



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

2024 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ACCESSIBILITY PLAN



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General

Message from the Speaker

I am proud to present the 2024 Progress Report on the [House of Commons Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#). Prepared in accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act*, this report outlines the progress made since December 2023. The House Administration continued to listen to feedback from people with disabilities and other key stakeholders to improve the Accessibility Plan. Here are some major achievements and important steps taken this year:

- Making significant and ongoing improvements to ensure websites are more accessible;
- Developing training for Members, their staff and House Administration managers to provide them with the necessary tools to support employees with disabilities;
- Making several quick-fix improvements to buildings and adding a new accessible washroom in the Confederation Building;
- Establishing a new directive to help the organization buy more accessible products and services.
- Developing a policy to better support employees with disabilities.
- Working closely with organizations that promote accessibility, such as the Office of the Chief Accessibility Officer of Canada.
- Launching a self-identification survey for House Administration employees, which showed a significant increase in the number of employees identifying as having a disability; and
- Setting up a group for employees with disabilities and supportive coworkers, where they can work together to make the organization more inclusive.

I invite you to read the 2024 Progress Report to learn more. The House Administration is committed to improving accessibility through listening, ongoing updates, and strong partnerships with people with disabilities. House Administration teams are already working on projects for 2025, moving the organization closer to becoming fully accessible and inclusive.

The Honourable Greg Fergus, P.C., M.P.

Contact information and feedback

The Director of Accessibility Implementation is responsible for overseeing accessibility initiatives at the House.

Contact the Accessibility Secretariat regarding questions and feedback about accessibility and the House's Accessibility Plan or to obtain the plan or progress report in a different format.

Accessibility Secretariat
House of Commons
181 Queen Street
P.O. BOX 11
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
accessible@parl.gc.ca
613-995-1111 (Ottawa) or 1-833-725-2686 (toll-free)

Feedback about accessibility at the House can also be submitted anonymously [online](#), and forms in alternate formats can be obtained from the [Accessibility Secretariat](#). The House will review all the feedback it receives and take steps to address any barriers to accessibility that are identified.

Consultations

Consultations continued to be a major focus of the implementation of the House's Accessibility Plan. In keeping with the principle of "nothing without us," which recognizes that persons with disabilities must be equal participants in all areas of life and be involved in all decisions regarding policies, programs, practices, and service delivery, the organization continued to listen to, consider and reflect on what they had to say.

Survey

In the spring and fall of 2024, the House emailed a survey to Members, their staff and House Administration employees. As with surveys that were conducted in previous years, responses were anonymous. Survey respondents were asked to describe barriers that they had encountered or observed; suggest ways of removing those barriers; and prioritize potential solutions. Respondents could self-identify as having a disability or as being close to someone with a disability. They could also provide contact information if they were interested in participating in consultations in the form of workshops. A total of 166 responses were received: 21% of respondents self-identified as having a disability and 15% as being close to someone with a disability.

Workshops

The House held two small-group workshops with employees living with disabilities. The goal was to gather feedback to inform the preparation of various initiatives related to the Accessibility Plan. During the workshops, participants reviewed the 2023 Progress Report and the content of accessibility training for managers. Some participants had mobility, visual or auditory impairments, while others were neurodivergent or close to someone with a disability.

Advocacy groups

The House consulted Stephanie Cadieux, Canada's Chief Accessibility Officer, and her office to improve the implementation of its Accessibility Plan and prioritize the removal of barriers. As part of National AccessAbility Week activities, Ms. Cadieux gave a talk, which Members, their staff and House Administration employees were invited to attend. The House also continued to consult with representatives from Inclusion Canada and Spinal Cord Injury Canada with a special attention to assistive technologies. In addition, in partnership with Public Services and Procurement Canada, the House Administration continued its consultations with a committee made up of representatives from recognized disability advocacy groups. These meetings facilitated discussions on various projects and proposals aimed at supporting the

implementation of the Parliamentary Precinct Universal Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan, with the goal of improving the built environment at the House.

