

Helijet

Accessibility Progress Report: 2024



Helijet

From our CEO: Our commitment

For over 35 years, Helijet has provided vital air transportation across British Columbia. We take pride in supporting British Columbia's vibrant economy and providing safe, secure, and dependable transportation between Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Prince Rupert, and Haida Gwaii.

The safety of our passengers and employees is top priority. Helijet is committed to enhancing services and facilities without compromising safety. This commitment extends to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to equal access across our network, facilities, and services.

In 2023, Helijet engaged InterVISTAS Consulting to evaluate its barriers and develop the Accessibility Plan and Feedback Process, to enhance accessibility for passengers and employees with disabilities. This plan focuses on a three-year period from 2023 to 2026 and outlines how Helijet will continue identifying, removing, and preventing barriers from being introduced into its operating environment for both passengers and employees.



Daniel Sitnam
President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



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Introduction: Our Accessibility Journey

Helijet is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessible transportation in everything we do. This includes the products, services, and facilities we offer both passengers and staff. We categorize barriers into five (5) categories:



Attitudinal barriers

These barriers result when people think or act based on false assumptions.



Systemic barriers

These barriers include policies, procedures, or work instructions that result in some people being excluded from activities, employment, or other services.



Technological barriers.

These barriers occur when technology, such as smartphone applications, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities.



Information and communication barriers

These barriers are created when information is offered in a format that suits some of the population, but not all people.



Physical/architectural barriers

These physical obstacles prevent access to a facility, room, or other location.

Progress Report for Year 1: 2024

This Progress Report follows a similar structure to the Helijet 2023-2026 Accessibility Report, providing updates on our progress related to the following 11 key topics:

1. General
2. Employment
3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)
4. Communication, other than ICT
5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities
6. Design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation
8. Built environment
9. Provisions of CTA accessibility-related regulations
10. Feedback information
11. Consultations

1. General

Unaltered from the Accessibility plan, general information for contacting us on all accessibility related topics is posted below. Helijet welcomes feedback from passengers, employees, and disability advocacy groups on our Accessibility Plan, our feedback process and this Progress Report.

A. Designated person

To submit feedback or request alternative formats for these documents, please contact the designated person below:

Carla Kovacs, Director, Client Relations

Phone: +1-604-231-3510

Email: carlakovacs@helijet.com

B. Feedback process

In addition to Helijet's Director of Client Relations, Carla Kovacs, individuals can also contact Helijet via our website, social media, toll-free number, mail or in-person at any of Helijet's facilities.

- Telephone (Toll-Free): +1-800-665-4354
- Email: accessibility@helijet.com
- TTY Relay Service:
 1. Dial 711
 2. After the operator confirmation, type in +1-800-665-4354
 3. The operator will dial the number for you and act as interpreter.
- Fax: +1-604-273-5301
- Mailing address:

Helijet International Inc.
5911 Airport Road South
Vancouver International Airport
Richmond, BC, V7B 1B5



Feedback may be provided anonymously by any and all of the previous methods of communication. We will acknowledge that we received feedback and will respond to it in the format in which we received it.

C. Alternative formats

Helijet will provide materials in alternative formats upon request. For braille or audio formats, Helijet will provide information in 45 days. For large print, physical copies, or a format that is compatible with adaptive technology, Helijet will provide documentation in 15 days.

Progress Report highlights and updates:

This is our first Progress Report to provide updates on Helijet's implementation of its Accessibility Plan 2023-2026. Together, the Accessibility Plan and Progress Report mark two significant milestones of the journey that Helijet has embarked on. The Accessibility Plan and the Progress Report form the foundations for measurable improvements in the accessibility of Helijet's services and facilities.

There are three main achievements to report on, all of which took place in the short period between the publication of this Progress Report and its Accessibility Plan (published in May 2024). These achievements are as follows:

1. Helijet established an internal Accessibility Working Group. The Working Group is expanding its membership and will be comprised of employees at various levels and supported and empowered by senior leadership.
2. The Consultation section in the Accessibility Plan was reviewed, following additional feedback from the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) and passengers.
3. Helijet extended the contract with third-party accessibility consultant InterVISTAS for continued guidance and support, including support on this Progress Report and subsequent action.

