



York Region District School Board

Annual Accessibility Report 2021 to 2022

Building an Accessible and Inclusive York Region District School Board

A status report on measures taken in the past school year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility for everyone who learns, works and/or participates in the YRDSB community.



How do I access the Annual Accessibility Report?

The YRDSB Annual Accessibility Report is available in any of the following ways:

- **Online to the public:** Go to [Accessibility Reports and Plans](#) on the YRDSB accessibility webpage
- **By email:** aoda@yrdsb.ca
- **By telephone:** Leave a voicemail at 905-884-2046 ext. 311, and the Accessibility Officer will follow-up with you; or
- **In an alternate format upon request.**

How do I provide feedback?

Feedback regarding the Annual Accessibility Report is both encouraged and essential for advancing accessibility at YRDSB in a way that recognizes the needs of all learners, educators and people with disabilities.

To provide feedback or questions about any section of this Annual Accessibility Report, please contact the Human Rights Commissioner's Office at:

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York Region District School Board
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Message from the Interim Human Rights Commissioner (Consultant)

During the 2021-2022 reporting year, our Board community continued to navigate various facets of accessibility within the meandering landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ongoing impact of periodic shutdowns and closures not only affected student well-being but also presented accessibility challenges associated with remote learning in ensuring that all students had access to online learning tools and technologies. For all students and especially those with special education needs, the world of synchronous and asynchronous learning required consistent planning and engagement by system leaders. With most of our Board community working and learning remotely at various intervals, certain accessibility issues were left until the assurance of certain level of normalcy returned.

Despite the challenges of a pandemic environment, the York Region District School Board remained steadfast in advancing key accessibility-related projects in the virtual world and the Human Rights Commissioner's Office continued to provide guidance and support in ensuring our continued commitment to complying with (and beyond) the AODA. We also continued the work in bringing together the Accessibility Advisory Committee through meetings during the 2021-2022 school year to discuss ways of ensuring our actions remained aligned with fostering well-being and mental health, championing equity and inclusivity, building collaborative relationships, and empowering ethical leadership.

Notwithstanding the departure of the full-time Human Rights Commissioner at the end of March 2022, the HRCO staff delivered important professional learning through ongoing department-specific accessibility workshop sessions as well as revisions and updates to accessibility compliance training. Despite the ongoing pandemic during the 2021-2022 reporting year, we leaned into challenges with courage as we remained committed to the vital work of embedding accessibility into all aspects of our decision-making as a system.

Anthony Anirud
Interim Human Rights Commissioner (Consultant)

Purpose and Commitment

Legislated Purpose

York Region District School Board (YRDSB or the Board) has prepared this Annual Accessibility Report in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

The Board is defined as a “designated public sector organization” under the AODA. All designated public organizations are required to:

- “prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the [multi-year accessibility plan], including steps taken to comply with this Regulation; and
- post the status report on their website, if any, and provide the report in an accessible format upon request.” ([O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4](#))

The Annual Accessibility Report describes the measures that YRDSB has taken in the past school year and the ensuing summer months (September 2021 to August 2022) to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility for everyone who learns, works and participates in the Board community. The annual status report continues to be prepared as a separate document from the [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2025](#).

The Annual Accessibility Report is presented to Executive Council and subsequently to the Learning, Equity and Well-Being Standing Committee each fall. For the 2021-2022 reporting period, the Annual Accessibility Report is presented jointly with the [HRCO Annual Report](#). Following approval, this annual report will be posted on the Board’s [Accessibility Reports and Plans webpage](#).

Commitment to Accessibility

The Board’s commitment to accessibility is guided by the Human Rights Commissioner’s Office (HRCO). The accessibility portfolio for the YRDSB is managed by the Accessibility Officer. This position is unique to any school board in Ontario and reiterates the commitment to accessibility at YRDSB. Accessibility is further guided through the shared responsibilities and collaborative commitments of the [Accessibility Advisory Committee](#).

The Board's commitment to accessibility is aligned with the four priorities of the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP):

- Foster Well-Being and Mental Health
- Champion Equity and Inclusivity
- Build Collaborative Relationships
- Empower Ethical Leadership

Four Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) Goals have been developed in alignment with the MYSP priorities as well as the Director's Action Plan goals.



