


From Words to Action: Moving Together Toward a Barrier-Free Canada





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Message from the Chairperson



If I were to sum up the last year and all that was accomplished by Accessibility Standards Canada, I would say this: 2022 to 2023 was the year we moved from words to action.

We reached significant milestones. We advanced priorities. We delivered results. We established our organization in the accessibility and standards development world.

These achievements demonstrate our deep commitment to delivering on [our mandate](#).

Accessibility Standards Canada was created to help build a Canada without barriers by January 1, 2040. Each day, we aspire to make that happen.

Guided by the [Roadmap to 2040](#) and its underlying principles, we have kept our focus on 3 things:

- supporting accessibility-related research,
- developing accessibility standards according to our priorities, and
- building lasting relationships with people and organizations.

This year, we helped grow a rich inventory of important research. Through our funding, people and organizations across Canada are moving accessibility standards research forward. In turn, this work:

- informs the development of our own standards,
- generates a lot of interest in our work and our goals, and
- helps us advance key priorities.

We have made tangible progress in developing new, rigorous, and equity-based standards. We conducted the first public review for one of our accessibility standards: A Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the *Accessible Canada Act*. This standard will be published this year. More public reviews of draft standards will be launched in 2023 to 2024. I want to thank the leadership of our Chief Executive Officer and the employees who supported the exceptional work of our technical committees. These milestones are moving us toward achieving Canada's vision of a more inclusive and barrier-free society.

Our organization has positioned itself as a leader and an ally on accessibility-related issues. We have worked hard to greatly expand our networks. We formed new partnerships and strengthened existing ones. These relationships are with:

- federal government organizations,
- other levels of government,
- diverse disability communities, and
- the industry.

We did this because we need to work together with all our stakeholders. This will really help us create a culture shift around accessibility and inclusion.

In keeping with this leadership role, we held our second annual public meeting. Close to 350 participants joined us online, giving us the chance to hear and learn from Canadians. We also had the pleasure of welcoming Canada's Chief Accessibility Officer and Accessibility Commissioner as panellists. We learned a great deal from that engaging conversation. The meeting also gave participants an opportunity to meet our Board of Directors.

We continued to work with and learn from people with disabilities and diverse disability communities. This informed every aspect of our efforts and drove everything that we did.

I sincerely thank the members of our Board for their commitment, their passion, and their contribution. I feel privileged to serve with such a committed and passionate group. Integrity, transparency, respect, and inclusivity are the words that come to mind when I think about our Board.

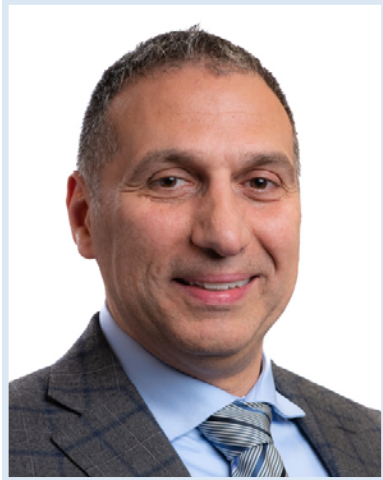
The work of the Board's internal and external affairs committees also helped guide the organization toward achieving its objectives and mandate. Both committees took our values and mission to heart and kept them at the forefront of their work.

Our mandate, vision, and employees are playing a key role in building the foundation for a Canada without barriers. Our work on achieving that goal is well underway. Our actions already speak volumes, and much more is to come.



Paul-Claude Bérubé,
Chairperson

Message from the Chief Executive Officer



As the theme of this year's report suggests, moving from words to action means taking steps that have a real impact. It means doing what we have set out to do: create standards that remove barriers for all Canadians. Over the last year, we made concrete progress toward that goal.

To create the best standards, we rely on the best technical committees. Our current committees continued their work on eight standards. This work is done with input from the disability community, industry, and other partners.

In March 2023, we opened an application process to set up three new committees for standards on:

- [Acoustics in the Built Environment](#)
- [Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services](#)
- [Accessible Travel Journey](#)

Diversity and inclusion are at the core of what we do and how we do it. Our technical committees are diverse. People with disabilities make up 58% of their membership. This level of representation is the best in Canada—if not the world.

We ended 2022 on a high note by sharing our first draft of [A Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the Accessible Canada Act](#) for public review. The review generated hundreds of comments from across Canada. This standard is about equity first. It goes beyond minimum technical requirements. It is an innovative standard, and it sets the standard for how we do things.

