

# 2019–2020 Annual Report



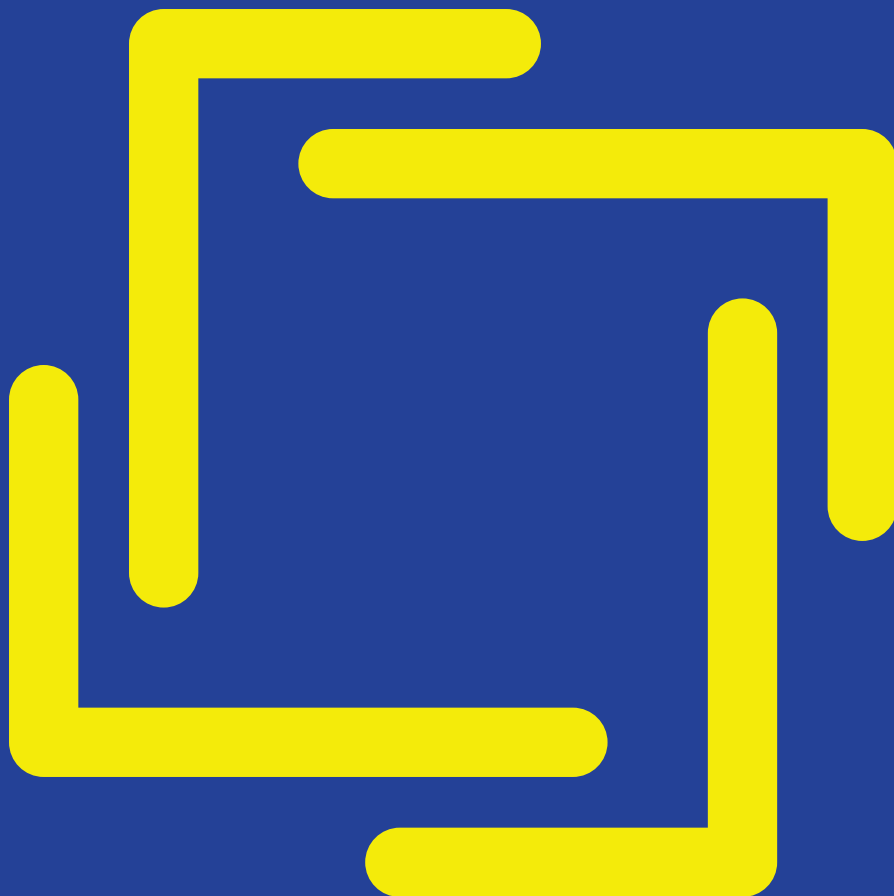
**Together,  
toward an  
accessible  
Canada**



Accessibility Standards  
Canada

Normes d'accessibilité  
Canada

Canada



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## Message from the Chairperson, Paul-Claude Bérubé

Our first annual report tells Canadians and members of Parliament about the creation and work of Accessibility Standards Canada. This new public organization stems from the Accessible Canada Act (the Act). The Act became official on July 11, 2019, after a long process of talks with persons with disabilities. This date marks the official creation of Accessibility Standards Canada.

The Act will allow us to move to a system where persons with disabilities no longer have to fight for basic access. This system will actively and consistently reduce accessibility barriers. It will change the structures that repeat these barriers. Although it will not happen overnight, this work will make our country more accessible and inclusive for the 6 million Canadians with disabilities. It is an honour for our organization and our partners to be a part of this change.

Accessibility Standards Canada has a key role: to be a federal leader in creating accessibility standards. In addition, Accessibility Standards Canada supports and promotes research on accessibility standards. It also promotes accessibility best practices. Most importantly, Accessibility Standards Canada fulfills its role by working together with persons with disabilities and many other partners.

Accessibility Standards Canada has an inclusive vision and philosophy. We abide by the principle: “Nothing about us, without us.” We are proud to be part of the first federal

organization led by a majority of persons with disabilities. To maximize its impact, the organization has to rely on the experience and knowledge of experts including:

- persons with disabilities and their organizations;
- Indigenous people, their organizations and governments;
- provincial, territorial and municipal governments; and
- technical experts, researchers and industry representatives.

