

Questions and Answers from Annual Public Meeting, 2021

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Accessibility questions for our Annual Public Meeting

1. Will there be a bilingual transcript available for this event?

- Yes, it can be found on our [website](#).

2. How do I get on the stakeholder list?

- To sign up for the stakeholder list please [email us](#) or call 1-833-854-7628. You can also register for our [newsletter](#).

3. Is there access to the presentations in Braille?

- You can contact us to request documents and presentations in braille.
- Please [email us](#) or call us at 1-833-854-7628 if you require accessibility accommodations or alternate formats, such as Braille.

Board and standards development

Joining the Board

4. How are Board Members chosen, and is anyone representing Quebec?

- All members of Accessibility Standards Canada's Board of Directors are Governor-in-Council appointees.
- They went through an open and transparent selection process led by the Privy Council Office.
- All Governor-in-Council appointees, including Board members had to meet criteria, such as:
 - experience serving on boards of directors; and
 - knowledge of accessibility issues, policies and programs.
- The [Privy Council Office](#) website provides information on the Governor-in-Council appointment process and available opportunities.
- The previous notice for positions on Accessibility Standards Canada's Board of Directors is under the "Archived opportunities" section.

- Board members are appointed for terms of up to four years.
- Diversity is an important factor in the appointment process for Board members. This includes people:
 - with different types of disabilities;
 - from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; and
 - from different regions of the country.
- The Chair of the Board of Directors is from Québec, and there are Board Members from Coast to Coast.
- Board Directors do not represent any province, territory, city, or organization.

5. How did you decide on the seven priority areas?

- Section 5 of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) identifies the seven priority areas. They were based on consultations with Canadians. They are:
 1. Employment;
 2. Built environment;
 3. Information and communication technologies;
 4. Communication, other than information and communication technologies;
 5. Service delivery;

6. Transportation; and

7. Procurement.

- We consulted Canadians about their priorities for standards development. This took place from September 1 to September 30, 2020.
- The Board selects priorities for standards development within the seven areas in the Act (e.g., outdoor spaces). They base priorities on the results of consultations and other sources.

6. How do we encourage private entities to adopt our optional standards?

- The accessibility standards developed by Accessibility Standards Canada are voluntary.
- Sharing best practices is part of our mandate. We will put a plan in place to build awareness on our standards once we are ready to publish them.
- We plan to work with Stakeholders to create awareness and encourage the use of standards. This includes other governments and private entities.

- We will recommend approved standards to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.
- The Minister will consider making them mandatory by using them as regulations.
- If standards become regulations, federally-regulated entities will have to follow them and they will be enforceable.

Standards

Process for creating standards

7. What is the process for creating new standards?

- Yearly, the Board of Directors determines priorities for standards development based on input from Canadians.
- Standard are created by technical committees. They are made up of experts. [Subscribe to our newsletter](#) or visit our [website](#) to learn when to apply to a technical committee.
- It takes about two years to develop a standard. When we have developed a standard, we will publish it online so that all Canadians can provide input.
- We expect to consult with Canadians on our first draft standard in spring 2022.
- We will share standards we develop with the Minister for Disability Inclusion. They will decide if it becomes a regulation. Regulations apply to all federally-regulated groups and can be enforced.
- Accessibility Standards Canada currently has technical committees developing standards in four areas:

- plain language;
- employment;
- outdoor spaces; and
- emergency egress, or exit.
- We are setting up a fifth technical committee for a model standard for the built environment.
- In the coming year, we will set up technical committees to develop standards for:
 - wayfinding, including signage;
 - emergency measures;
 - acoustics; and
 - procurement, or the buying of goods, services and facilities.

8. How do you select technical committee members?

- First, the Board identifies priorities for standards development. We then launch a recruitment process for technical committee members. We share details of the recruitment process online and through our [newsletter](#).
- We select applicants based on many criteria, including being a person with lived experience. We also look for knowledge and expertise in the standard's area of focus.

- Accessibility Standards Canada encourages people from diverse communities to apply.
- We also consider regional representation. We hope committee members will bring views from across Canada.
- Each committee has 12-18 members, which can mean that there are qualified people who are not selected.
- We compensate persons with disabilities who are members of our technical committees. We do so if they do not receive payment from an employer for their participation in our committee.

9. What happens after a standard is created?

- Once we create a standard, it enters a maintenance phase. We will review it every two and a half years, or whenever a stakeholder identifies an urgent safety issue.
- After publishing, we will want to hear from people using and affected by the standards.
- We review Standards at five year intervals to make sure they are effective.