The internal Accessibility Working Group will aim to create an Accessibility Advisory Committee with members of the company, external third-party consultants and representatives of disability advocacy groups, as well as individuals with lived experience who Helijet serves. The goal is to enhance and maintain an open dialogue between Helijet and people with disabilities and lived experience. We strive to reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate and those who we serve.



2. Employment

As of January 2024, Helijet currently employs 165 people based in Richmond, Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Prince Rupert, and Haida Gwaii. Helijet's core values center on customer dedication, safety, professionalism, mutual respect, and trust.

Helijet currently has a *Discrimination, Violence, and Harassment Policy*. This policy highlights our commitment to providing everyone with an environment that is free from any form of discrimination or harassment under the BC Human Right code or the Canada Human Rights Act. The policy reflects our commitment to supporting diversity and fostering an environment of respect, inclusivity, and safety.

Barriers Identified

- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) training and awareness is uneven across the organization.
- Job advertisements and job descriptions are not always barrier-free or support assistive technology.
- Communication about workplace accommodation processes are not always consistent.
- Internal and employee-facing systems are not always compatible with screen readers or other assistive devices.

Actions and Timelines

- Review job descriptions for completeness and incorporate language on roles, responsibilities, and reasonable accommodations (2025)
- Review job advertisements to ensure they are compatible with assistive devices (2025)
- Continue and expand disability-awareness training across the organization and including senior leadership (2025-2026)
- Establish an internal accessibility committee that includes all levels of Helijet's organization to address any barriers identified by employees or passengers (2024)

Progress so far:

- As part of our accessibility working group, we will continue to solicit feedback from employees on barriers to equal access within the workplace



3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Helijet leverages its website to promote and highlight some of the products and services offered to the public. As a result, the corporate website is a critical part of our ICT offering. In addition to our website, Helijet is active on all major social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Barriers Identified

- Website pages are not always accessible to people who use adaptive/assistive technologies or devices
- Announcements in terminal(s) are not always barrier-free or provided in alternative formats
- Uneven awareness of telephone relay system and functionality
- Employee-facing systems and applications not always compatible with assistive devices

Actions and Timelines

- Engage third-party to audit Helijet's external website against WCAG 2.1 (Level AA) standards (2025-2026)
- Amend existing process for how in-terminal announcements are made to provide more barrier-free communication
- Promote accessible means of communication to broaden engagement between the travelling public and Helijet (e.g. TTY and other)

Progress so far:

- We have enhanced our Accessibility page on the website to make information to the public more readily available and easy to navigate.
- Helijet will continue to work on improving the website and other ICT offerings, working towards attaining its barrier-free goals.

4. Communication, other than ICT

Helijet operates a call center for reservations and customer inquiries. All agents are trained to use customer service best practices, including to speak in plain language and to ensure that information is available and communicated in a way that meets the needs of the customer.

Barriers Identified

- Terminology about disability and barriers are not used consistently
- Passenger briefings on board aircraft are not always accessible to passengers with disabilities depending on the nature of the disability
- Staff not always able to adopt strategies to provide information that is barrier-free (such as modifying communication or provide plain language instruction).
- Unclear process for providing information in alternative formats (both for employee-facing materials and for the travelling public)

Actions and Timelines

- Expand accessibility awareness training for all staff with a focus on barrier-identification, language/terminology, and mitigating solutions to barriers (2025)
- Conduct more lived experience exercises with local disability advocacy groups (2025-2027)
- Review options to make closed captioning default on applications used by Helijet employees, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams (2025)

Progress so far:

- Helijet is currently testing closed captioning on its communication platforms to implement this as a default setting on applications.
- Furthermore, Helijet is planning the revision of the training program for employees, specifically looking at accessibility-related topics and awareness. This will likely start in the fall of 2024.



5. Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Helijet manages all procurement of goods, services, and facilities from its central office in Richmond. Where possible, we prioritize vendors, contractors, and suppliers who are based locally, and this applies to all Helijet's terminals and office locations.

