

## **Webinar Transcript**

### **The Accessible Canada Act: what it means for Canadians**

#### **Casey:**

Hello everyone and welcome and thank you for joining us today for this special presentation on the Accessible Canada Act in celebration of National AccessAbility Week as well as Red Shirt Day, which is taking place tomorrow, Wednesday June 2nd. For more information about Easter Seals Canada and Red Shirt Day we invite you to visit our website at [www.easterseals.ca](http://www.easterseals.ca) or [www.redshirtday.ca](http://www.redshirtday.ca).

Today's webinar is being recorded and will be made available to all participants on the Easter Seals Canada website in the next week or two.

My name is Casey Sabawi and I am the Senior Manager for National Corporate Partnerships at Easter Seals Canada.

Our special guest presenter today is Rachel Weiner, staff lawyer at ARCH Disability Law Centre. Also joining us today will be Christopher and Emma from Toronto Sign Language Interpretation Services, who will be providing ASL interpretation services for today's webinar.

Before we proceed any further, I would like to say on behalf of myself, my fellow presenters, and colleagues at Easter Seals Canada and our provincial member organizations, that we are grateful to be able to meet and work on many Indigenous homelands across this country that we now know and share as Canada. As settlers on these lands, we further acknowledge that our national office in Toronto is located on the traditional territory of many nations, such as the Wendat peoples, the Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and it is covered by the Williams Treaties and Treaty 13. We are committed to being active participants and partners in reconciliation and to respect and honour the history and diversity of the Indigenous peoples who have lived and worked on this land, past and present.

I think this is especially important and poignant given the news that broke this past week of the discovery of the mass grave of 215 children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in BC and June being the National Indigenous History Month.

For those who are unaware of Easter Seals, we are a federation of registered charities across Canada that is dedicated to offering a variety of support programs and services that contribute to enhancing the quality of life, well-being and self-determination of people living disabilities.

Easter Seals will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of our founding and service to community next year in 2022.

And with that, I will pass you on to our presenter, Rachel.

Please note that there will be time dedicated for question-and-answer session at the end of Rachel's presentation. So, if you have any questions for Rachel, please feel free to enter them into the chat box on your screen. Okay over to you Rachel.

**Rachel:**

Hi everyone. My name is Rachel Weiner. I'm a staff lawyer at ARCH Disability Law Centre and I have a short agenda for today.

This is one of my first slides, Casey. Perfect, thank you. **[Refer to slide 4 on the slide deck]**

So, we have about five items to cover for today and then, like Casey said, we're going to have some time for questions at the end.

First I'm going to tell you a little bit about ARCH Disability Law Centre, my clinic and what we do and then we are going to get into the substance of the presentation talking about what the Accessible Canada Act is, how it fits in with other laws in Canada and also international law, and then how the Accessible Canada Act works, how it achieves its purpose and what it does, and then I'm going to conclude my presentation talking about some recent developments in terms of how the Accessible Canada Act, or the ACA, as I might call it, is going to be implemented and some things that have been happening lately in terms of accessibility standards, new regulations and complaint mechanisms that are going to be put in place.

Next slide. **[Slide 5]**

So ARCH Disability Law Centre is a specialty legal aid clinic that advances and defends the equality rights of persons with disabilities in Ontario. We're governed by a volunteer board of directors and our bylaws ensure that the majority of directors identify as having a disability. ARCH is primarily funded by Legal Aid Ontario and we have a variety of areas of practice that relate to disability law.

These include accessibility, which we are talking about today, attendant and personal support worker services, education law, transportation, discrimination and human rights in the workplace, in education, and also decision-making rights, including supported decision-making removing guardianships, and public guardian and trustee.

ARCH provides a number of different kinds of services. The first is a free and confidential summary advice and referral program. This is for persons with disabilities in Ontario and also lawyers and

paralegals can consult on disability-related legal matters. Second, ARCH represents individuals or disability-related organizations in test case litigation in ARCH's areas of practice. Third, ARCH gives public legal education presentations, like this one, and also continuing legal education presentations for members of the legal profession and administrative tribunals. Fourth, ARCH does law reform in terms of policy advocacy on issues that are important to communities of persons with disability. Finally, ARCH is also involved in community development.

