



## **SSi Canada and QINIQ Broadband**

### **Accessibility Plan**

June 1, 2024

#### ***About SSi Canada***

SSi Micro Ltd., doing business as SSi Canada (SSi), is dedicated to advancing universal access to state-of-the-art broadband and mobile wireless services in Canada. We invest, innovate, and deploy using emerging technologies and applications to provide consumers and businesses in remote regions with the selection and pricing advantages of competitive choice.

Founded in 1990, SSi is headquartered in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, with a Network Operations Centre in Ottawa, Ontario. SSi specializes in the design, deployment and operation of innovative and cost-effective communications networks to support the needs of communities with little to no terrestrial access to the outside world.

Our mandate and culture revolve around empowerment, integrity, and curiosity: empowering the lives of people in remote communities; doing the right thing even when no one is looking; being relentlessly curious and forever challenging the status quo.

SSi has carried out projects across Canada and around the world. With advanced satellite, gateway and local wireless facilities, we are the only provider to offer an equal level of broadband service in all 25 communities of Nunavut, operating under the QINIQ brand since 2005. We deployed LTE broadband wireless technology in all 25 communities in 2016, and launched SSi Mobile service across Nunavut in 2018.

SSi has deployed advanced satellite networks and local wireless facilities that deliver communications services throughout Nunavut under the “QINIQ” brand, and in communities of the Northwest Territories, an area spanning over three million square kilometres.

We are also working with partners to expand communications services in other northern and remote markets of Canada. With James Bay Eeyou Corporation and Eeyou Communications Network, we co-founded Eeyou Mobility Inc. (EMI). A majority Cree-owned company, EMI has extensively deployed and launched mobile wireless services throughout the Eeyou Istchee and James Bay region of Quebec, delivering significant benefits and enhanced safety for residents, workers and travellers.

Remote area connectivity has many facets, and SSi constantly evaluates, develops and integrates new technologies to ensure our offerings remain attractive and competitive.

Our focus on new technology – and our relatively small size and nimble operations – permit us to reduce barriers to full participation by Canadians with disabilities, both in the telecommunications markets we serve, and in our company’s operations.

The Accessibility Plan for SSi and QINIQ, like all our operations, is oriented towards meeting the specific needs of the people we serve, and the people who help us to fulfill our mandate.

### ***General***

We value your feedback in helping us make SSi as accessible as we can be. The Chief Privacy Officer is responsible for receiving feedback on barriers to access and how we plan to remove them.

Please visit:

- <https://www.ssicanada.com/accessibility-feedback/>; and
- <https://www.qiniq.com/accessibility/>

to learn how to provide feedback on accessibility and on our plan, or to request an alternate format of the plan or our feedback process. Alternate formats can include print, large print, braille, audio, or electronic.

Our mailing address is:

Chief Privacy Officer, SSi Canada  
356B Old Airport Road  
Yellowknife, NT  
X1A 3T4

PhoneToll-free: [1 \(867\) 686-2888](tel:18676862888)

Email: [accessibility@ssicanada.com](mailto:accessibility@ssicanada.com)

**Accessibility Statement:**

We respect the principles outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*. To ensure that our actions match our commitment, we:

- Respect and value the dignity, independence, and lived experiences of people with disabilities;
- Promote integration, equal opportunity, and positive experiences for everyone;
- Recognize that designing accessibility into our products and our workplaces benefits everyone. Not only does thoughtful design reduce barriers to those currently experiencing disability; it helps us to address the challenges associated with the remote markets we serve to make our services attractive and available to all;
- Build on our existing commitments to accessibility by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers on an ongoing basis;
- Engage with disability advocates to help shape and inform the services and products we offer, now and in the future.

**Consultations**

SSi has always designed our services and our workplaces to be as inclusive as possible.

Our business model encourages ongoing consultation and feedback on all aspects of our operations and itself enhances accessibility for the people we serve. In each community we serve, either through SSi, QINIQ or EMI, we maintain a Community Service Provider (CSP). Our customers in many of Nunavut's 25 communities and the 9 Cree communities and 5 Jamésien municipalities in Eeyou Istchee and the James Bay region can choose to speak with a CSP in their own Indigenous language and dialect.