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) Goals



Provide Accessible Customer Service

Provide customer service excellence by promoting accessibility best practices that give meaningful access to all students and staff with and without disabilities.



Understand Accessibility as a Process

Provide accessibility learning, education and outreach to build awareness, knowledge and attitudes to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.



Engage the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Engage the Accessibility Advisory Committee that operates through shared responsibilities and inter-departmental collaboration, while also engaging people with disabilities.



Publish an Annual Accessibility Report

Complete and publish an Annual Accessibility Report to demonstrate accountability for the Board's progress in implementing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

1.0 General Requirements Achieved in 2021-2022

1.1 Annual Accessibility Plans and Reports

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meetings

MYAP Goal Alignment: Engage the Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Four Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings were held during the 2021-2022 school year. All approved meeting minutes are available to the public on the [Accessibility Advisory Committee web page](#).
- Professional development and learning was designed and delivered for committee members at each meeting, and included the following:
 - Presentation of YRDSB Feedback Report on the proposed K-12 education standards
 - Hiawatha (wampum) belt shared learning; and the cost of accessibility renovations and retrofits Q&A
 - Rick Hansen Foundation panel discussion on “The Power of Inclusive Language”; and York Region Inclusive Language Guide shared review and discussion
 - Land Acknowledgment reflection activity; and collaborative review of the K-12 Education Standards - 2022 Final Recommendations Report
- An online feedback form was shared at the end of the school year to allow Accessibility Advisory Committee members to share feedback in order to improve future meetings.

Annual Accessibility Report

MYAP Goal Alignment: Publish an Annual Accessibility Report

- This report is the completed annual status report describing the measures that the YRDSB has taken in the 2021-2022 school year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.
- The finalized report will be posted online to the public on the Board’s [Accessibility Reports and Plans web page](#) following review and approval by Executive Council and Learning, Equity and Well-Being Standing Committee.

Proposed K-12 Education Standards

MYAP Goal Alignment: Engage the Accessibility Advisory Committee

A [YRDSB Feedback Report on the Proposed K-12 Education Standards](#) was completed and submitted to the Education Standards Development Committee on September 22, 2021. The report was based on input from Accessibility Advisory Committee members as well as additional feedback from members of the Board community.

Based on all feedback received from across the province, the Proposed K-12 Education Standards - 2022 Final Recommendations Report was made available to the public on February 23, 2022. The Accessibility Advisory Committee later engaged in focused discussions about select final recommendations.

1.4 Accessibility Learning and Training

There is a twofold approach to accessibility learning and training at YRDSB:

1. **Accessibility compliance training** - mandatory and standardized accessibility training modules as set out under AODA legislation that build accessibility (and human rights) awareness; and
2. **Accessibility learning beyond compliance** - optional but recommended professional learning sessions and pathways intended to foster accessibility capacity- and knowledge-building.

Accessibility Compliance Training

MYAP Goal Alignment: Understand Accessibility as a Process

There are three separate accessibility compliance training modules that all new employees must complete as a one-time training requirement. The table below outlines each accessibility compliance training module, its previous iteration, and the renewal timelines for updating each module.