10. What is the difference between a standard and a regulation?

- Compliance with a standard is voluntary. It's only possible to enforce a standard if it becomes a regulation.
- It takes an extra two and a half years to develop a regulation out of a standard.

11. What other departments are creating their own standards for accessibility?

- Once Accessibility Standards Canada develops a standard, it may become a regulation. All federal departments will then have to comply.
- However, under the Accessible Canada Act:
 - [The Canadian Transportation Agency](#) creates accessible transportation standards.
 - The [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission](#) creates accessible information and communication technologies standards.

Accessibility Standards Canada Standards

12. Employment Standard – How can the government help people with multiple sclerosis to keep their jobs and professions with the necessary accessibility accommodations?

- We have created a technical committee that will develop a standard on employment.
- This technical committee includes experts in employment, as well as individuals with a broad range of lived experience.
- The standard on employment will look at the full employment life cycle, including:
 - Finding and keeping a job;
 - Seeking workplace accommodations; and
 - Getting access to career development opportunities.
- It will also look at employment from the perspective of a full range of disabilities.
- We want all our standards to remove barriers for people with all types of disabilities.
- There will also be an opportunity for all Canadians to provide input on the draft standard.
- The draft should be ready for public consultation in 2023.

13. Built environment – What is Accessibility Standard Canada doing to simplify "barrier-free" sections in building codes, to make sure that design professionals are comfortable using them and knowledgeable about them?

- Harmonization in standards across the country is important. That includes harmonization in building codes across Canada.
- We aim for common criteria, but our top priority is equity in the built environment for persons with disabilities. We want to create a best-in-class standard.
- Accessibility Standards Canada is developing two standards in the built environment:
 - a standard on emergency egress, or exit; and
 - a model standard for accessibility in the built environment.
- A technical committee of experts is leading the development of each standard.
 - These committees include persons with lived experience.
 - We aim to publish both standards in 2023.
 - All Canadians will have the chance to comment on the draft standards in late 2022.

- When the standards are open for comments, we will notify Canadians
- in our [newsletter](#);
- on our [website](#); and
- on our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
 - Sharing best practices is also part of our mandate.
 - We will put a plan in place to build awareness on our standards once we are ready to publish them.
 - We will work with the [National Research Council](#) on the National Building Code. We will also work with provinces and territories to harmonize standards.

14. Procurement - Are there plans to make standards for products that are procured by the federal government?

- Our Board of Directors has identified procurement as a priority. We are working with Public Service and Procurement Canada to determine next steps.

Accessibility Standards and Provinces and Territories

15. Will there be organized events and outreach planned within each province? There are a lot of networks and groups at the provincial, regional and municipal level.

- There are many networks and groups at various levels across the country. We want to hear from all Canadians on how to make a more accessible Canada.
- The Board encourages groups and networks to get involved in our work.
- They are welcome to:
 - present to our technical committees; and
 - give input during our consultations.
- We encourage all groups to subscribe to our [Stakeholder List](#).

16. Across Canada, there are groups that are French or English only, and others that are bilingual. How will they be represented?

- We want to hear from all Canadians and organizations. This includes
 - French and English Canadians;

- newcomers;
 - Indigenous people; and
 - a variety of organizations that represent people with disabilities.
- Diversity is important to our work. We are committed to engaging with people in:
 - English;
 - French;
 - American Sign Language; and
 - “Langues des signes Québécoise”.

17. What is the Federal government doing to enforce the *Accessible Canada Act* provincially and when might this begin to take effect?

- The *Accessible Canada Act* is federal legislation. As such, it only applies to federally regulated entities.
- The mandate of Accessibility Standards Canada is to create accessibility standards for federal entities.
- Areas under federal responsibility include but are not limited to:
 - the federal government;

- banks;
 - telecommunications;
 - broadcasting; and
 - the federal transportation network.
 - The [Canadian Transportation Agency](#) and [CRTC](#) will develop standards in their areas.
 - Many provinces have or are working on relevant legislation for their jurisdictions.
 - Organizations under provincial or territorial responsibility include but are not limited to:
 - hospitals;
 - schools;
 - local transportation;
 - most housing; and
 - stores.
 - Section 16 of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) says that the Minister must work with provinces and territories on accessibility.
- Accessibility Standards Canada is working with provinces and territories to understand their priorities for standards development.

18. How will you ensure accessibility is the same across the country?

- We want to make sure that accessibility is the same across Canada.
- We are working with provinces and territories to understand their standards development priorities.
- We will encourage and help provinces and territories to use our standards.
- We also want to learn from existing best practices in provinces and territories.
- Our technical committees of experts will develop our standards with these best practices in mind.