I am humbled to lead a group that brings such a diversity of experiences and a keen commitment to the cause of accessibility. As a Board, our job is to guide the organization and decide its strategic direction. We also have to make sure that Accessibility Standards Canada's work reflects the priorities of persons with disabilities. Lastly, we have to make sure the organization is a model of transparency.

In the past few months, Accessibility Standards Canada went through several steps to become a separate organization and stand on its own. We have started our work with determination. I wish to thank the Chief Executive Officer, Philip Rizcallah, and his entire team, for their dedication. They worked extremely hard to help set up the organization and support the work of the Board. We are just about to create our very first standards. Motivated by our desire to improve people's access and lives, we will continue full speed ahead.



Paul-Claude Bérubé



## Message from the Chief Executive Officer, Philip Rizcallah

This report is very special as it is Accessibility Standards Canada's first annual report. In reading it, you will see that in the past few months, the organization:

- was created;
- operated mainly under Employment and Social Development Canada;
- produced many documents that establish Accessibility Standards Canada's foundations;
- became independent and got its own budget; and
- adopted the name Accessibility Standards Canada.

We put a lot of effort into setting up the organization. Hiring employees was a priority. This helped us to move forward and start working on certain parts of our mandate. In particular:

- We looked at existing standards and where new standards are needed.
- We created the process to recruit people to join the technical committees. These committees will create the first standards.



- We launched the “Advancing Accessibility Standards Research” grants and contributions program.
- We created and started to use our communication strategy.
- We started rallying persons with disabilities and other partners.

I would like to thank Employment and Social Development Canada and all the employees who helped to set up Accessibility Standards Canada this year. Millions of Canadians with disabilities have been waiting for this organization to be created. Without you, this would not have been possible.

I am proud to see Accessibility Standards Canada take shape. In the coming year, the organization will:

- strengthen its foundation;
- start creating standards; and
- create more opportunities for working with the community of persons with disabilities and other partners.

I have no doubt that, together, we will help to create an accessible Canada.



Philip Rizcallah





# 1 About Accessibility Standards Canada

## 1.1 Vision, mission, mandate, values and principles

### **Vision**

Our vision is a Canada:

- that does not have barriers; and
- where persons with disabilities can be sure that they have the same access to opportunities and services as everyone else.

### **Mission**

Persons with disabilities lead Accessibility Standards Canada to create a Canada without barriers. We work with persons with disabilities to:

- create new modern accessibility standards in key areas;
- revise current accessibility standards;
- lead research; and
- support everyone to reach the highest level of accessibility.

## **Mandate**


Our mandate is to help make Canada a place without barriers, by January 1, 2040. We will do this by:

- creating and updating accessibility standards;
- recommending accessibility standards to the Minister;
- providing information, products and services about the accessibility standards we create and update;
- funding and doing research to identify and remove barriers and to stop new barriers from being made; and
- sharing information about the best ways to identify and remove barriers and about how to stop new barriers.

## **Values**

These six value statements guide our work:

1. We value the knowledge and experience of persons with disabilities. We expect those we collaborate with to demonstrate this same value.
2. We value the diversity of society. Our work respects human rights and focuses on including everyone.
3. The consistency of a Canada without barriers is important. Persons with disabilities can expect equal level of access across the country.
4. We value universal access. Services, products and places are designed to be accessible to everyone.

- 
5. We value two-way communication in an open, accessible, timely, and clear manner and in all areas of our work.
  6. Disability experience and research have the same value when making decisions.

These values are based on the principles outlined in the Accessible Canada Act.

## **Principles**

We support and follow the principles in the Accessible Canada Act.