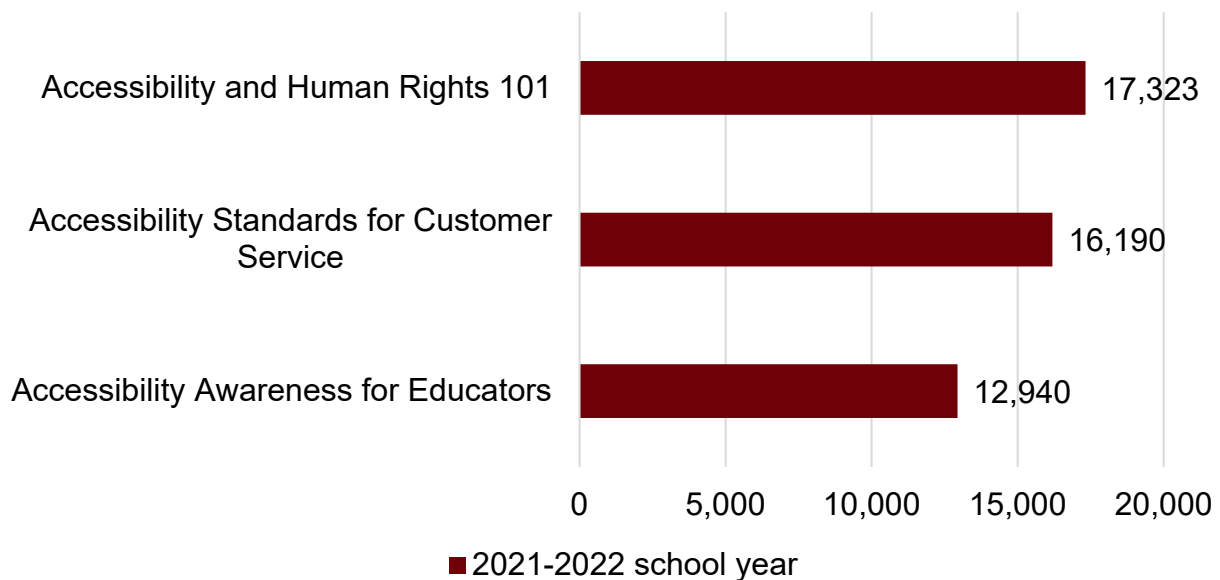
Current module title	Previous title	Renewal timeline
1. Accessibility and Human Rights 101*	Accessibility and Human Rights: Working Together	Updates completed during the 2022 spring and summer months. Renewed module introduced for start of 2022-23 school year.
2. Accessibility, Disability and the AODA**	Accessibility Standards for Customer Service	Revision and updates ongoing in collaboration with Student Services and other areas.

Current module title	Previous title	Renewal timeline
3. Accessibility Awareness for Educators	Accessibility Awareness for Educators	Renewed module introduced for start of 2021-22 school year.

***Accessibility and Human Rights 101:** This compliance training module was significantly revised to integrate the existing “Introduction to Human Rights” module previously introduced as a one-time completion requirement as part of 2020 compliance training. This renewed compliance training module provides better context for how and why the accessibility portfolio at YRDSB is connected with the Human Rights Office.

****Accessibility, Disability and the AODA:** The renewal of the existing “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service” module (originally introduced in 2005) was initiated during the 2021-2022 school year and will incorporate the AODA requirement to “ensure training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards and... on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities” (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 7).

The total completions among active employees for each online module are presented in the bar chart below as of August 31, 2022.



Accessibility Learning (Beyond Compliance)

MYAP Goal Alignment: Understand Accessibility as a Process

The focus of accessibility training at YRDSB has continued to shift towards professional learning beyond compliance through more customized and individualized sessions facilitated by the Accessibility Officer as well as other accessibility champions within different departments.

Accessibility professional learning delivered during the 2021-2022 school year included symposium workshops and department-specific learning sessions, as presented in the table below.

Date	Session Title + Brief Description	Participants	Facilitator(s)
October 6, 2021	Equity Symposium 2021 facilitator training - accessibility guidelines and best practices presentation	Workshop facilitators	Accessibility Officer
October 28, 2021	Beyond Compliance: Accessibility Acceptance - Equity Symposium 2021 workshop	YRDSB community	Accessibility Officer
March 6, 2022	Human Rights and Accessibility Panel - CMPS Induction meeting	Corporate Management Professional Staff	Accessibility Officer + Human Rights Officer
March 21 and 23, 2022	PEAC Regional Symposium Information Sessions 1 and 2 - accessible guidelines and best practices presentation	Workshop facilitators	Accessibility Officer
May 4, 2022	Human Rights and Accessibility at YRDSB - PEAC Regional Symposium 2022 workshop	PEAC members	HRCO

Enterprise Application Support (EAS) also offered virtual Accessible Document Training for YRDSB staff on the following 10 dates throughout the 2021-2022 school year:

- October 21, 2021
- November 10, 2021
- November 18, 2021
- December 9, 2021
- January 20, 2022
- February 17, 2022
- March 24, 2022
- April 13, 2022
- May 11, 2022
- June 16, 2022

2.0 Customer Service Standards Achieved in 2021-2022

“Customers” within a school board setting refer to all members of the YRDSB community, including: students, employees, trustees, parents/guardians, guests and visitors, permit holders, service providers, and volunteers.