Regulations

19. How will accessibility regulations be enforced?

- The Accessibility Commissioner at the [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#) handles enforcement of regulations.
- The Chief Accessibility Officer will handle monitoring and reporting on the outcomes of the [Act](#).
- These are new positions, created by the Accessible Canada Act.
- Applications for both roles are now closed.
- Please note that neither of these roles are with Accessibility Standards Canada.

General Questions

20. Are there standards being developed for people with speech, language and communication disabilities?

- Many of our standards aim to remove or prevent barriers related to speech, language, and communication disabilities. That includes our standards in development like plain language and employment.
- We regularly communicate with stakeholders to identify new priorities. If there is a need for a standard dedicated to speech, language, and communication, we may develop one in the future.
- Technical committees will be created based on the priorities of Canadians. They are identified by the Board of Directors.

21. Will braille be considered an important part of accessible communication?

- We want to remove barriers for all persons with disabilities. We will take into account all accessibility features when making standards.
- Thousands of Canadians use braille. It is important our technical committees include braille communication in our standards.

22. What is the process to have accessibility standards for environmental sensitivities or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities?

- All standards developed by Accessibility Standards Canada will address barriers for all persons with disabilities.
- This includes people with environmental or multiple chemical sensitivities.
- People with environmental sensitivities or multiple chemical sensitivities can help us shape our standards in many ways.
- They can apply to be members of our Technical Committees.
- Like all Canadians, they will be able to give feedback on draft standards.

23. As we develop standards we will post drafts online for public consultation. Have there been any standards that have been created that focus on the needs of children with disabilities?

- We want our standards to improve accessibility for all Canadians. This includes children with disabilities and families with children with disabilities.

- The Board determines priorities for standards development based on input of Canadians. Standards for children have not been identified at this time.
- We invite children with disabilities and their families to follow the progress of our [technical committee for outdoor spaces](#).
- We want to hear from a diverse range of people. All Canadians will be able to provide comments on draft standards. We encourage children with disabilities and their families to do so.
- As we develop standards, we will post drafts online for public consultation.
- Finally, as mentioned during the Annual Public Meeting, we are working on a youth engagement strategy. We welcome feedback from youth and children across Canada. We will have a youth event later this year.

24. Emergency measures – How do we ensure equal access to intervener services for Canadians who are Deaf-Blind, regardless of where they live in our country?

- The creation of an emergency measures standard is a priority for 2021.

- Standards will include measures for the Deaf-Blind community for areas under federal responsibility.
- As we develop standards, we will post drafts online for public consultation.

25. Emergency measures – What is being done to improve standards for emergency situations?

- Accessibility Standards Canada has prioritized the development of an emergency egress (exit) standard.
- We have a technical committee of experts, including persons with lived experience. The committee began meeting in March 2021.
- We aim to publish the standard in 2023.
- We have also prioritized the development of an emergency measures standard.
- We will be starting a technical committee later this year.

26. Housing – What role would Accessibility Standards Canada play in the creation of housing standards?

- Accessibility Standards Canada and the [CSA Group](#) are developing a standard on accessible housing. The standards is also being supported by [Canada Mortgage and Housing](#)

[Corporation](#). The expected timeline for the release of the standard is 2023. We will post the draft standards online as they are developed. This will also allow for public consultation where Canadians can provide input.

- We are also developing standards on the built environment and on emergency egress. We expect these standards will also contribute to more accessible housing.

27. Will Accessibility Standards Canada work with other groups to co-design standards?

- Working together with other standards development organizations is an important part of Accessibility Standards Canada's work.
- When it comes to co-branding standards, Accessibility Standards Canada has partnered with the CSA Group to develop standards in:
 - accessible design for the built environment;
 - accessible housing; and
 - accessible design of interactive devices and electronic payment terminals.

- We carefully consider standards developed by other standards development organizations from Canada and around the world. We want to avoid duplication.
- We also look for persons with lived experience when composing our technical committees. Canadians can provide input on our standards when we post them online for comments

28. What methods is Accessibility Standards Canada exploring or actively pursuing in regards to outreach to Canadian Universities and Colleges to engage with Canadian youth?

- Engagement with young Canadians is very important. We benefit from getting points of view from different and diverse audiences.
- Accessibility Standards Canada is developing a strategy to engage youth, and in particular youth with disabilities.
- This will include a youth event this fall. We will have more information to share in the coming months, so be sure to watch our social media platforms.

Grants and funding

29. What is Accessibility Standards Canada's grant and contribution program?

- Accessibility Standards Canada's grant and contribution program "Advancing Accessibility Standards Research" supports research projects that generate data to develop accessibility standards.
- For more information, including when calls for proposals are open, visit our website [Accessibility Standards Canada](#).