1. All people, regardless of their disabilities:
  - should be treated with respect;
  - deserve an equal chance to create the life that they can and wish to have;
  - should have access without barriers to full and equal participation in society; and
  - should have meaningful options. They must be free to make their own choices, with support if they wish.
2. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account:
  - the disabilities of people;
  - the different ways that people communicate and react with their environments; and
  - the many types of isolation and discrimination people face.
3. Persons with disabilities must be involved in creating laws, policies, programs, services and structures that affect them.
4. New and revised accessibility standards and regulations must try to have the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.



## **What is a departmental corporation?**

Accessibility Standards Canada is a departmental corporation. Departmental corporations are special government entities included under Schedule II of the Financial Administration Act. This act provides a legal framework for financial management within the Government of Canada.

Those corporations operate at arms length from ministers and typically have a management board. They get their funding largely through budgets voted in Parliament.



“Not many government workers will ever have the chance to build a new department. [...] Even though the job has not been easy, we feel honoured. The excitement of our team overcomes the hard parts and the unknowns we face each day.”

– **Philip Rizcallah**, Chief Executive Officer



## 1.2 A departmental corporation in the making

There is no instruction book to build a new government organization. Every organization is different: different laws, different rules, different mandate, different size, and different structures. Not many government workers will ever be able to build a new department. It is a unique opportunity but it can be challenging when the organization has to be created from nothing. The job has not been easy, but we feel honoured to be making a difference for Canadians with disabilities.


### First phase

In March 2019, we started with a blank canvas and one employee. At first, we were part of Employment and Social Development Canada. Nevertheless, we had to get ready to take off on our own, not knowing our departure date. There were

policies and laws that would frame that canvas, but nothing else. With the help of other government colleagues, we had to design and build everything. There were many unknowns.

Before we could think about what the organization should do and how it should do it, we had to think about its foundations. We asked ourselves what kind of support the organization would need. We do not usually think about those foundations and supports. It is like the plumbing in our houses; we take it for granted. It is amazing, once we stop and think about those foundations and supports, how much is required. We had to think about the following aspects:

- What types of jobs will we have?
- How will we hire those employees?
- How will we pay those employees?
- How will the organization be governed?
- How do we make sure that our organization is led by persons with disabilities (live up to the saying “Nothing about us, without us”)?
- How will the organization work with the public?
- What kind of social media presence should we have?
- What computer system will we use?
- Where will the organization be located?
- How should we design that location?
- What will we call the organization?



This is just a small sample of the questions we had to ask and answer. There are many questions in each area such as:

- finance;
- procurement (buying things);
- human resources;
- accommodations;
- security;
- information technology;
- information management;
- access to information and disclosure;
- privacy;
- governance; and
- communications.

Before we could start working, we had to answer these questions, or at least part of these questions. Our organization focuses on accessibility, so we had to spend more time thinking about things to be sure that the chosen solutions model accessibility.

Take our location for example. Our office is currently at a temporary location. It is accessible but it is far from the model of accessibility we want it to be. However, we are excited to have the opportunity to build our accessible new location from the ground up. Of course, in everything we do, we will include the very best accessibility practices.



## **Implementation phase**

On July 11, 2019, the Accessible Canada Act received royal assent and this officially created our organization. It was the beginning of the journey, because creating a new department depends on many important milestones, which require different levels of approval. We needed the following:

- a governance structure;
- a strategic direction;
- our own budget; and
- an applied title (which is the name commonly used by a department).



# 2019

**July**

The Accessible Canada Act comes into force.

**Result**

The Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (CASDO) is created.

**October**

First Board meeting.

**Result**

Board starts establishing the organization's strategic direction.

**August**

Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors appointed.

**Result**

CASDO is the first federal institution to be led by a majority of persons with disabilities.

A horizontal timeline arrow pointing right, divided into a light blue section on the left and a yellow section on the right by a vertical dashed yellow line. Three events are marked with arrows pointing to the timeline: a light blue arrow for December, a yellow arrow for January, and a yellow arrow for February. Each event includes a date, a description, and a result in a yellow box.

# 2020

**January**

Approval of our applied title.