This section outlines the programs and services offered during the 2021-2022 school year that supported more accessible learning or working environments for students, employees and other “customers” with and without disabilities, exceptionalities and/or special education needs.

2.1 Assistive Devices

Special Equipment Amount (SEA)

Accommodations for students with identified special education needs often include access to assistive technology through Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claims. [A Family's Guide to SEA](#) was updated during the 2021-2022 school year with more inclusive language, less jargon, and embedded QR codes to web-based alternatives.

The Ministry of Education approved over **1,000 SEA claims** for the purchase of assistive technology for students with special needs during the 2021-2022 school year.

Additionally, Student Services replaced over 2,000 SEA laptops during the 2021-2022 school year. A group purchase of 700 BoardMaker licences was purchased and distributed across the Board. SEA approvals included (but was not limited to): hearing assistive technology, vision assistive technology, and software that provides access to curriculum.

Hearing Assistive Technology

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services for YRDSB has a wide variety of Hearing Assistive Technology that increase auditory access for students when there is personal hearing loss. Some of the devices provided during the 2021-2022 school year included:

- **Digital Soundfield Towers** - speakers that amplify the voice of educators/peers when wearing a wireless microphone. These can also pair with the digital receivers on the students' hearing aids or cochlear implants. Everyone benefits from Soundfield as it assists when there is environmental noise.
- **Digital transmitters and receivers** - use of various microphones for sound amplification. Phonak receivers pair with the personal hearing aid or cochlear implant of the student and the digital transmitter microphone(s) used within the classroom by the educator or student peer(s) in order to amplify their voice.

Vision Assistive Technology

- **MacBook accessibility pilot project** - MacBooks were explored for students who require the benefits of iOS accessibility features for low vision. The MacBook accessibility pilot project concluded in the 2021-2022 school year, with 8 MacBook users and additional SEA claim orders for these devices.

- **PC Windows laptops** - Braille users continued to use PC Windows laptops. SEA claims doubled last spring once students returned to in-person learning and Functional Vision Assessments and Learning Media Assessments could be conducted in order to provide appropriate data to support the technology for visual/tactile access.
- **Other Hearing Assistive Technology** - magnifiers, braille embossers, Brailnote Touch Plus refreshable braille keyboards, large font keyboards, screen reader software, robotics, and more.

Student Technology Exchange Program (STEP)

The Student Technology Exchange Program (STEP) continues to be managed by Information Technology Services (ITS) and Enterprise Application Support (EAS) in support of virtual schools.

Through STEP, loaner technology was deployed to virtual students in need, primarily Chromebooks (155) and internet hotspots (215).

Additionally, virtual school teachers were supported with additional peripheral technology equipment based on a teacher technology survey, which included:

- Chromebooks
- document camera
- headsets
- USB hubs
- Wacom tablets
- webcams
- wireless keyboards/mice
- wireless speakers

For information on assistive devices provided to YRDSB employees with disabilities, refer to [Workplace Accommodations for Staff](#) under Section 5.1 Accessible Employment.

2.2 Student Services and Supports

Blind and Low Vision (BLV) Services

- **Provincial school partnerships** - Provincial school consultants continued to provide in-school assessments for students who meet the criteria for Deafblindness. During the 2021-2022 school year, a percentage of students opted to enroll at W Ross MacDonald School for the Blind as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and issues with accessing remote learning in a meaningful way.
- **Accommodating medically fragile students** - a small number of students continue to learn remotely due to medical fragility. They are supported both virtually and in-person at their residence by Deafblind Interveners and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Services

- **New DHH program** - a new DHH program was launched in September 2021 to support communication and access needs for new grade 9 DHH students. Learners who are profoundly deaf engaged in mostly credit-bearing courses and interval assessments with consultants from a partnership school for the Deaf.
- **ASL Interpreters** - within the specialized DHH program, three ASL Interpreters and one Assistant for Sign Language Support meet the demands of different timetables for DHH students, in order to ensure meaningful access to curriculum that is comparable to their hearing peers.
- **Provincial school partnership** - A provincial school consultant from EC Drury School for the Deaf provided direct instruction in the development of ASL skills with profoundly deaf learners through weekly virtual sessions.

