



# Accessibility Standards Canada

# Accessibility Plan

December 31, 2022



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Accessibility Standards Canada aims to meet the highest standard of accessibility. Our goal is to give every Canadian, regardless of technology or ability, equal access to our reports.

This report is also available [online](#). To request this document in another format, please [contact us online](#), or call 1 833-854-7628. Large print, braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD and DAISY are available on demand.

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## Message from the Chief Executive Officer

“Our goal is to develop accessibility standards. But we can't fix things unless we know they're broken. And the only people that can tell us that they're broken, is you. The lived experience of people of all abilities is the most critical thing we can possibly have.”

– *Brad McCannell, Member of Accessibility Standards Canada's Board of Directors*

We are proud to share Accessibility Standards Canada's Accessibility Plan. Accessibility Standards Canada is a one of a kind organization. The organization was created through the passage of the *Accessible Canada Act* (the Act) in 2019. Our mandate is to contribute to a Canada without barriers by 2040. We do this through:

- developing and reviewing accessibility standards for organizations under federal jurisdiction;
- supporting research on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers; and
- sharing best practices about the removal of barriers.

While we are a small organization with just over 50 employees, people with disabilities lead Accessibility Standards Canada at all levels:

- our Board of Directors is majority-led by people with disabilities;
- people with disabilities make up approximately a quarter of our workforce;
- people with disabilities comprise 50% of technical committee members; and
- people from diverse disability communities provide feedback on our draft standards.

This sort of representation of people with lived experience is well above the labour market availability and a great source of pride for us. We truly embody the principle of 'nothing without us'.

For all aspects of our work, we put the principle into practice. This plan was no different. We brought together key players in our organization to create the plan: employees, technical committee members, and Board members.

As a fairly new and growing organization, we strive to build a strong, diverse, and talented workforce. We want to embed accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion into all aspects of our work.

For instance, our new permanent office space in Gatineau exemplifies ‘accessibility by design’. It has been built to be accessible for people with a wide range of disabilities. It embodies the Act’s principle that all persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.

Accessibility Standards Canada’s first Accessibility Plan will guide us as we continue addressing barriers in the priority areas under the Act. This first iteration of our plan is one of the many ways we implement our [vision, mission, and values](#).

We are committed to combatting accessibility barriers to achieve a truly accessible Canada. We are listening to what people with disabilities in our organization are saying and taking action.

## General

### **Alternate formats**

Large print, print, braille, MP3 (audio), e-text, and DAISY formats are available on demand.

To request alternate formats of this plan:

1. Call us at 1-833-854-7628; or
2. [Email us](#).

### **Feedback process description**

#### Feedback from the public

Accessibility Standards Canada aims to meet the highest standard of accessibility. Your feedback is important and necessary. We value the lived experience of people with disabilities. If you have questions or suggestions about our Accessibility Plan, or any issue related to accessibility on any of our platforms, send us your feedback by [use our online form](#).

## **Designated person to receive feedback**

The Human Resources manager is responsible for receiving feedback from the public on the Accessibility Plan or any issue related to accessibility.

## **Feedback you can submit**

You can submit feedback about the Accessibility Plan or any other barriers you encounter when dealing with Accessibility Standards Canada. We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of our:

- services
- office
- website
- support to technical committee members and the Board of Directors

## **How we will use your feedback**

Your feedback will be used to:

- advance the objectives in our plan; and
- improve our overall accessibility.

All feedback will be taken seriously. Your feedback will be included in our progress reports, published in the years between our updated accessibility plans.

## **Confidentiality**

If you wish to remain anonymous, you do not have to include your name when submitting your feedback. We will share your feedback only with those employees directly involved in improving accessibility at Accessibility Standards Canada.

## **How to submit feedback**

To submit your feedback about the Accessibility Plan or any other barriers you encounter when dealing with Accessibility Standards Canada, please use one of the methods below.

We will acknowledge all accessibility feedback we receive within 48 hours, except for feedback shared anonymously.

## **Online**

- [Submit your feedback using our online form.](#)

## Email

- [Send us an email.](#)

## Telephone

- 1-833-854-7628

## Mail

Accessibility Standards Canada  
320, St-Joseph Boulevard  
Suite 246  
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3

Feedback from employees of Accessibility Standards Canada

### **Designated person to receive feedback**

The Human Resources manager is responsible for receiving feedback from employees of Accessibility Standards Canada.

### **What feedback can you submit?**

Employees can submit their feedback on this Accessibility Plan or any issue related to accessibility at Accessibility Standards Canada.