**Result**

The organization becomes  
Accessibility Standards  
Canada.

**December**

Parliament approves  
Supplementary  
Estimates A.

**Result**


CASDO receives  
its own budget.

**February**

Approval of mission, vision,  
values and strategic plan.

**Result**

The organization can  
now operate under  
this new framework.



As we were putting these foundational pieces in place, we devoted many efforts to create our core programs and corporate services. Behind all this work, we have made a lot of progress in many areas, including the following:

- we created the structure for the organization and defined the jobs we will need;
- we began hiring people for the organization. We have hired almost half of the 50 positions. We expect to reach a full staff by 2021–2022;
- we signed service level agreements with other government departments. They will provide us with services like human resources, finance and the necessary computer programs;
- we created our own corporate services in areas such as procurement (buying things) and communications;
- we defined our objectives (goals) and our strategies to get there;
- we renovated and moved into our temporary location;
- we found a permanent location and completed its initial design;
- we have created the internal rules, processes and guidelines to make sure we take proper care of government resources; and,
- we have put in place information technology solutions, programs and accounts.





Accessibility Standards Canada employees. Front row (left to right): Micah Walters, Isabelle Carrier, Keith Collier, Tina Dowe, Gavin Scharfe. Back row (left to right): Christina Richard, Alexandria Menard-Estevéz, Tania Magloire, Maggie Saunders, Kevin Whitehouse, Lorraine Trudel, Daname Gogue, Hayley St-Clair, Michelle Demery, Andre Madrid, Mathieu Gorley, Philip Rizcallah, Eric Kalambay.

## Looking back

Looking back a year ago, we had almost nothing. We had a computer, a phone and an office that someone let us use. Twelve months later, we have become a government organization. We can do almost everything all departmental corporations must do. Normally those organizations are much larger than we are.

With our approximately 25 employees, we have accomplished a lot in a very short timeframe. Our team is up for the challenge, and eager to learn. They want to help build an organization that will change Canada. We are fortunate to count on other government departments and colleagues who have freely shared their expertise and experiences. We thank them loudly for their help.

**We are not finished our work.** We will continue to improve our processes and programs, to better serve Canadians. We will always be looking at things with accessibility in mind. Our work will never end. As we focus on creating an accessible Canada, we are humbled by our mandate and proud of what we achieved so far.

### **Governance structure**

As a departmental corporation, Accessibility Standards Canada has some independence:

- The Minister may issue general directions;
- The Board of Directors sets the organization's direction; and
- The Chief Executive Officer puts this direction into action.

## 2 Board of Directors

Our organization is managed by 10 Board members, including a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson. The Governor in Council appointed Board members on August 26, 2019. Board member positions are part-time. Each Board member's mandate is for 2 or 4 years.

The Board guides the organization in its activities and advises the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is responsible for the daily operations of the organization.

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion may give general instructions on how to carry out our mandate. We also have to submit our annual report to the Minister. Then, the Minister presents the annual report in Parliament.



Members of the Board of directors and the CEO. Front row (left to right): Penny Hartin, Brad McCannell, Mary Reid, Paul-Claude Bérubé, Philip Rizcallah (CEO). Back row (left to right): Dr. Joseph McLaughlin, Laurie Ringaert, William Adair, Rabia S. Khedr, Maureen Haan, Kory L. Earle.



## **2.1 Meetings of the Board**

The Board of Directors has three to five regular (or face-to-face) meetings each year. The Board has at least one meeting each year in the National Capital Region, where the organization's head office is located. The Board is trying to meet in all regions of Canada over time. Board members want to hear what Canadians across Canada have to say.

In 2019–2020, the Board of Directors had three regular meetings and four special (or teleconference) meetings.

## **2.2 Governance and policies**

At the start, the Board had to create the organization's governance framework. This framework includes by-laws and policies.

The Accessible Canada Act is the starting point for the organization's governance framework. Section 27(1) of the Act allows the Board to make by-laws stating how the Board will carry out its activities and conduct its business.