3.0 Information and Communication Standards Achieved in 2021-2022

3.1 Accessible Web Content

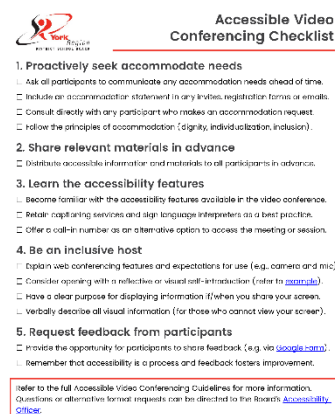
YRDSB Website

The Board continued to monitor and approve web content to ensure AODA compliance. Content Contributors continued to receive support and training in order to publish more accessible web content/copy.

Accessibility Resource Hub

The YRDSB [Accessibility Resource Hub](#) is an open-access and centralized web space that continued to be updated with best practice resources and guidelines to educate and support the system in making learning and working environments more accessible.

In particular, the previous Remote Learning and Training Guidelines were refreshed and retitled as the [Accessible Video Conferencing Guidelines](#). This update expanded the guidelines to provide accessibility best practices and considerations for virtual conferences and events in addition to accessible remote learning and training.



YRDSB Accessible Video Conferencing Guidelines | Updated March 2022 | 7

3.2 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Accessible Board Videos

All Board-approved prerecorded videos produced by Corporate Communications and/or Learning Design and Development continued to include open captions in meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA requirements.

The HRCO was approved to purchase a series of licenses for automatic transcription software, [Otter.ai](#). The transcription software continued to support a more efficient process for captioning Board videos as a regular practice.

A total of **3,165 minutes** of audio and video data were transcribed through Otter.ai during the 2021-2022 school year.



Accessible Document Remediation

The Accessibility Officer as well as other accessibility champions within YRDSB remediated countless documents throughout the 2021-2022 school year, including (but not limited to):

- Board memorandums,
- Board Policy and Procedure documents,
- Parent, Family and Community Engagement Advisory Committee (PEAC) newsletters,
- Research and Assessment Services reports,
- Mental Health flyers, and
- Other Board communications.

4.0 Standards for the Built Environment Achieved in 2021-2022

4.1 Scheduled Accessibility Projects

MYAP Goal Alignment: Provide Accessible Customer Service

Plant Services completes accessibility projects to update, modify and retrofit existing buildings as part of its multi-year plan. A complete list of accessibility projects started and/or completed on YRDSB facilities during the 2021-2022 school year is presented in the table below.

Facility Name	Description / Scope of Work	Status	Cost
Armitage Village Public School	Installed automatic door operator for main office	Complete	\$6,000
Beckett Farms Public School	To install braille signage throughout school	Design	\$10,000
Beverley Acres Public School	Creating barrier-free washroom	In Progress	\$95,000
Bill Crothers Secondary School	Installed automatic door operator on community classroom door	Complete	\$5,000
Black Walnut Public School	Installed automatic door operator on main office and gym doors	Complete	\$17,217
Charles Howitt Public School	Creating all access washroom on the 2nd floor	In Progress	\$244,402
Education Centre - Aurora	Replacing south elevator controls to include audible annunciation	In Progress	\$90,200
Edward T. Crowle Public School	Replacing fire alarm system to include visual strobes	In Progress	\$159,200
Emily Carr Secondary School	Replacing elevator controls to include audible annunciation	In Progress	\$94,100
Lorna Jackson Public School	Replacing fire alarm system to include visual strobes	In Progress	\$240,000
Markville Secondary School	To replace doors and frame on cafeteria door, and install LCN for accessibility	Contract Awarded	\$17,350