Next slide. **[Slide 6]**

Alright, now we're going to be moving into what the Accessible Canada Act is.

Oh, sorry. I've got a question in the chat box. I think some people have been asking about closed captioning.

Casey?

**Casey:**

Yes, unfortunately we don't have closed captioning for today. However, we will be introducing closed captioning for this presentation with the recording of the webinar and so we apologize profusely for that.

**Rachel:**

Okay, thanks Casey I appreciate it.

Alright, so in terms of what the Accessible Canada Act is: it's a law that aims to achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040. The ACA is meant to do this by identifying, addressing and preventing barriers.

The ACA is what I would call framework legislation, so it puts general processes and organizations in place to achieve its purpose and then some of the details will be filled in later using regulations and standards, which I'll get to a little bit later in my presentation.

For example, the legislation creates Accessibility Standards Canada. This organization's mandate is to do research regarding accessibility and to make accessibility standards. The ACA also empowers the Government of Canada, the Canadian Transportation Agency, and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, or the CRTC, to make regulations about, again, some of these more general requirements it sets out.

ARCH has some resources on its website about the ACA that complement my presentation. For example, ARCH has a fact sheet on its website that explains what the ACA is. You can access these resources at <https://archdisabilitylawcentre.ca>. This link and ARCH's contact information will also be provided at the end of my presentation for you if you want.

The purpose of the act -- oh, next slide. Thank you! **[Slide 7]**

So the purpose and priority areas of the Accessible Canada Act are very important to understanding how it works and what it does. Section 5 of the act says that its purpose is to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, through the realization within the purview of matters, coming within the legislative authority of Parliament, of a Canada without barriers on or before January 1st, 2040, particularly by the identification and removal of barriers and prevention of new barriers in a variety of areas. These include employment, the built environment, information and communication technologies, communication – other than information and communication technologies, the procurement of goods, services and facilities, the design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation. New priorities may be added later by regulation.

Next slide. **[Slide 8]**

The Accessible Canada Act specifically defines the word barrier. It says a barrier is anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment, or functional limitation.

Some examples of barriers are, for example, if someone was using an ATM, which stands for an automatic teller machine, there might be technical support for the ATM with a phone to allow customers to call if the machine isn't working, but if the phone isn't accessible to deaf people, then this would be a barrier. Another example could be when a person with a disability is having a job interview with the federal government. If they are not allowed to use their assistive communication device during the interview, then this would be a barrier. Barriers could also be created when information about a person's federal benefits is not sent to them in plain language, or an online form that's on a timer could time out too quickly. It could time out before the person using assistive technology is finished filling it out. So that could also be a barrier.

Next slide. **[Slide 9]**

The purpose of the ACA and the way that it defines barriers reflects what we call the social model of disability. The social model says that society's reactions or inactions, the built environment, and attitudes that promote discrimination, exclusion and ableism are the barriers that persons with disabilities experience.

Barriers in society are what prevent people with disabilities are being included and from participating. The answer, according to the social model, is that we need to end discrimination, segregation and remove barriers. In contrast, the medical model would take a different approach. It focuses on the person as a problem that needs to be fixed or cured.

It emphasizes clinical and medical diagnosis of disability. The medical model would say that the answer is medical, psychological, or rehabilitative services or treatment. The Accessible Canada Act represents a move away from this medical model and a move towards the social model of disability in Canadian law.

Next slide. **[Slide 10]**

To understand what the Accessible Canada Act does, it is important to know when it applies and when it doesn't. It is important to know that the ACA is a federal accessibility law. It only applies to organizations, businesses and government offices under federal jurisdiction. It does not apply to organizations that are regulated by provincial or territorial laws.