Another pillar of our mandate is to fund and support research. This fiscal year, our grants and contributions program, Advancing Accessibility Standards Research, funded eleven research projects. These projects are helping to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. Funded projects must include partnerships with disability organizations and involve people with disabilities.

Building relationships is key to our work and to fostering change. This year, we signed five memoranda of understanding with three provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan. These will help ensure that accessibility standards reflect the needs of people with disabilities—regardless of jurisdiction. This will lead to better results for all Canadians.

In the fall of 2022, we held the first Pan-Canadian Forum on Accessibility Standards. We co-hosted this event with the Government of British Columbia. Senior officials from all provinces and territories joined us to discuss common priorities and goals for accessibility standards. It led to fruitful discussions and a better understanding of the standards landscape across the country.

We also strengthened our collaboration with the Chief Accessibility Officer and the Accessibility Commissioner. We were honoured to chair a discussion panel with both during our 2022 annual public meeting. Within our respective mandates under the *Accessible Canada Act*, we are committed to continue working together toward the realization of a Canada without barriers. We took concrete steps toward that goal.

We sought partnerships with other standards development organizations, such as CSA Group. We co-developed three standards with that organization:

- Accessible Design for the Built Environment
- Accessible Dwellings
- Accessible Design for Self-Service Interactive Devices Including Automated Banking Machines

These standards have been published and are now available for free for all Canadians.

Staying true to our word and values, we published our first Accessibility Plan. This plan was a collective effort. It could not have been done without the contributions of our:

- employees,
- members of the Board, and
- our technical committees.

This plan will guide us as we continue addressing barriers in the priority areas set out in the *Accessible Canada Act*.

I want to thank the members of the Board for their dedication and support in helping Accessibility Standards Canada advance on its objectives and important mandate.

Our actions are paving the way and moving us closer to a more inclusive and barrier-free Canada. Certainly, in reading this report, Canadians should understand that none of this is possible without the participation, expertise, and knowledge of people with disabilities. Every advancement and success reflect their invaluable contributions.



Philip Rizcallah,
Chief Executive Officer

1. About us

Vision

- Everyone, including people with disabilities, can expect a Canada without barriers, and
- be sure that opportunities and services are fully accessible.

Mission

People with disabilities lead Accessibility Standards Canada to create a Canada without barriers. We work with people with disabilities to:

- create modern accessibility standards in priority areas,
- revise current accessibility standards,
- lead research, and
- support society to reach the highest level of accessibility.

Values

Our values are based on the principles stated in the *Accessible Canada Act*. We value:

- The knowledge and experience of people with disabilities. We expect those we collaborate with to show this same value.
- The diversity of society. Our work respects human rights and focuses on including everyone.
- A Canada without barriers where people with disabilities can expect the same high level of access across the country.
- Universal access where services, products, and places are designed to be accessible to everyone.
- Two-way communication in all areas of our work. Communication must be open, accessible, timely, and clear.
- Lived experience of disability and research as equally important when making decisions.

2. Board activities

The [Board of Directors](#) continues to guide the priorities for the new technical committees being created to develop the next round of standards. The Board also provides strategic advice for the Chief Executive Officer and staff based on lived experience. In addition to the regular Board meetings, the Directors serving on the Board's standing committees met often throughout the year to advance the mandate of the organization.

2.1 Key accomplishments

During the 2022 to 2023 fiscal year, the Board set the research priorities for 2024 to 2025. It also refined existing policies and protocols and developed new ones. This was done to improve planning and Board efficiencies. The Board adopted a director-focused engagement plan. This plan seeks to extend the organization's reach to key stakeholders. Part of this reach included our second annual public meeting. This successful event was held in September 2022 and more than 350 people attended.

The Board also adopted the new Strategic Plan of the organization for 2023 to 2026. The plan aligns with the organization's mandate, priorities, and Roadmap to 2040. It also identifies the following 4 strategic pillars:

- Create and evaluate equity-based accessibility standards
- Enhance engagement of stakeholders
- Enable organizational sustainability
- Strengthen diversity and inclusion

The Board also continued to guide the technical committees. This included:

- approving the terms of reference for five new committees, which will be established in 2023 to 2024, and
- revising the general terms of reference for the existing technical committees.

Each standard under development represents the work of a technical committee. More details on committees can be found in section [3.1, Developing Accessibility Standards](#).

One of the highlights of the year was overseeing the first public review of a draft standard, Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the *Accessible Canada Act*.

2.2 Committee reports

Members of the Board also contribute through the work of two standing committees: the Internal Affairs Committee and the External Affairs Committee. The committees advise the Board and make recommendations specific to their mandates.