Facility Name	Description / Scope of Work	Status	Cost
Park Avenue Public School	Installed automatic door operators	Completed	\$27,000
Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School	To install automatic door operator on corridor and music room doors	Not Started	\$10,000
	Replacing elevator controls to include audible annunciation	In Progress	\$85,185
Pleasantville Public School	Installed automatic door operator on washroom door	Complete	\$3,300
	To replace fire alarm system and include visual strobes	Contract Awarded	\$178,000
Prince Charles Public School	Replacing fire alarm system to include new strobes	Design	\$150,000
Red Maple Public School	Provided curb depression at south end driveway entrance	Complete	\$14,600
Silver Pines Public School	Replacing fire alarm system to include new strobes	In Progress	\$127,500
Silver Stream Public School	Created curb cut depression at front entrance pathway	Complete	\$6,900
Stephen Lewis Secondary School	Installing two grab bars in washroom	In Progress	\$1,280
Sutton Public School	Provided curb cut depression at playground path of travel	Complete	\$4,180
Thornlea Secondary School	Installed automatic door operators on classroom, washroom, and four sets of hallway doors	Complete	\$25,000
Wellington Public School	To create all access washroom	Contract Awarded	\$95,000
Wilshire Elementary School	Installed automatic door operators on main office, classroom, gym, and two washroom doors	Complete	\$40,000
Woodbridge College	Replacing elevator controls to include audible annunciation	In Progress	\$95,800
Total cost of accessibility projects in 2021-2022 school year			\$1,842,214

All Access Washroom Project

MYAP Goal Alignment: Provide Accessible Customer Service

During the 2021-2022 school year, Plant Services continued with the full-scale implementation phase of the Board's [All Access Washrooms Project](#). All access washrooms have now been installed across all Category 1 to 3 schools, which have one all access (or all gender) washroom per floor. The way all access washrooms are accessed (unlocked or by card reader) is at the discretion of each school administrator and how they identify issues/needs specific to their school community.

Plant Services began working on Category 4 schools that require significant renovations and costs in order create an all access washroom. Schools included as part of the 2021-2022 accessibility project budget include [Charles Howitt Public School](#) and [Wellington Public School](#).

Braille Signage Project

MYAP Goal Alignment: Provide Accessible Customer Service

Blind / Low Vision (BLV) Services continued to identify and update a priority list of YRDSB schools with students who require Braille signage to access their school environment in a meaningful way. The priority schools requiring and installed with Braille signage are listed below:

Priority schools

1. [Beckett Farms Public School](#)
2. Doncrest Public School
3. Hodan Nalayeh Secondary School
4. Newmarket High School

Completed schools in 2021-2022

- H.G. Bernard Public School
- Maple High School
- Wilshire Public School

5.0 Employment Standards Achieved in 2021-2022

5.1 Accessible Employment

Disability Management

MYAP Goal Alignment: Provide Accessible Customer Service

The Disability Management (DM) team within Human Resources Services supported **3,952 employees on DM** during the 2021-2022 school year.

- DM files carried over from the 2020-2021 school year: **1,731**
- New DM files opened in 2021-2022: **2,221**
- DM files closed in 2021-2022: **1,980**

Assistive Devices as Workplace Accommodations

Assistive devices that were provided by HRS for workplace accommodations are listed below:

- Air cleaners and humidifiers for scent sensitivities / allergies,
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters,
- Arranging worksite ergonomic assessments,
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and/or computerized notetaker services,
- Custom noise cancelling ear plugs,
- Document cameras,
- Mobility devices (scooters, wheelchairs, wheeled carts, stools),
- Modified work stations (special chairs, desks, keyboards, monitors and lighting),
- Specialized phones and headsets,
- Speech to text software,
- Voice amplification and hearing systems (FM transmitters, receivers, microphones, and sound barrier devices)
- Zoomtext Plus technology.

Candidate Support

MYAP Goal Alignment: Provide Accessible Customer Service

- Human Resource Services (HRS) will be transitioning from Zoom to Microsoft Teams as the primary video conferencing platform for virtual interviews. The Recruitment and Promotion team continued to include the Accessible Video Conferencing Guidelines in the Administrator Toolkit for use with school-based interviews.
- Human Resource Services continued to review all job postings to ensure only bona fide occupational requirements and educational credentials are included to reduce barriers to entry, consistent with Recommendations 14 and 15 of the [Employment Equity Plan](#).