In practice, this means that the ACA may remove barriers that prevent people with disabilities from travelling on railways, airplanes and inter-provincial buses, being employed by or working for the Government of Canada, banks, mining companies, railways, airlines, trucking companies and other federally-regulated industries or companies, accessing federal buildings, accessing federal programs and services, like Canada Pension Plan - disability, Employment Insurance, registered disability savings plan, disability tax credit, Canada Revenue Agency, Service Canada, the Social Security Tribunal, the Immigration and Refugee Board, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights tribunal and others.

It also applies to communicating with federally-regulated service providers like railways, airlines, inter-provincial buses, telecommunications companies and federal programs and services. Finally, it also applies to using information and communication technologies like television, radio and internet.

Next slide. **[Slide 11]**

The ACA sets out several guiding principles in section 6. These principles are important because they inform how we interpret the rest of the act and its regulations and standards once they're in place.

The ACA says that this act is to be carried out in recognition of, and in accordance with the following principles:

- a) all persons must be treated with dignity, regardless of their disabilities
- b) all persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives they are able and wish to have, regardless of their disabilities
- c) all persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities
- d) all persons must have meaningful options be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities
- e) laws, policies, programs and 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 faced by persons.
- f) persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures.

and g) 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.

Next slide. **[Slide 12]**

The preamble of the ACA connects the ACA's approach to barrier removal to various parts of Canadian law. It connects it to section 15 of the Charter, which is the equality guarantee, and it also connects the ACA to the Canadian Human Rights Act, which is federal human rights legislation.

The preamble explains: whereas a proactive and systemic approach for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility without delay complements the rights of persons with disabilities under the Canadian Human Rights Act, the ACA is structured in such a way that its purpose and approach reinforce Charter rights and human rights.

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The ACA is also meant to reinforce disability rights at international law. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international agreement. It was made with involvement of persons with disabilities themselves. It says that people with disabilities have the right to participate equally in society.

The preamble to the ACA says: whereas Canada is a state party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Canada has agreed to take appropriate measures respecting accessibility and to develop and monitor minimum accessibility standards. In this way, the ACA implements some of Canada's obligations under the convention.

The specifics about what the convention says and how it works fall outside of the scope of this presentation, but you can learn more about it on ARCH's website. We have fact sheets and educational resources about what the convention says and what obligations Canada has to ensure the full participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Canadian society.

These strong statements in the preamble that connect the ACA to the convention will be important when courts and tribunals begin to interpret what the ACA means. Sections of the ACA must be interpreted and applied in a way that achieves the goals of complimenting the rights not to be discriminated against in domestic law under the Charter and the Canadian Human Rights Act like we talked about before, as well as the right to full and equal participation in the convention.

Next slide. **[Slide 14]**

Now I'm going to be moving into the part of the presentation where I talk about what the Accessible Canada Act actually does to achieve its purpose. The first thing that it does is that it requires regulated government offices, organizations, and businesses to make accessibility plans. The ACA provides some general guidance about what accessibility plans are required to include. It says that they should include policies, programs, practices and services to identify, remove and prevent barriers relating to priority areas. It also says that regulated organizations have to refer to any accessibility regulations, license conditions or orders that relate to accessibility and relate to

them. These regulated organizations also have to set out how they consulted persons with disabilities to prepare their accessibility plan.

Accessibility plans also have to take into account the principles in the ACA – the ones that we talked about in section 6 earlier in the presentation. The act also says that accessibility plans have to be updated at least every three years. Regulated organizations have to make their accessibility plan available on request in accordance with any regulations.

I'll be touching on regulations that are currently being developed, which can set more specific requirements about accessibility plans and other planning and reporting requirements.

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The ACA requires businesses, organizations and federal government offices to create feedback processes. These feedback processes allow them to get feedback about how they're implementing their accessibility plan and barriers to accessibility that are encountered by people who deal with them. The ACA also requires these federal organizations to publish a description of their feedback process in accordance with regulations.

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The Accessible Canada Act also requires regulated federal organizations to report on how they're doing in terms of whether they're achieving their goals in their accessibility plan. It does this by requiring these regulated federal businesses, organizations, and government offices to make progress reports.