Internal Affairs Committee

This committee is responsible for internal matters. This includes governance, strategic planning, performance evaluation, and other tasks. During the last fiscal year, the committee led the development of a new three-year strategic plan. It also reviewed and revised the internal policies and protocols that govern Board activities. In addition, the committee discussed the definition and usage of key terms like intersectionality. This was done to improve consistency in understanding. The committee's objectives include:

- expanding Indigenous awareness,
- improving Board effectiveness and intersectional decision-making.

The committee has begun planning Board training activities for 2023 to 2024 aimed at supporting those goals.

External Affairs Committee

This committee is responsible for external matters, including the annual public meeting and consultations. It also guides external communications and stakeholder engagement.

One of the committee's goals is to raise awareness about our organization and what we do and inform stakeholders on how to become involved in our work. To support this, the committee developed a stakeholder engagement plan.

In addition, it developed a policy on managing requests from those who want to meet with or present to the Board. The committee also guided the planning for both the 2022 annual public meeting, held in September, and the meeting taking place in May 2023. The committee presented to the Government of Canada's Community of Practice on Accessible Communications and was well received.

3. Helping to achieve a barrier-free Canada: Our Mandate

Our primary mandate is to develop or revise accessibility standards. The key to achieving this is supporting and funding research that informs our standards. We also measure the impact of our research and educate the public about our standards and the work we do. Last year, we made significant progress in delivering on these aspects of our mandate.

3.1 Developing accessibility standards

The standards we create will set out how the following bodies can prevent, identify, and remove barriers to accessibility:

- federally regulated organizations in the private sector, and
- Government of Canada departments and agencies.

Technical committees

The drafting of standards is driven by our technical committees. These committees consist of people from different backgrounds and organizations. They combine their expertise and lived experience to identify accessibility barriers and develop national standards to eliminate these barriers.

Standards developed

This year, we made significant achievements including the launch of our first public review of [A Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the Accessible Canada Act](#). With this standard, we set the stage for the new series of public reviews of standards that will launch in 2023 to 2024.

In addition, we published three new accessibility standards in 2022 to 2023. These were created in collaboration with the Canadian Standards Association Group. They represent another step toward contributing to a more inclusive and barrier-free Canada. Table 1 below lists the standards we have developed and published so far. Table 2 lists the standards under development.

Table 1: Published standards

Name of technical standard	Standard identifier	Publication date
<u>Accessible Design for Self-Service Interactive Devices Including Automated Banking Machines</u>	CSA/ASC B651.2	December 2022
<u>Accessible Design for the Built Environment</u>	CSA/ASC B651	January 2023
<u>Accessible Dwellings</u>	CSA/ASC B652	January 2023

Table 2: Standards under development

Name of technical standard	Expected public review date	Expected publication date
<u>Outdoor Spaces</u>	Spring 2023	Spring 2024
<u>Plain Language</u>	Spring 2023	Winter 2024
<u>Employment</u>	Spring 2023	Summer 2024
<u>Information and Communication Technology</u>	Summer 2023	Winter 2024
<u>Emergency Measures</u>	Spring 2024	Spring 2025
<u>Emergency Egress (exit)</u>	Spring 2024	Summer 2025
<u>Wayfinding and Signage</u>	Fall 2024	Winter 2026
<u>A Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the Accessible Canada Act</u>	Spring 2025	Spring 2026

Our work to support our current technical committees and create new ones continues as we develop new standards to eliminate barriers to accessibility.

3.2 Funding research

An important part of our mandate is to support research. This is done through our grants and contributions program, [Advancing Accessibility Standards Research](#). The program funds research aimed at identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility. The findings from this research are made publicly available. In addition, we use this research to support the work we do, such as informing the development of accessibility standards.

Based on input from the public and stakeholders, the Board of Directors established the research priority areas for the 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 fiscal years.

We funded eleven new research projects that launched in 2022 to 2023. The total funding amount is reflected in the grants and contributions tables in section [7.1, Financial Results](#).

One of our key accomplishments was streamlining the research funding application process. This process was put in place for projects that will start in 2023 to 2024. The process has two steps. The first is an invitation to express interest. The second is a call for research proposals. This new process reduced the burden on applicants. It has also made the administrative work more efficient.



3.3 Supporting research and assessing the impact

In April 2022, we established a new Research and Impact team. This team's strategic work supports the Standards Development and the Grants and Contributions teams. It also maintains our accreditation with the Standards Council of Canada as a Standards Development Organization.