### **How to submit feedback**

There are various ways you can submit your feedback. If you want to submit anonymous feedback, please [use our online form](#) and leave the contact information section blank.

[Please click here to find out more about our feedback process.](#)

## **Executive Summary**

The *Accessible Canada Act* (the Act) came into effect on July 11, 2019. Its goal is to build a Canada without barriers by January 1, 2040. It will do this by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility.

The Act requires Accessibility Standards Canada to prepare and publish an Accessibility Plan every 3 years. People with disabilities must be included in the process. We also need to set up a feedback process. The purpose is to receive and address feedback on our plans and accessibility barriers. These plans must show how we will identify, remove and prevent barriers

to accessibility for our employees and stakeholders. We will publish progress reports in the years between our plans. These must describe the actions we have taken to remove barriers using the feedback we receive from employees and stakeholders.

Our vision at Accessibility Standards Canada is that everyone, including people with disabilities, can expect a Canada without barriers and be sure that opportunities and services are fully accessible. This includes our Board members, employees, technical committee members and stakeholders. We want everyone to be able to contribute to the organization's important work.

This is our first Accessibility Plan. In keeping with our values, we consulted with employees and stakeholders to develop the plan. We sought feedback on the priority areas found in the Act to identify barriers. You can see the findings from these interviews and consultations summarized in the section on the priority areas under the Act. We identified 7 desired objectives; one for each priority area:

- To enhance recruitment, retention, training, advancement, job satisfaction and support of employees with disabilities.
- To offer the highest level of accommodation for employees and guests with disabilities, including the Board of Directors and technical committee members, to use the facility based on available technology and standards.
- Employees and stakeholders can use Information and communication technologies (ICT) to engage in their work.
- Employees and stakeholders have the knowledge they need to do their work.
- To embed accessibility into our procurement philosophy.
- Canadians are able to access and experience our programs.
- Employees and guests, including technical committee and Board members can access our premises autonomously.

We are confident that the actions we have laid out in the plan will help us achieve these objectives by 2025. All actions are intended to be taken in the short term (within one year). We know barriers experienced by people with disabilities persist. We aim to practice what we preach and make our workplace barrier free.



## Accessibility Statement

“We will only achieve the highest level of accessibility by including persons with lived experience in the standards development process in keeping with “nothing without us.”

– *Paul-Claude Bérubé, Chairperson of the Board of Directors*

Accessibility Standards Canada commits to work with employees, committee members and all stakeholders. “Committee members” include technical committees, advisory committees, task groups, working groups and any other organizational committees.

We commit to excellence in accessibility, through:

- Ensuring that people with disabilities can access and experience any of our activities.
- Ensuring that everyone is treated respectfully. Diversity is welcomed.

We believe in full inclusion. We will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. These barriers stop people from:

- sharing their expertise
- participating
- being independent
- being involved

We are a leader in accessibility standards. We show what it means to be barrier-free and inclusive. We will have barrier-free and inclusive:

- work areas
- meetings and activities
- communication
- information
- resources
- human resource policies

## Consultations

“It was with a tremendous sense of duty that I contributed to this Accessibility Plan. With lived-experience as a legally blind individual,

working with a team experiencing a variety of accessibility challenges, we dug deep together in our consultation efforts to identify current barriers. We experienced great satisfaction in developing a forward-looking Accessibility Plan that will help ensure persons with disabilities are fully respected and wholly included in our workplace for years to come.”

– *Stuart, Member of the Accessibility Plan Working Group*

Accessibility Standards Canada’s mandate is to contribute to a barrier-free Canada by 2040. Accessibility is what we are about. Employees with disabilities formed a working group to develop our first Accessibility Plan. They consulted colleagues, technical committee members and our Board of Directors to gather feedback on accessibility issues. The plan is based on this feedback. (See [Appendix A](#) for details on the consultations).

As required by the *Accessible Canada Act*, we will publish a progress report every year that shows how we have moved forward on our commitments in the plan. We will update our plan **every three years**. We will also measure the overall progress of our plan and how it influences the culture and experiences of our organization.

## Priority areas under the Accessible Canada Act:

### Employment

“Leave behind rigid notions that employees are most productive when in the office during designated hours. Employees with disabilities bring fantastic perspectives and expertise to the workplace but often require flexible working arrangements. As a person living with a disability, it can be challenging to succeed in environments that do not embrace flexibility. At Accessibility Standards Canada, I want us to learn that not everyone thrives during the same hours of the day or in the same work environments as others. If we understand this, I believe we will have healthier and happier employees who feel more included in the workplace.”