When they make progress reports they have to consider two different things: they have to consider their consultations with persons with disabilities, which is something they also have to do at this stage, and they also have to take into account the feedback that they got from the feedback process.

Regulated organizations must make their progress report available on request in accordance with any regulations.

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Okay, so this is the last section of my presentation and it might be the most topical because the Accessible Canada Act was passed in 2019, but the big question now is what's being done to implement it and make it a reality.

One of these things that's happening now is the development of regulations. The Government of Canada, the Canadian Transportation Agency, and the CRTC just published draft regulations for public comment. They did this in February and they were taking feedback, I think, until the end of March or middle of April depending on which one of them it was and these regulations are going to be finalized by July 2021. These draft regulations all dealt with planning and reporting: so accessibility plans, progress reports and feedback processes that I talked about before.

And the Government of Canada's draft regulation also discussed penalties. These were not the final regulations, and so they may read some of the feedback that they got, consider them further and make changes before they finalize those regulations in the summer.

Some of the topics that they covered, with respect to planning and reporting, are the dates when the first accessibility plans need to be done, the date of their feedback process, headings for accessibility plans and progress reports, and specific requirements about where accessibility plans, progress reports and feedback processes are published, and alternate formats that have to be provided on request.

The Government of Canada's regulation also addressed retention of accessibility plans, progress reports and feedback.

It also explained how fines are calculated. The government explained in its regulatory impact analysis statement, which is something that it publishes with its draft regulation, how it classified offenses. It classified offenses into three categories: minor, serious and very serious. And this is based on the nature of the violation, whether it is typically serious enough for a fine, respect or disrespect for the accessibility commissioner, who is responsible for enforcement, and the impact on people including physical and psychological harm property damage, and monetary loss.

The government has a schedule to the draft regulation that outlines each provision of the ACA and the draft regulations that can have a fine as a penalty. If a provision of the act, or if the regulations, is not included in the schedule then it would not be possible for that organization to get a fine for violating that section.

If new accessibility regulations are made later, the government could add more provisions to this schedule.

All this being said, like I said before, these are draft regulations: they're not the final regulations.

The government, the Canadian Transportation Agency and the CRTC are working on finalizing the regulations by this summer and those final regulations may contain changes based on the feedback they got from people with disabilities, regulated organizations, and other members of the Canadian public.

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In addition to regulations, another thing that's under development is accessibility standards. Like I said before, the ACA creates an organization, called Accessibility Standards Canada. Accessibility Standards Canada is responsible for conducting research about accessibility standards and developing those standards. Standards are voluntary, so different than regulations, they don't have legal consequences.

But standards can still be helpful because they can provide guidance to regulated federal businesses, organizations and government offices in terms of how to follow the Accessible Canada Act or how to follow the regulations. As well, a standard could be turned into a regulation and then

it would have legal consequences. Accessibility Standards Canada can and, I think, does plan to ask the Government of Canada, or recommend to them, that they turn their accessibility standards into regulations. We don't know yet whether that's going to happen, but that's something that could possibly happen.

In terms of where Accessibility Standards Canada is on this: it hasn't finished any accessibility standards yet. There are four standards that are currently being developed. They relate to emergency egress, employment, outdoor spaces and plain language. There's also another fifth standard that is sort of at the beginning of the process.

What they do at the beginning is they set up a technical committee that will write the standards. These technical committees have persons with disabilities, other experts, and representatives of sectors and organizations that would have to meet the standards. They've already set up these first four technical committees and I think they've put out a call for a fifth one about the built environment, that I think just closed and, so, I think they'll be starting on that relatively soon.

In terms of Accessibility Standards Canada's process, what they do next after they set up this technical committee, is the technical committee will work on the standard and try to develop a draft standard and once they've done that, that draft standard will be posted online so that members of the public have the opportunity to comment on that standard. Based on those comments, again, like the regulations, Accessibility Standards Canada could make changes to that draft standard and then they would publish the final standards online so that they would be available so that everybody would know what they said, including regulated organizations who might want to use them.

At the end of this process, this is when Accessibility Standards Canada would recommend the final standards to the minister to be made into a regulation.