Barriers Identified

- No formal accessible procurement policy
- Uneven understanding of barrier prevention in procurement, services, and facilities
- No regular consultation process with people with lived experience and disabilities

Actions and Timelines

- Develop accessible procurement policy (2024)
- Incorporate accessibility as a criterion in all procurement processes for the provision of goods and services, as well as any construction that Helijet initiates (2025-2026)
- Continue reviewing employee-facing systems, processes, and facilities to ensure Helijet provides staff with a barrier-free workplace (ongoing)
- Engage with people with lived experience and disability advocacy groups to ensure products and services are barrier free (2025-2026).

Progress so far:

- The development of an accessibility procurement policy is slated for this year (2024). Helijet has started drafting the project scope and requirement in order to attract third-party consultancy services for the writing of the policy. This is part of our 2024 Accessibility Implementation Plan.

6. Design and delivery of services and programs

Helijet actively engages with the communities in which we serve and operate. We regularly review all communication, compliments, suggestions, and feedback for ways we can continuously improve the services and program we offer. This includes any feedback related to barriers or issues related to the accessibility of our services and programs.

Barriers Identified

- Currently, there is no mechanism or system to identify barriers for both employee- and passenger-facing services, programs, and facilities
- Barriers to equal access are not always explicitly mentioned in internal processes, standard operating procedures (SOPs), or employee-related policies
- Currently, there is no formal way to solicit feedback from people with disabilities and lived experience

Actions and Timelines

- Develop an internal feedback mechanism for employee-related feedback on barriers to equal access in the workplace (2025)
- Implement a feedback process for all accessibility-related topics (2024)
- Conduct a comprehensive review of internal standard operating procedures (SOPs), plans, and policies to identify barriers and to remove them. This applies to employee-related policies and processes, as well as passenger-facing policies and procedures (2024-2027).

Progress so far:

- The feedback process has been created, tested, and initiated, as per the description offered in Section 1 'General'.
- Helijet started the initial review of its SOPs, this will be a priority for the remainder of 2024. This initial review will inform the measures that Helijet will then be able to consider for removing and preventing of accessibility barriers.
- Helijet is also drafting its internal feedback process – see Section 9. 'Feedback'.

7. Transportation

Helijet is proud to offer transportation services to and from a variety of locations in British Columbia. We engage with our passengers at various points along the travel journey, which includes as early as making a reservation, check-in at our terminals, and providing service to and from our fleet of aircraft. Safety remains our top priority in the movement of all passengers, baggage, aircraft, and crew.

Barriers Identified

- Some information about passenger process could be provided in advance of a passenger's journey to familiarize themselves with the aircraft and process (e.g. social stories or information to pre-plan a trip)
- Hidden or non-apparent disabilities not always recognized in relation to seating next to emergency exits
- Configuration and physical dimensions of aircraft can be challenging for some people with muscular, mobility, or dexterity-related disabilities

Actions and Timelines

- Explore opportunities to share pre-planning information about what to expect, including "sensory guide" and social stories (2025).
- Review other opportunities to provide federally-regulated safety briefings (e.g. different locations) while remaining compliant with Transport Canada regulations (2025-2026)
- Review of Helijet's *Scheduled Domestic Tariff* (2019), particularly Section G "Services to be Provided" related to services provided to passengers with disabilities (2026-2027)
- Continue to work with manufacturers of aircraft on accessible design and feasibility related to barrier-free cabin configurations (2027)

Progress so far:

- Helijet started the drafting of revised pre-planning information like "social stories". This was based on our lived experience exercise hosted in Vancouver with participants who have lived experience and their caregivers.



8. Built environment

Helijet owns, operates, and maintains its terminal facilities. We recognize that boarding positions at some of our locations, such as Vancouver Waterfront, do not have sloped ramps at boarding positions. Helijet provides an alternative boarding process for those passengers with mobility-related disabilities and passengers with reduced mobility (PRM).

Helijet's fleet consists of 9 Sikorsky S-76 helicopters. Helicopters are compact, versatile aircraft with a dense seating configuration. This can sometimes create barriers for people with disabilities. We recognize that seating configurations and internal space can be challenging for people with service dogs, for example.