In November 2019, the Board approved its first By-Law. The By-Law has a number of main provisions. It also contains open and inclusive practices such as requiring the Board to:

- have an annual public meeting open to individuals and organizations;
- appoint members of standing committees from outside the organization to ensure diversity; and
- post the By-Law online in an accessible format.

In November 2019, the Board also approved a Governance Policy to support the By-Law. The policy is online. It gives details about how Board meetings should operate, and about the accessibility of meetings. The Policy sets out the terms of reference for the five standing committees. The Policy also requires the Board to post meeting minutes online.

The By-Law and the Governance Policy are the main policies guiding the governance framework. The Board has also approved some internal policies to make sure its conduct and activities meet the high standards expected of a federal board. These policies include a Code of Conduct and Ethics, a Whistleblower Policy and a Recruitment Policy.

The Board will regularly review all of its policies and provide guidance through new policies as needed.

## 2.3 Committees of the Board

The Board created five standing committees. The following committees advise the Board and make recommendations relating to their areas of expertise:

- strategic planning
- external relations
- governance
- nominations
- performance appraisal

## 2.4 Standing committees


### Strategic Planning Committee

This Committee advises on the organization's strategic direction, in collaboration with persons with disabilities. The Committee develops the organization's vision, mission and values and ensures that the work of the organization follows them.

The Committee suggested the following, which the Board approved in February 2020:

- a vision;
- a mission;
- value statements;
- a strategic plan for the organization.

These will serve as the base of the work done by the organization. They will also help to ensure that the work we do is in line with the Accessible Canada Act. The Committee has also put forward an annual calendar for Board activities.



The Committee makes sure that the organization is always looking to include persons with disabilities in everything it does. This ensures that we are always thinking about “Nothing about us, without us” when working on standards development.

## **External Relations Committee**

This Committee gives the Board advice about including persons with disabilities and other partners in Accessibility Standards Canada’s activities.

Key areas of responsibility are:

- including persons with disabilities;
- including outside partners; and
- having a communications strategy.

The Committee started the work in December 2019. These are the most important projects that the Committee has undertaken so far:

1. Created our own visual identity to make sure that our organization is easy to recognize in all of its communications.
2. Made a comprehensive framework to build the list of our partners.  
There are 12 categories, and they include:
  - persons with disabilities;
  - organizations representing persons with disabilities;

- groups affected by the Accessible Canada Act;
  - provinces and municipalities;
  - industry experts; and
  - organizations doing research on accessibility.
3. Began to develop a strategy to get people involved.
  4. Started planning our first events.

The Committee welcomes comments, suggestions and ideas for getting people involved. The Committee wants to hear from all partners, including persons with disabilities and especially people who are regularly excluded.

## **Governance Committee**

The role of the Committee is to provide advice to the Board on governance issues. This includes advice on the Board's by-laws and governance policies.

Its key responsibilities include:

- researching governance questions and advising the Board;
- developing new governance policies and reviewing existing policies; and
- supporting the training of the Board and new Board members.

The Committee started its work in December 2019. Below are the most important projects that the Committee has overseen so far:

1. developed a Code of Conduct and Ethics;
2. developed a Whistleblower Policy; and
3. planned future Board training.

## **Nominations Committee**

The role of the Committee is to recruit independent members for standing committees. The goal is to ensure expertise and diversity on committees.

Its key responsibilities include:

- identifying any gaps in skills or diversity; and
- preparing calls for nominations to recruit members.

The Committee started its work in December 2019. Below are the most important tasks the Committee has undertaken so far:

1. identified current skill gaps; and
2. planned for future recruitment activities.





## Performance Appraisal Committee

The role of the Committee is to provide advice to the Board on evaluation and performance.

One of its key responsibilities is ensuring the annual performance evaluation of the Board, the standing committees and the CEO.

The Committee started its work in December 2019. Below are the most important projects that the Committee has overseen so far:

1. developed the performance management program for the CEO for 2019–2020; and
2. planned for Board and standing committees' evaluations.