Having the option of signing up, obtaining, upgrading and trouble-shooting devices, and paying monthly invoices in their home communities also affords our customers greater opportunities than many people in remote Canada enjoy to communicate with their telecommunications service as they choose – and at the pace they require.

Our decision to offer customers the option of communicating with SSi, QINIQ and EMI through CSPs, as well as directly over the internet or telephone, lets the customer set the pace and select the method of interaction – a way to reduce barriers to accessibility. Customers who require interpreters, such as those with hearing disabilities who rely on family members or others to help communicate with them, can interact with us through a neighbour – the CSP – who knows how best to meet their needs.

In designing our feedback process and the consultations that resulted in the SSi Accessibility Plan, we built on the ways we have done business since we first began to serve Nunavut in 2005. That is, we relied both on the personal touch of our CSP network and on our commitment to making the most effective possible use of available technologies to reach out to our customers, our CSPs, organizations that advocate for persons with disabilities in the regions we serve, and our workforce of about 60 employees to solicit feedback the aspects of accessibility identified as Priority Areas below.

In June 2023 we initiated our Feedback Process by adding an Accessibility Feedback Form to our customer-facing websites. See <https://www.qiniq.com/accessibility/> for one example. We also reached out to groups including Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuiatiit Society to gain a better understanding of the types and prevalence of barriers that people with disabilities face in our serving territories so as to be able to focus our service efforts most effectively. These consultations have informed our initiatives in areas that are customer focused, including communication other than ICT and the design and delivery of programs and services.

In May 2024, we conducted a survey of our workforce to determine what barriers to access people might face in the built environment, availability and use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), procurement of goods, services and facilities, and employment. About 15% of our employees responded to the survey, with two respondents identifying themselves to our Chief Privacy Officer as wishing to be contacted individually to follow up on the survey.

## ***Priority Areas***

### ***1. Employment***

We focused on the recruitment of individuals at SSi and the availability of supports to anyone requesting workplace accommodations. We also invited employees to provide any additional comments they have, such as concerns about retention and career advancement as barriers for persons with disabilities.

A strong majority of respondents (90%) considered the documentation they received when they joined the company to be easy to understand, and a majority (60%) were aware of accommodations that SSi already offers in order to support employees who have accessibility requirements. No respondents were aware of additional accommodations that SSi should consider in our hiring and training processes or additional changes we should implement to support employees with accessibility requirements.

## Identified Barriers

We identified no barriers in this area. However, we did discover that many SSi employees are unaware of what we already do to address employment barriers, such as accommodations during the hiring process, as well as of what additional measures might be available.

## Action Plan

### 2024

- Initiate improvements to communications strategies to inform both potential and actual employees about supports available to them;
- Improve regular dialogue with employees concerning both the need for action to remove barriers and the measures that are available and might be adopted to address these needs.

### 2025

- Assess awareness of measures taken by soliciting inputs from potential and actual employees.

### 2026

- Evaluate and implement feasible actions to remove barriers to employment, retention and advancement for persons with disabilities.

## 2. *The built environment*

SSi's headquarters in Yellowknife and our Network Operations Centre (NOC) in Ottawa were both built recently and with a deliberate view to removing any barriers to access for employees and visitors alike.

All respondents to our employee survey were aware of accessibility features that SSi has incorporated in our buildings, such as access ramps and railings to assist persons with mobility issues and the availability of wheelchair-accessible washrooms, including showers, on all levels of our buildings. No respondents identified any trouble working inside or accessing an SSi building because of a disability issue. A strong majority (90%) reported having no difficulty getting around inside an SSi building.

## Action Plan

### 2024

- One respondent identified a potential accessibility and safety issue at the main entrance to the NOC that affects entry especially during the winter months. We will investigate what can be done to address this issue as soon as possible.

### 2025 and 2026

- Continue regular dialogue with employees to identify barriers to accessibility in SSi's built environment;
- Address identified barriers as soon as possible.

## 3. *Information and communication technologies (ICT)*

We asked employees what they knew about ICT tools, in the sense of technologies used to create and store information, that might help to reduce barriers to access.