We have engaged a third-party consultant to help identify barriers and to provide insight into how best to remove and prevent barriers from being introduced into the built environment.

Barriers Identified

- Cargo door at Victoria's terminal needs a sloped ramp for people with reduced mobility or people who use mobility aids. The door is used by both employees and public.
- Boarding positions at Vancouver (Waterfront) include stairs only.
- Toilets for both employees and passengers at Victoria terminal do not have sufficient turning radius for persons with reduced mobility or wheelchair users.
- Signage and wayfinding in terminals are limited and does not incorporate tactile and braille characteristics (as indicated in CSA/ASC B651:23)

Actions and Timelines

- Design and introduce sloped ramp to cargo door at Helijet's Victoria & Vancouver terminal (2027)
- Review signage and wayfinding at all terminals (2026)
- Review shuttle buses and other vehicles associated with transporting Helijet passengers and employees to and from terminal facilities (2024-2025)

Progress so far:

- Initial progress was made on gathering proposals for busses, now under analysis.



9. Provisions of CTA accessibility-related regulations

Helijet is subject to Part VII of the *Air Transportation Regulations (ATR)* and *Personnel Training for the Assistance of Persons with Disabilities Regulations (PTR)*. Our compliance with Part VII of the ATRs is captured in our Domestic Tariff and includes provisions related to the service and transportation of passengers with disabilities across our network. Helijet provides its staff with training to support a barrier-free passenger experience at our facilities.

We are subject to the *Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations (ATPRRs)*, which outlines how Helijet plans on delivering on commitments to improving the passenger experience for people with disabilities.

Provisions of federal employer-related regulations

As a federally regulated employer, Helijet is subject to the *Accessible Canada Regulations (ACRs)*. We strive to create a workplace that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

Progress so far:

- To comply with the ATPRR, Helijet has published this Progress Report.
- For more information on Helijet's Accessibility Plan, please visit: <https://helijet.com/home/accessibility-plan/>
- For more information on the ATPRR, please visit the CTA's website here: <https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/publication/accessible-transportation-planning-reporting-regulations-progress-report>

10. Feedback

Helijet's Feedback process is described in Section 1. 'General' and provides passengers, customers, visitors, and other interested parties different means to provide feedback on Helijet's services, facilities, and processes.

Each item of feedback is taken into careful consideration by our Director of Client Relations, Carla Kovacs. As indicated in our feedback process, we acknowledge feedback and respond to it in the format in which it was received.

Feedback Received and Responses:

- At the time of writing this Progress Report, Helijet has not received any feedback from the public.
- For the solicitation of internal feedback, Helijet is working on a survey for its employees. The aim is to launch this survey in the next two months.

11. Consultations

Helijet adopts a collaborative approach to consult persons with disabilities and lived experience. This includes both passenger-facing and employee-facing areas.

Helijet hosted a “lived experience exercise” in early 2024 in to solicit feedback from twelve people with lived experience and their caregivers about Helijet’s services, facilities, and products. The feedback has been incorporated into the Accessibility Plan.

Additionally, Helijet has solicited feedback on the Accessibility Plan from select disability advocacy groups in British Columbia. We have requested feedback about the types of barriers that people may encounter while travelling with Helijet and potential solutions to mitigate them.

Helijet also consulted a sample of employees to ensure that Helijet continues to support a safe, empowered, and barrier-free workplace for employees with disabilities.

Actions and Timelines

- Establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee within 30 days of publishing the Accessibility Plan (2024).
- Empower the Accessibility Advisory Committee to plan future consultations with the community to facilitate open dialogue between Helijet and people with disabilities and lived experiences, advocacy groups and other key stakeholders.

Progress so far:

- Helijet is currently waiting on responses from select disability advocacy group in British Columbia, after requesting feedback on the Accessibility Plan
- Helijet is working on processing employee feedback on topics of safety, empowerment and barriers.
- Helijet has established an internal Accessibility Working Group.
- In the process of establishing an Accessibility Advisory Committee, finalizing the list of interested individuals, advocacy groups, and employees to participate.