### 3 Standards development



Our main mandate is to create and review accessibility standards, which apply to:

- the federal government; and
- organizations that are regulated by the federal government (for example: banks).

These standards will prevent, identify and remove accessibility barriers.



Once created, we will submit the standards to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. The Minister may adopt them into regulations. Removing accessibility barriers will ensure that the Canadian society fully includes persons with disabilities.

### **3.1 Areas for standards development**

During the meetings that led to the Accessible Canada Act, Canadians identified which areas were the most important for improving accessibility. Canadians identified the following 7 areas:

- Employment (jobs);
- The built environment;
- Information and communication technologies;
- Communication, other than information and communication technologies;
- The procurement (buying) of goods, services and facilities;
- The design and delivery of programs and services; and
- Transportation.




## 3.2 First sets of standards

In December 2019, the Board of Directors agreed on four priority areas to develop the first sets of standards. The priority areas are:

- Emergency egress (exits);
- Employment (jobs);
- Plain language, and
- Outdoor spaces.

For each of the above four sets of standards, we are collecting information and looking at areas where gaps exist. This process will help identify key areas for standards development.



“We are excited to start working with persons with disabilities and other experts to create the very best accessibility standards.”

– **Paul-Claude Bérubé**, Chairperson



### 3.3 Working with partners

Our organization will continue to work with persons with disabilities, representatives from industries and other partners, to review and create standards.

As such, we are preparing to launch an online process to ask people if they are interested in volunteering on our four technical committees. These committees will create the first sets of standards.





## 4 Advancing Accessibility Standards Research

In January 2020, we launched our grants and contributions program: Advancing Accessibility Standards Research (the Program). The Program supports research projects to find, take away and stop obstacles to accessibility. This research will help to inform accessibility standards in the future.



“Funding innovative accessibility standards research will be key to fuel our standards development processes.”

– **Mary Reid**, Vice-Chairperson



## 4.1 Objectives

The Program will allow us to work with many people and organizations across Canada. Our goal is to make progress in accessibility standards research.

The Program also has the following goals:

- involve persons with disabilities, other experts and organizations to help carry out the research; and
- find and share research, information, best practices and tools about accessibility obstacles and standards.

## 4.2 Research priorities for 2020–2021

Our Board chose the following research areas for 2020–2021:

1. Employment;
2. Emergency measures;
3. Built environment, including parks and outdoor recreation facilities;
4. Information and communication technologies;
5. Indigenous accessibility; and
6. Accessible communications.



## 4.3 Initial results

The response to the Program has been very positive so far. We have received 81 funding applications.

We expect the research projects will guide us as we create accessibility standards in the future.



## 5 Public and stakeholder engagement

### 5.1 Communications

Our organization began communicating with the public in August 2019, shortly after the Accessible Canada Act received royal assent. We did not have a communications team at the time. With ESDC's help, we produced our first communications and created our website.

We created a communications team in September 2019. The team supports all corporate programs and services. The team came up with the organization's first communication strategy. The Board approved the strategy in November 2019.

Over the last few months, we created our visual identity and adopted our common name. We also increased our Web presence and added videos to our website in Langue des signes Québécoise (Quebec Sign Language) and American Sign Language. We built tools to communicate and engage with the public and intend on continuing to do so. We recently started a newsletter. We also created our Twitter and Facebook accounts.






## 5.2 Collaboration with stakeholders


Over the last few months, we started to engage with stakeholders.





“I am looking forward to the development of standards on employment. It will have an incredible impact on society. I believe we all win when we adopt inclusive practices in the workplace and I would love for the world to see that. It is also important to fund research to produce the best possible and evidence-based standards.”

– **Steve Mantis**, Chair, Research-action committee,  
Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups



In February 2020, we came up with a plan to create our list of partners. Since then, we have been working to build our partner database.