In 2022 to 2023, the Research and Impact team primarily focused on developing a prototype and content for our new virtual [Centre of Expertise](#). The Centre of Expertise is a centralized information hub on standards and research.

To support the standards development process, the team also did the following:

- It initiated eleven research projects. These projects have the potential to provide seed documents for future technical committees.
- It helped identify the grants and contributions research priorities for the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year.
- It undertook preparatory work for standards development. This work focused on the following areas:
 - Accessible tourism
 - Accessible design and delivery of programs and services
 - Accessible travel journey
 - Acoustics in the built environment
 - Accessible and equitable artificial intelligence systems

4. Building and reinforcing partnerships

Accessibility Standards Canada is working toward achieving its objective to eliminate accessibility barriers by 2040. One way it does this is by collaborating with other organizations. Last year, we strengthened relationships with key stakeholders and developed new strategic partnerships.

4.1 Working with the provinces and territories

We continued to engage with our provincial and territorial counterparts. We did this to promote the adoption of the national standards our technical committees are developing.

We held initial consultative meetings with each province and territory. These have turned into concrete actions focused on aligning accessibility standards across Canada. We also shared information on best practices and worked to avoid duplication wherever possible. This collaboration promotes a consistent, harmonized, and high level of accessibility across Canada.

Between April and October 2022, we signed five memoranda of understanding with three provinces. These agreements were signed with the following provincial government bodies:

- [Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility \(April 28\)](#)
- [British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction \(May 11\)](#)
- [British Columbia Ministry of Attorney General and Responsible for Housing \(June 23\)](#)
- [Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services \(August 11\)](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing \(October 19\)](#)

These agreements support and enhance the ability of all parties to collaborate and coordinate efforts within their respective jurisdictions to remove barriers.



In October 2022, Accessibility Standards Canada and British Columbia's Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction co-hosted the first Pan-Canadian Forum on Accessibility Standards. The Forum brought together senior officials from every province and territory. The event provided an opportunity to come together from across Canada to discuss priorities for accessibility standards and work toward common goals.

The successful outcomes included the following:

- We identified shared priorities and areas of collaboration and alignment.
- We formed two task groups representing all provinces and territories. Both groups held productive first meetings in March 2023. One group is developing a guide for accessibility in northern, rural, and remote communities. The other group is working on a guide for adaptive housing and associated costing.

4.2 Engaging with stakeholders

We continued to implement our stakeholder engagement strategy. This involves creating lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with other organizations. This will help us achieve our mandate.

We attended various engagement activities. This included international events and conferences with stakeholders. We had opportunities to raise awareness about our work and the progress made. We also encouraged the public to get involved. We asked Canadians to engage with our organization on:

- issues of accessibility and inclusion,
- the development of standards, and
- to apply for research grants.

We collaborated closely with various federal partners to help coordinate the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act*. These partners either have mandates under the Act or are working on accessibility-related issues. They include:

- the Chief Accessibility Officer,
- the Office of Public Service Accessibility,
- the Canadian Transportation Agency,
- Public Services and Procurement Canada,
- the Accessibility Commissioner at the Canadian Human Rights Commission,
- the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and
- Employment and Social Development Canada.

5. Engaging with the public

We value the knowledge and experience of people with disabilities. We value the expertise of Canadians. We therefore engage the public in our work. Throughout the year and in various ways, we consulted and worked closely with different groups. This includes:

- people with disabilities and representative organizations,
- Indigenous people, organizations, and governments,
- provincial, territorial, and municipal governments,
- technical experts, and
- industry players.

5.1 Annual Public Meeting

We held our [annual public meeting in September 2022](#). Close to 350 participants joined us online. We took this opportunity to share and celebrate the progress we have made. We provided an update on our work and an overview of our plans. We were delighted to have the Chief Accessibility Officer, Stephanie Cadieux, and the Accessibility Commissioner, Michael Gottheil, join our meeting. They participated in a discussion panel with our Chief Executive Officer.



5.2 Outward-facing communications

In our communication efforts, we work to lead by example in terms of ensuring accessibility.

This year, we:

- redesigned our website to improve the user experience and its accessibility,
- added accessible communication formats,
- rebranded and developed a new branding guide, and
- continued to connect with the public and our stakeholders through our newsletter. We kept the public and our stakeholders informed of our work and about the many ways to engage with us.

We expanded our social media reach through focused campaigns and messaging. We continued to give Canadians an opportunity to get involved.