– *Erica, Policy Analyst*

We are committed to providing our employees with a barrier-free experience so that everyone has what they need to do their best work. We

recently developed “Accessibility Standards Canada Code of Values and Ethics” to show our commitment to promoting inclusion in the work place.

### Objective

- To enhance recruitment, retention, training, advancement, job satisfaction and support of employees with disabilities.

### Barrier 1

- Inflexible and often inaccessible application and hiring procedures within Government.

### Actions

- Applicants can submit documents to us in their preferred format.
- We will provide the name and position of the person to contact for more information about the job poster.
- We will provide accommodations throughout the application and hiring process.

### Barrier 2

- Not reaching out to potential candidates with disabilities.

### Action

- Our human resources department will fine tune the recruitment strategy to broaden our talent pool to include more people with disabilities.

### Barrier 3

- Using outdated or inappropriate language when speaking about people with disabilities.

### Action

- We will continue to educate employees, especially those who are new to the organization, about disability awareness and appropriate terminology.
- We will make inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility allyship (IDEA) as an organization-wide competency.

### Barrier 4

- Transitioning from education to employment for youth with disabilities comes with many challenges.

## **Action**

- Add accessible employment for youth with disabilities transitioning from school to work as a priority area for our research funding program.

## **The Built Environment**

“Accessibility Standards Canada has raised the bar for accessible workplaces. The design of new space has taken into account so many features that enhance the space's accessibility to employees with disabilities. Features such as wider corridors and door openings, sound and lighting controls that accommodate individual preferences, among others. I'm proud of our new offices and look forward to working with my colleagues in this space.”

– *Collinda, Manager of Accessibility and Education*

Our new office is a model for accessibility in the workplace. We are located at 320 St. Joseph Blvd, Gatineau, Quebec.

## **Objective**

- To offer the highest level of accommodation for employees and guests, including the Board of Directors and technical committee members, with disabilities to use the facility based on available technology and standards.

## **Barrier**

- Certain elements of the office may not yet be fully accessible to everyone, whether that be employees or guests.

## **Actions**

- We will implement recommendations from employees taking part in the pilot return to the office project.
- We will feature our facility to other government departments and agencies to encourage a higher level of accessibility in future fit ups or new builds.

## **Information and Communication Technologies**

“I appreciate the “by design” approach and adaptability that Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) demonstrates for accessible documents and platforms. Provides me the alternate representation

tool to actively review material, immediately contribute and relevantly engage with others. The access I need for my screen reading technology is key. ASC team members are always working to ensure access needs are met before the meeting starts.”

– *Carrie Anton, Chair of a Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility*

Information and communication technologies (ICT) covers all the hardware and software we use which allows our staff and stakeholders to share or do their work.

For example:

- our website
- our web applications, like Outlook
- documents we use like PDF and MS Word files, and presentations like PowerPoint
- staff mobile phones and tablets
- virtual meeting platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams

**Objective**

- Employees and stakeholders can use ICT to engage in their work.

**Barrier 1**

- Lack of knowledge or experience in the latest accessibility technology, which is always evolving.

**Action**

- We will provide training opportunities on accessible ICT.

**Barrier 2**

- Procurement of software that is sometimes incompatible with the needs of people with disabilities.

**Actions**

- We will coordinate software procurement in consultation with the intended user.
- We will include an accessibility assessment of ICT set up in the onboarding process.

## **Communication, other than ICT**

“I think the plan is the first step towards an accessible public service. I am looking forward to more opportunities to be consulted about anything that is related to the accessibility of our workplace. It is important for people with lived experience to have a voice and to be part of changes that can benefit as many employees as possible.”

– *Accessibility Standards Canada Junior Communications Officer*

We use a number of communication supports and accessible formats to provide our staff and stakeholders with information. This information includes:

- Documents
- Announcements
- Memos and forms
- Presentations and videos
- Handouts or discussions at meetings
- Policies and guidelines

### **Objective**

- Employees and stakeholders have the knowledge they need to do their work.

### **Barrier**

- Employees and stakeholders sometimes experience inaccessible information and cannot complete their work.

### **Actions**

- The communications team will stay informed about new communications tools that could help us provide accessible information to employees.
- We will consult staff and stakeholders on which format(s) and support(s) would meet their needs.
- We will continue to provide employee training on plain language and making documents accessible.

## **Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

Our procurement activities relate to the purchase of services and products. They extend to Board and technical committee members, and the public accessing our programs and services.

### **Objective**

- To embed accessibility into our procurement philosophy.

### **Barrier**

- Accessibility is not always considered during the procurement process due to lack of knowledge and understanding.