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Oh, back one! Thank you.

Alright, so another way that the ACA is going to be implemented and enforced is through complaint mechanisms. These complaint mechanisms are not in place yet, but this will be happening soon. The ACA creates ways for people to make complaints about accessibility issues. There's a number of different places that these complaints can go.

A lot of that depends on what the subject matter of the complaint is about, although, again, this is a general presentation. I would generally advise if someone wanted to make a complaint to get legal advice from a lawyer about where to bring their complaints.

Some of the places where complaints can go are the Accessibility Commissioner, the Canadian Transportation Agency, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or the Federal Public Sector Labor Relations and Employment Board.

I don't have too much more to say on this since these complaint mechanisms haven't been developed yet and they aren't in place yet, but that's something that will be happening in the future and that's something that we will have more information about in the months to come.

**[Slide 20]**

Just to conclude – and we will have some questions. I've seen some questions pop up in the chat box, so I really appreciate you asking them. I think we're still very much at the beginning in terms of the journey with the Accessible Canada Act.

You know, 2040 seems like a long time. It will probably get here faster [laughs] than we all think it's going to.

And a lot of these rules, regulations and standards are still in development and in terms of how the ACA will be implemented and how well it will work, all of this depends on a lot [audio cuts]

**Emma, ASL Interpreter:**

Sorry Rachel, I can't hear you.

**Participant:**

Me neither. I think she muted herself.

**Rachel:**

Oh sorry did I cut out for a second?

**Emma:**

Yeah you did.

**Rachel:**

Okay. I guess just in terms of concluding, hopefully most of that got through but, I guess the last part of what I was saying was that, I think we're still early on in terms of the Accessible Canada Act. I think it was a really big moment when the Accessible Canada Act was passed and made law, but a lot of the really important things, in terms of how well it's going to work and whether it is actually going to lead to a more inclusive society for people with disabilities is going to depend on a lot of these regulations and standards, complaint mechanisms, and other implementation of the ACA that is currently underway.

I'm really glad that you were able to come today and learn more about it and I think there's a lot more to come in terms of where this will all go.

**Participant:**

I have a question. How will the Accessible Canada Act affect non-profit organizations, if in any way?

**Rachel:**

I think if it's a non-profit organization that is in an area that's federally regulated, then I think it would affect them in the ways that I discussed in my presentation in terms of, they would be required to make accessibility plans and progress reports and have a feedback process. I think it depends on, what the non-profit is doing and whether it's possible for that to fall under federal jurisdiction.

But if not, then – and I'm not gonna get into this in a lot of detail since this is mainly about federal accessibility – but I think if not, then any provincial accessibility laws could apply to them.

Somebody's posted something about the AODA – that's the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act – and that's the provincial accessibility law in Ontario. So that can apply, and also provincial human rights law would also apply.

**Tarra, participant:**

I have a question. I'm in Alberta and currently I have a government here that hardly even answers to anybody, let alone their own farts. Um, [laughs] pardon my acronym there. Basically, what I'm wondering is that I have invisible disabilities. When it comes to accessibility, these laws, in theory they're great, but how will they consider accessibility for those with no aids, but still need help with basic language and/or supports, but they're like me: they're married, they drive, they do everything, but there are certain aspects in their life where they may need assistance.

Like, say, my husband dies – he does all the banking. I couldn't bank my way out of a flipping maze if he dies or gets sick. Where does that put me when I age and I need support because my natural support is dead or ill. [Unintelligible – weak connection] ... getting older, getting wiser and yet our systems are lagging behind in regards to support and accessibility for people like me who do not qualify for programs or basic needs within our government. I'm sorry if I'm yelling, but this is a love.

**Rachel:**

Yeah. I think you've raised a couple of things.

In terms of areas that are under federal jurisdiction like banks, the Accessible Canada Act definitely would apply. One of the things that you raised also is invisible disabilities and I think, in terms of that, it's really important to go back to how the Accessible Canada Act defines barriers.