The level of awareness was high among respondents of ICT tools that SSi does provide, although few respondents were aware of other tools that SSi might provide to remove accessibility barriers to using ICT in our workplaces. About half of the respondents agreed that they would use ICT tools if they were available. Only 20% of respondents considered that SSi should offer simpler ways for employees with accessibility concerns to help themselves, although a strong majority answered "don't know" to this question.

### Identified barriers

Our feedback process has not identified any specific barriers. However, it is clear that SSi can do better to tap our employees' knowledge of available and desirable ICT tools to ensure that barriers do not form.

## Action Plan

### 2024

- Continue dialogue with employees to identify barriers to accessibility and desired and available ICT tools to facilitate access to using ICT in our workplaces;
- Continue to explore the needs of customers for, and ways to implement, accessibility improvements in our customer-facing websites.

## **2025 and 2026**

- Evaluate suggestions and implement ICT tool availability as practicable on an ongoing basis.

### **4. *Communication, other than ICT***

This priority considers non-digital communication.

#### **Identified barriers**

SSi uses few, if any, non-digital communications, either internally or to exchange information and views with our customers. We endeavour to use easy-to-understand language in all our communications in English, Inuktitut, and, for EMI, Cree and French.

Consequently, we have not identified any barriers in this Priority Area.

#### **Action Plan**

##### **2024-2026**

- Continuously review non-digital and digital communications to remove barriers to access and comprehension.

### **5. *Procurement of goods, services, and facilities***

We surveyed employees concerning barriers to accessibility in the process of buying goods and services and leasing facilities from suppliers.

#### **Identified barriers**

A relatively high proportion of respondents reported that they either believe SSi should ensure our procurement processes are accessible for Canadians with disabilities or are unsure. Similarly, a majority of respondents to our survey were unaware of existing measures SSi takes to address accessibility challenges in procurement.

We interpret these results as indicating a need for further work to explore what our best practices in procurement are and should be, and to improve dialogue with our employees concerning the implications for SSi of our findings.

## Action Plan

### 2024

- Research industry best practices to reduce barriers to accessibility in procurement.

### 2025

- Further assess current procurement practices to identify barriers to accessibility;
- Focus discussions on employees engaged in procurement processes to identify improvements that SSi can and should make.

### 2026

- Implement identified improvements, if any.

## ***6. Design and delivery of programs and services***

By “design and delivery of programs and services,” we mean, in particular, services offered to customers including customer service and technical support. It also includes how effectively we communicate the availability of accessibility features in our wireless and internet products.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), which regulates telecommunications and broadcasting in Canada, has developed a wide range of requirements to remove barriers to accessibility from the programs and services offered throughout the communications sector. SSi complies with the applicable regulations, orders and conditions of service.

In determining how best to implement these regulatory requirements, we are guided by the feedback we receive from customers, CSPs, and community advocacy groups such as Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS) concerning the specific needs and priorities of the people we serve.

### **Identified barriers**

SSi’s services in Canada’s Far and Mid-North are all designed to eliminate barriers to participation in the economic, social, and community connections that broadband internet and mobile wireless services can bring. Our CSP networks extend to all communities we serve, inviting customers to interact with us in person through a neighbour who speaks their language. Our services are designed to be as affordable as possible, so that income level is not a barrier, recognizing that physical and mental disabilities often correlate with poverty. And we make our services available on terms that put the customer in control of when, what, and how much they use.

For these features to be truly helpful to the people of the remote areas we serve, we need to communicate what accessibility features we offer and how to make the most of our flexible terms to meet accessibility needs.

## **Action Plan**

### **2024-2026**

- Develop awareness among frontline staff of the accessibility features and the potential for service offerings such as Qiniq's Kamotik plan to address the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Further develop feedback process to ensure we know whether the internet and wireless service accessibility discounts we offer and the eligibility criteria we apply continue to remove barriers and add value for our customers with disabilities;
- Reach out to accessibility advocates including NDMS and advocacy groups in the Eeyou Istchee and James Bay region of Quebec for input in service design and promotion.

## **7. *Transportation***

SSi does not offer transportation services externally or internally.

### **Identified barriers**

We have not identified any barriers to accessibility relating to transportation.

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