### **Actions**

- We will equip employees involved in the procurement of accessible products and services with knowledge to understand the needs of people with disabilities.
- We will seek services from providers who have values in line with ours whenever possible.
- We will conduct an accessibility assessment of equipment and products purchased for employees. We will replace items that are not accessible if possible.
- We will include information on the *Accessible Canada Act*, disability, accessibility and human rights in our on-boarding training.

## **Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

“As a Public Servant at Canada Border Services Agency and member of the Emergency Egress Committee, and a person with a disability, I wish to thank Accessibility Standards Canada for accommodating my visual disability needs by providing documents and all material in large print on large paper in order for me to contribute to the team.”

– *Giuliana, member of the Technical Committee for Emergency Egress*

We will achieve our mandate to contribute to a barrier-free Canada by 2040, in part, by the accessible delivery of our programs and services. This includes the design and delivery of our standards development and grants and contributions programs.

We developed policies to take make sure accessibility is at the core of the delivery and design of our programs. Our “Accessibility Policy and Guidelines” lays out a framework committing to excellence in accessibility. It supports our employees, technical committee members, members of our Board, and stakeholders so that they can access and experience any of our activities.

Accessibility Standards Canada strives to meet the needs of our Board of Directors and technical committee members.

Examples of accessible practices to support the Board of Directors:

- An employee discusses the individual member’s needs for travel and accommodation before making the arrangements.
- Documents for meetings are provided in plain language, as needed.
- Board documents are verified for accessible formatting.
- American Sign Language or Langue des signes québécoise is provided, as needed.
- Venues are chosen based on accessibility requirements.

Examples of accessible practices to support technical committees:

- Documents provided in PDF format are remediated for accessibility.
- During virtual meetings, material shared on the screen is announced.

## Objective

Canadians are able to access and experience our programs.

## Barrier

- Shared information is not always provided in formats that meet the needs of all users.

## Actions

- We will include accessibility requirements for accommodations in the Standards Development Operating Procedures (SDOR) used by employees to support our Board of Directors and technical committees.
- We will provide guidance materials in plain language.
- We will publish standards in accessible formats.



- We will conduct future surveys with employees, technical committee members and the Board of Directors. Through the survey results, we will see how we can improve accessibility in the design and delivery of our programs and services.

## **Transport**

### Objective

- Employees and guests can access our premises autonomously.

### Barrier 1

- Employees and guests are unable to locate the office in the shopping mall.

### Action

- We will provide clear instructions and have an employee meet guests at the main entrance and guide them to the office entrance.

### Barrier 2

- Insufficient parking or lack of accessible parking spaces nearby.

### Action

- There is a commercial parking lot next to the office. We will ask management to add additional accessible parking spaces requiring a tag.

## **Conclusion**

“We are committed to listening to our employees, technical committee members and Board of Directors to continuously adapt to make Accessibility Standards Canada the most accessible department in government, and a place where people interacting with us can feel supported and welcome.”

– *Philip Rizcallah, Chief Executive Officer*

While accessibility may be our reason for being, it does not mean there is no room for improvement in our policies and practices. At the time of drafting this first Accessibility Plan, Accessibility Standards Canada is heading into its fourth year of existence. We have learned many lessons along the way so far. From the first meeting of our Board of Directors,

where we learned the importance of making sure the height of the table would be comfortable for someone using a wheelchair, to finding new ways to include our technical committee experts regardless of their type of disability, we are committed to improvement.

Accessibility Standards Canada is grateful to the employees, Board members and technical committee members who took the time to respond to the survey. While this first Accessibility Plan tries to summarize the overarching barriers that were flagged, no comments were ignored. We also learn so much as we meet with diverse disability stakeholder groups and portfolio partners in the course of our work. We look forward to receiving feedback on additional measures we can take. Thank you all for helping us grow. Together, we can lead the way to an accessible Canada.

## Appendix A

### **Accessibility Plan Working Group**

Accessibility Standards Canada established the Accessibility Plan Working Group in 2021 to prepare our first Accessibility Plan. We wanted to inform the plan through consulting with persons with disabilities involved with the organization.

Five members of staff made up the working group and each member had lived experience with a disability. They met regularly to guide and prepare the plan for publishing.

### **Consultations**

The working group consulted stakeholders by way of a targeted online survey to inform the plan. They identified three sets of stakeholders who identified as having disabilities. They were:

- employees
- technical committee members
- Board of Director members

A consultant interviewed Managers and Directors about the organization's accessibility policies and practices. They shared information on barriers at work and put forward possible solutions. They also provided recommendations on how the organization could improve its accessibility.

We used information from the consultations and interviews to inform this Accessibility Plan.