While our first annual public meeting was canceled due to COVID-19, we are currently exploring virtual ways to get feedback. This feedback will help us plan our overall strategy for reaching out to partners.





## 6 Financial results at a glance

The organization received its own budget in December 2019. We then became an independent organization. We received these funds through an appropriation Act: the Supplementary Estimates (A), 2019–20.

In 2019–2020, we received \$9.2 million to:

- establish the new organization;
- begin creating accessibility standards; and
- support research projects to find, take away and stop obstacles to accessibility.

This amount included:

- \$5.9 million for operations (that is, to get the organization up and running and achieve progress on our mandate); and
- \$3.3 million to award in grants and contributions. This program will advance accessibility standards research. This research will inform future accessibility standards.

## Funding to establish the organization and the Advancing Accessibility Standards Research Fund

Details	Full-time employees	Salary	Operating and maintenance	Total – Operating	Grants and contributions	Total
<b>Actual spending</b>						
Operating	6.5*	799,487	1,651,709	2,451,196	N/A	<b>2,451,196</b>
Grants & contributions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,488,358	<b>1,488,358</b>
<b>Total 2019–2020 funding</b>						
Supplementary estimates (A)	37.25	2,868,291	2,998,460	5,866,751	3,250,000	<b>9,116,751</b>

\*As part of the start up of Accessibility Standards Canada, appropriations were obtained on December 16th, 2019. As a result, this figure represents just one quarter of the year. Expenditures reflect the work accomplished over that period. While delays occurred in 2019–2020, Accessibility Standards Canada is in a financial position to accomplish the objectives set out in the 2020–2021 departmental plan.



## 7 Looking ahead

### 7.1 Creating standards

In the next few months, we will choose members for the first 4 technical committees that will create the standards. It will take us between 12 to 24 months to develop a set of standards. Some of these standards could be recommended to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion to be made into regulations.

### 7.2 Engagement strategy and consultations

Collaboration with the disability community and other stakeholders is key to our mandate. That is why we are currently developing an engagement strategy. This strategy will have many tactics, as we want to hear from stakeholders across the country and on an ongoing basis. This will be key to inform our work moving forward.

Participants will be able to give their opinions on:

- our priorities in creating standards;
- our priorities for the research program; and
- how we can best collaborate with stakeholders.

## 7.3 Our future offices

Right now, we are designing our new offices. They will be located at 320 St-Joseph Boulevard in Gatineau, Quebec. We are working with an interior design company to make sure that the project includes universal design principles. The goal is to create a modern and inclusive workplace; a workplace that is a model of accessibility. We plan to complete the project and move into our new offices in October 2020.







# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Board members

Paul-Claude Bérubé,  
Chairperson

Penny Hartin,  
Director

Mary Reid,  
Vice-Chairperson

Rabia S. Khedr,  
Director

William Adair,  
Director

Brad McCannell,  
Director

Kory L. Earle,  
Director

Dr. Joe McLaughlin,  
Director

Maureen Haan,  
Director

Laurie Ringaert,  
Director

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Standing committee members**

#### **Strategic Planning Committee**

Maureen Haan,  
Committee Chair

Mary Reid,  
Committee Member

Dr. Joe McLaughlin,  
Committee Member

#### **External Relations Committee**

Penny Hartin,  
Committee Chair

Mary Reid,  
Committee Member

Dr. Joe McLaughlin,  
Committee Member

#### **Governance Committee**

Kory L. Earle,  
Committee Chair

William Adair,  
Committee Member

Laurie Ringaert,  
Committee Member

#### **Performance Appraisal Committee**

Brad McCannell,  
Committee Chair

William Adair,  
Committee Member

Laurie Ringaert,  
Committee Member

#### **Nominations Committee**

Rabia S. Khedr,  
Committee Chair

William Adair,  
Committee Member

Dr. Joe McLaughlin,  
Committee Member

Paul-Claude Bérubé (Chairperson) and Philip Rizcallah (CEO) are non-voting members of each committee.



Accessibility Standards  
Canada

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