6. Advancing corporate priorities to deliver on our mandate

Delivering our mandate is only possible by having the right people in place. We also need to support them with efficient services and processes.

This year was marked by organizational growth and change. This increased demands on our employees, both operationally and administratively. We have therefore put new and innovative strategies in place. We have also developed solid processes and improved on the delivery of essential support services.

6.1 Creating a purpose-driven, diverse, and inclusive workforce

We took clear action to build a skilled and diverse workforce while fostering an inclusive work culture. For example, we implemented a strategy to attract and retain the highest calibre and quality of staff.

We also collaborated with Employment and Social Development Canada's Indigenous Recruitment team. This helps our organization attract and retain Indigenous talent.

We continue to participate in interdepartmental networks and working groups that focus on hiring people with disabilities. For example, we worked closely with the federal Interdepartmental Human Resources Advisory Committee on people with disabilities. We also worked with the Employment Accessibility Resource Network, which works to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

We promoted the Virtual Door to Talent with Disabilities. This is the Public Service Commission of Canada's inventory of graduates with disabilities. We also promoted MentorAbility. This national program matches jobseekers with a disability with a mentor to explore career opportunities. This was done through our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) working group, with support from other organizations.

6.2 Setting the stage for workplace reintegration

In August 2022, we welcomed employees back to a fully accessible office. Our new workplace follows universal design principles. These allow for and accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

We successfully implemented our workplace reintegration plan. This included a four-month pilot project to support a smooth transition to a hybrid work model and to our new office space.

The pilot project was an opportunity to import the best of what we were already doing before the pandemic, while leveraging the best emerging workplace models. Our approach helped us to:

- evaluate the hybrid model in our new offices,
- learn how to adapt the work of each team to a hybrid context,
- become familiar with the technological aspects of our new offices,
- train managers and staff members on the different features of our new offices,
- continue to identify accommodation needs,
- evaluate our procedures and assess their accessibility,
- gather important lessons learned, and
- analyze the gaps and find solutions.

The pilot project served to work through the challenges. It also enhanced collaboration and helped foster a sustained sense of community.



6.3 Delivering our Accessibility Plan

The *Accessible Canada Act* requires our organization to prepare and publish an [Accessibility Plan](#) every three years. Our first one was published in December.

Diversity and inclusion are at the core of our organization:

- A quarter of our employees, and most of the Board members, are people with disabilities
- Our organization is the first Canadian federal organization majority-led by people with disabilities
- 58% of our technical committee members are people with disabilities

This level of representation of people with lived experience is well above the labour market's representation of people with disabilities. It is a great source of pride for us. We truly embody the disability community's principle of "nothing without us." We put it into practice in all aspects of our work, and this plan was no different.



7. Making sound financial decisions

7.1 Financial results

The following table summarizes the resources available and used during the fiscal year.

Table 3: Accessibility Standards Canada Financial Results 2022 to 2023

In the table below, you will find the following:

- Second column: 2022 to 2023 forecasted expenditures
- Third column: 2022 to 2023 available funds

Salaries	6,298,777	5,808,340
Operating and Maintenance	4,253,918	6,475,217
Total – Operating	10,552,695	12,283,557
Grants and Contributions	8,498,175	8,500,000
Total	19,050,870	20,783,557

8. Looking ahead

Our [mandate](#) is to create standards to remove accessibility barriers. We will continue to strive toward fulfilling that mandate. We will continue to create equity-based and world-class standards. We will invest in and support research that informs our standards.

We will invite Canadians to join our technical committees to share their expertise and insight. We will invite Canadians to review and provide feedback on the standards we develop, so we can learn from their lived experiences and knowledge.

We will expand our networks to ensure that people with disabilities and diverse disability communities across the country are listened to. They are an integral part of developing solutions to address barriers to accessibility. Standards development is not possible without their contribution.

We will continue to build and strengthen relationships with all provinces and territories. We will continue to seek their support and collaboration toward the harmonization of accessibility standards. Canadians deserve a consistent experience of accessibility from coast to coast to coast.

Together, we are breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for all. We are helping to drive real change toward a more inclusive society. With our [Roadmap to 2040](#) and our [Accessibility Plan](#) guiding us, we are moving from words to concrete actions toward a barrier-free Canada.

9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Board members



Paul-Claude Bérubé,
Chairperson



Mary Reid,
Vice-Chairperson



William Adair,
Director



Kory L. Earle,
Director



Maureen Haan,
Director



Penny Hartin,
Director



Dr. Joe McLaughlin,
Director



Brad McCannell,
Director



Laurie Ringaert,
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