The way it defines barriers, very broadly, it does it in a way that disabilities don't have to be physical to be recognized. And, so, I think it's important to know that that definition was made on purpose to be broad and to be inclusive.

And so the Accessible Canada Act, the idea is that it should help with identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for people with invisible disabilities.

**Tarra:**

Unfortunately, I also find that the more broad something is, the more divisive it is.

**Rachel:**

I mean, it's hard to tell and one of the other things that you raised was enforcement and implementation and I think that's something that we don't really know yet in terms of how well that's going to work.

There have been criticisms of the Ontario accessibility legislation that somebody raised, that there hasn't been enough enforcement.

And so I think, these things matter only when they're used and only when they have an impact on people's lives. And, so, I think the hope is that it will be well enforced.

But it's definitely something that ARCH thinks is important in terms of enforcing the act, and implementing it, and making it meaningful.

**Casey:**

Right. So, Rachel, we have another question that has come in: Do provinces have to make accessibility plans based on the ACA guidelines and principles and do they have to comply to the federal ACA?

**Rachel:**

That's a good question.

So, the government offices that I was talking about in the presentation, those are federal government offices, so it doesn't apply to, let's say, the Alberta Government or the Ontario Government.

The provincial governments are still subject to human rights law, provincial human rights laws that would exist in that province, but they're not required to follow the ACA or any of the ACA regulations or standards.

**Casey:**

Another question that we have received is how does the ACA relate to the duty to accommodate under human rights law? Could this be relevant to accommodations in employment, for example?

**Rachel:**

Yeah. That's a good question.

So, earlier in my presentation, I talked a little bit about how the ACA is meant to complement the Canadian Human Rights Act and federal human rights law, and so, the idea is that they work together to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

But organizations who are subject to the Accessible Canada Act and subject to the Canadian Human Rights Act also have to make sure they're following both.

Just because they've met the requirements of accessibility law, it doesn't mean that they're done. There may still be something that they have to do to accommodate based on what their requirements are under the Canadian Human Rights Act. These are responsibilities that are related, but they're not the same.

Looking at employment, for example, if someone has a job with the federal public service, employment in the federal area, that falls within the Accessible Canada Act, then the employer would have to look at both of their responsibilities under the ACA and under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

And there might be some things that they do which might allow them to comply with both, because, again, they work together, but it's important for them to understand that both of them are important to the job that they have to do.

**Casey:**

So we have Anna Marie Hubbard who has raised her hand. So, Anna Marie, feel free to unmute yourself and ask your question.

**Anna Marie:** Hi Rachel.

**Rachel:** Hi!

**Anna Marie:**

I just wanted to know about the hierarchy. Will the ACA then be going into the hierarchy below the Human Rights Act and above Treasury Boards' requirements for accessibility in real property or will the Treasury Board act actually be superseded, do you think?

**Rachel:**

I'm not familiar with – could you repeat what the Treasury Board act that you were referring to?

**Anna Marie:**

It's the real properties accessibility and real properties for the federal government's own spaces and offices. The requirement of that, though it's based on the CSA standard for accessibility spaces, it's still kind of loose. So, I would assume that the ACA – because it will be on governing federal offices – would slide into there. But where will be the question.

**Rachel:**

I think what I'll have to do is get back to you on that, because I'm not familiar with the Treasury Board. I've written down what you've told me and what I'd like to do is follow up with you afterwards about that.

Generally speaking, what I can say is that – so you have the Charter, which is constitutional legislation, then you have quasi-constitutional legislation like the Canadian Human Rights Act and then you would have other legislation like the ACA.

Again, I'll check up on the Treasury Board accessibility for real property, but the very general hierarchy, that's what it would be.

**Casey:**

Great, thank you, Rachel. There was another question that came in earlier in the chat box. Are you aware if there's any work being planned to help increase small employer awareness of the changes that ACA will bring to their workplaces?

