Rights Commission Accessibility Plan 2025

Executive Summary

Wasaya Airways LP, an Indigenous-owned airline based in Thunder Bay, Ontario, has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to accessibility and inclusivity in its operations. This report will examine Wasaya's progress in aligning with the Canadian Human Rights Commission's (CHRC) Accessibility Plan, as detailed in the CHRC's December 2024 Progress Report. By analyzing Wasaya's accessibility initiatives across the following categories—employment practices, built environment, information and communications technologies, communications, procurement, service delivery, design, and transportation—the aim of this report will be to provide a comprehensive overview of the company's ongoing efforts to foster an accessible and inclusive environment for Wasaya staff and the communities it serves.

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1. Employment Practices

1.1 Recruitment and Onboarding

It should be noted that most jobs at Wasaya are Aircrew who require a degree of mobility and fitness as well as certification by a Canadian Aviation Medical Examiner. For other occupations based in Thunder Bay, such as administrative positions, Wasaya has proactively revised its recruitment strategies to attract a diverse pool of candidates, including individuals with disabilities. The company collaborates with local organizations and utilizes multiple platforms to disseminate job postings, ensuring that opportunities are accessible to all applicants. During the onboarding process, Wasaya provides necessary accommodations and support to new hires, facilitating a smooth transition into the company.

1.2 Training and Development

Recognizing the importance of continuous learning, Wasaya offers training programs focused on accessibility and disability awareness. These programs educate employees on recognizing and mitigating unconscious biases, understanding various disability models, and implementing inclusive practices. The training also emphasizes the legal obligations under the Canadian Human Rights Act, fostering a culture of respect and understanding. Additionally, Aircrew, Customer Service Agents, and Ramp Attendants undergo modular training to use specifically designed loading chairs to accommodate individuals that require assistance in boarding and disembarking aircraft.

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1.3 Workplace Accommodations

Wasaya maintains an open-door policy for employees requiring accommodations. Wasaya recognizes that disabilities can be both visible and invisible, which not all employees or passengers may wish to identify. The company has therefore established a clear procedure for requesting accommodations, ensuring confidentiality and timely responses. Recent enhancements include ergonomic workstation assessments and flexible work arrangements, tailored to individual needs, thereby promoting productivity and employee well-being.

2. Built Environment

2.1 Facility Accessibility

Wasaya's hangar and administrative facilities in Thunder Bay have undergone significant modifications to enhance physical accessibility. These improvements include the installation of ramps, automatic doors, and restrooms equipped with assistive devices. Regular audits are conducted to identify and address potential barriers, demonstrating Wasaya's commitment to providing an inclusive environment for all stakeholders.

Passenger needs and requirements are handled through various airport authorities and are fully accessible. This includes barrier free washrooms, waiting areas, and restaurants (where available).

2.2 Signage and Wayfinding

To assist individuals with visual impairments, Wasaya has implemented tactile and braille signage throughout its facilities. The signage system is designed to be intuitive, aiding in navigation, and enhancing the overall user experience. Additionally, the company is exploring electronic wayfinding solutions to further support individuals with mobility and visual challenges.

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3. Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

3.1 Website Accessibility

Wasaya's website is in the process of being redesigned to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards. The redesign addresses previous issues such as low contrast, complex navigation, and non-compliant forms. Features like alternative text for images, captioned videos, and screen reader compatibility have been incorporated to ensure that all users, regardless of ability, can access information seamlessly. The redesigned website is expected to be launched early Q3, 2025.

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3.2 Mobile Accessibility

Understanding the widespread use of mobile devices, Wasaya has optimized its mobile site to provide a user-friendly experience. Adjustments include responsive design, touch-friendly

interfaces, and compatibility with assistive technologies. The mobile site ensures that users with disabilities can access services and information without encountering barriers.

3.3 Internal Systems

Wasaya has invested in accessible internal communication and collaboration tools. The adoption of platforms that support screen readers and other assistive technologies ensures that all employees can participate fully in internal communications. Training sessions are held to familiarize staff with these tools, promoting an inclusive digital workspace.

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4. Communications

4.1 Accessible Formats

All external communications, including newsletters, press releases, and promotional materials, are available in multiple formats upon request. Formats include large print, braille, audio, and electronic versions, catering to the diverse needs of Wasaya's clientele. This approach aligns with the CHRC's commitment to providing information in accessible formats.

4.2 Language Services

Recognizing the linguistic diversity of its service area, Wasaya offers translation and interpretation services. These services ensure effective communication with clients who speak Indigenous languages, French, or other languages, fostering inclusivity and respect for cultural diversity.

5. Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities

5.1 Inclusive Procurement Policies

Wasaya's procurement policies prioritize accessibility by evaluating potential suppliers based on their commitment to inclusive practices. The procurement process includes criteria that assess the accessibility features of goods and services, ensuring that acquisitions do not introduce barriers for individuals with disabilities.

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5.2 Supplier Training

Suppliers are provided with guidelines and training on accessibility standards and expectations. This initiative ensures that partners align with Wasaya's commitment to accessibility, promoting a consistent and inclusive experience for all stakeholders.

6. Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

6.1 Accessible Travel Services

Wasaya offers specialized training for staff to assist passengers with disabilities effectively. Services include priority boarding, assistance with boarding and deplaning, and storage for mobility aids. The airline's fleet is regularly assessed for compliance with accessibility standards, and necessary modifications are made to accommodate passengers with diverse needs.

6.2 Community Engagement

Wasaya actively engages with Indigenous communities to understand and address unique accessibility challenges. Community consultations inform the development of services that respect cultural practices and meet accessibility needs, ensuring that programs are relevant and beneficial to all community members.

7. Transportation

7.1 Fleet Accessibility

Wasaya has several specially designed loading wheelchairs which accommodate the narrow doorway and loading platform typical of the aircraft operated. All staff that interact with passengers receive training on the use of the loading chair and procedures to use when assisting passengers who require use of this chair. Wasaya also provides a golf cart with club seating at some airports where the distance from the terminal to the aircraft may be challenging for individuals with specific needs. The airline collaborates with airports to ensure that ground services, such as ramps and lifts, are available to support accessible boarding and deplaning.

7.2 Staff Training

All staff receive accessibility and disability training as part of their onboarding process. The training emphasizes empathy, effective communication, and the proper use of assistive devices. As stated previously in this document, frontline staff also receive training in embarking / disembarking procedures when the use of a loading chair is required.