**Rachel:**

That's a good question. I mean, I think that probably there hasn't been a lot of work on that yet, but that's work that could happen later. I know that, along with regulations, the federal government often has guidance documents. These are, again, voluntary, but those are helpful in terms of telling people who are being regulated by that regulation how to follow it and how it works. And I think one

of the things that they may turn their minds to, and I think that's important, is telling small businesses how this works and raising their awareness of it.

I don't know of any concrete plans, but I agree that's something that's a good idea (laughs).

**Tarra:**

I was wondering ... I do a lot of research because these days it seems that I've just made myself an advocate here in Alberta because of what's going on here and I'm not privy to get into full detail in regards to having a lot of friends that are on supports.

What I need to know is: were there any people with invisible disabilities consulted on this and were they from other provinces in accordance to where the law derived from? What I noticed is that the government negates this end of the disability spectrum, so to say, and a lot of people don't have much of a voice or a say within the government if it's in Western Canada.

How does this help people in Western Canada when they don't even hear about these laws, or these proposals being done if they're not included?

**Rachel:**

I mean, I think you've raised some good points and I think you're definitely right that there are definitely different barriers for different communities of persons with disabilities across the country and across various intersectional identity – identity groups – to participate in things like consultations on the Accessible Canada Act or consultations on the regulations.

I don't have a have a list or information in front of me right now in terms of who they consulted in terms of the Accessible Canada Act itself, but I think you're raising a good point, in terms of, you know, it is important when government or some of these regulators like the Canadian Transportation Agency or the CRTC are conducting these consultations, that they should do it in an inclusive and diverse way in terms of ensuring that they get as many perspectives as possible to inform their laws and regulations.

I think it's also important, not just for government, but also for regulated businesses and organizations and parts of the federal government as well, because they also have to consult when they do their accessibility plans and when they do their progress reports. And one of the things that they have to say in their accessibility plan is the way they consulted with persons with disabilities.

And so, one thing you could look for a few years down the line, or hopefully sooner, when some of these accessibility plans are in place, if you ask for one you could look to see who they consulted and whether they consulted in a diverse way and made efforts to reach communities who might be harder to reach.

**Casey:**

Thank you, Rachel. There was an earlier, I guess not such a question, but a request. If you could, very briefly, go over again the main areas in which the Accessible Canada Act applies.

**Rachel:**

Sure, absolutely. What we can do, we can even bring up the slide – let me see if I can find it. Um, let's see. So, this is the areas of federal jurisdiction or the priority areas?

**Casey:**

The question was a bit unclear about that, yeah.

**Rachel:**

Let's see. So maybe we'll do both. So in terms of the priority areas those are on the slide that I have as number five and those had to do with employment, the built environment, information and communication technologies, communication other than information and communication technologies, the procurement of goods services and facilities, the design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation.

And in terms of which areas of federal jurisdiction the Accessible Canada Act applies to: there's a lot. So, some of them have to do with transportation, so railways, airplanes, inter-provincial buses. Some of them have to do with being employed by or working for the Government of Canada or receiving federal government programs and services.

Some of the ones I mentioned were Canada Pension Plan disability, Employment Insurance, and also tribunals, like the social Security Tribunal or the Immigration and Refugee Board, accessing federal buildings, other types of organizations that are federal like banks or mining companies, trucking companies, and also information and communication technologies, like telephone and television and radio and internet.

**Casey:**

Great thank you so much, Rachel. We probably have ... I'm just watching the time. We're nearing the end of our presentation so we probably have time for maybe one more quick question if there's any other questions that anyone would like to ask.

Okay. If not, I would like to say, on behalf of Easter Seals, thank you very much Rachel for facilitating today's presentation and again to everyone for joining us for today's presentation with Rachel. We greatly appreciate your time.

Just a reminder that we will be sharing a recording of this webinar. We'll send a link to everyone who registered for today's webinar and we'll also post it on our website.

And again, we apologize that there was no closed captioning for today's session. It's our first webinar that we are hosting so we're still learning and we apologize and appreciate your understanding.

**Rachel:**

Thanks so much everybody!

**Casey:**

Thank you so much everyone. Have a great day and happy National AccessAbility Week!

**Participant:**

Thank you for your effort you put into the presentation.