Working group

The Accessibility Working Group was created in January 2022 and is comprised of directors, managers and subject-matter experts from across the House Administration. Co-chaired by two senior executives—the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel and the Chief Administrator—the working group continued the work it started in 2022. The working group is also supported by the Director of Accessibility Implementation, who coordinates the implementation of the Accessibility Plan and all initiatives to improve accessibility at the House. The working group meets once a month to track the plan’s implementation and to discuss the feedback received and any issues that have been identified.

During the same period, the House continued discussions and coordination with representatives from all organizations within the parliamentary precinct to share information and to ensure strategic alignment between Hill partners.

Feedback

The accessibility barriers identified by the 166 respondents to the 2024 survey were analyzed and grouped together according to the areas described in the [Accessible Canada Act](#):

- employment;
- the built environment;
- information and communication technologies (ICTs);
- communication, other than ICTs;
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities;
- the design and delivery of programs and services; and
- transportation.

The areas in which most barriers were identified are employment (46%), the built environment (35%), information and communication technologies (8%) and communication (3%). The barriers mentioned most often were related to the following:

- for the built environment: access to the Parliamentary Precinct, workspaces, doors, and noise levels; and
- for employment: accommodations and attitudes.

More than half of the respondents who self-identified as having a disability or as being close to someone with a disability highlighted one or more positive aspects of the House's work on accessibility.

Between September 2023 and October 2024, the Accessibility Secretariat received 21 enquiries by email (at accessible@parl.gc.ca) (62%), through the [anonymous online form](#) (24%) and at the toll-free number (1-833-725-2686) (14%). Individuals who contacted the Accessibility Secretariat provided feedback on the barriers faced in interactions with the House (48%); requested information on a topic relating to accessibility (29%) or a document in an alternative format (14%); or provided general feedback or suggestions (10%). In terms of the topics addressed, 33% of enquiries were related to information and communication technologies (ICTs); 24% to the built environment; 24% to services provided by the House; 14% to transportation; and 5% to employment.

All follow-up with individuals who provided contact information was done in accordance with the [Feedback Process](#) established by the House, and the relevant House Administration services were tasked with assessing each enquiry and following up where appropriate. The House appreciates that these individuals took the time to contact the Accessibility Secretariat. We will continue to solicit feedback related to accessibility at the House from all interested parties, with

the goal of removing barriers and reviewing the implementation of the Accessibility Plan on an ongoing basis.

Culture change and training: A strong foundation

Training

Mandatory accessibility awareness training for House Administration managers and supervisors was developed and launched in the fall of 2024. It focuses on how to interact with persons with disabilities, assess the accessibility of the work environment and accommodate employees with disabilities. This training is also offered to Members and their staff on a voluntary basis.

Employment

Advice to Members

Members' Human Resources Services (MHRS) has developed tools and resources to provide accessibility advisory services to Members in their role as employers. Tools were prepared to respond accurately and quickly to questions and concerns raised by Members regarding accessibility and accommodation. MHRS has also integrated an accessibility lens into its core processes and products. For instance, enhancements were made to workplace assessments to ensure that accessibility considerations are evaluated, and training for individuals with HR delegation has been adapted to meet accessibility and accommodation requirements.

Accommodation

The House Administration reviewed the *Workplace Accommodation Policy* and related accommodation processes. The new policy, launched in November 2024, provides more effective support to employees with disabilities, including offering formal and informal processes. Training on accommodation measures was developed and launched in tandem with the new policy to better support employees with disabilities and their managers.

Recruitment

- After reviewing its general recruitment and selection practices last year, the House Administration focused efforts this year on the recruitment of pages and students. Inclusive recruitment strategies and initiatives were prioritized, including partnering with key organizations and advocacy groups, attending job fairs to promote the Page Program and Student Employment Program, developing engaging social media content, and refining the recruitment process to minimize barriers. These efforts have led to success, with a significant number of pages and students with disabilities hired in the last year.

- Last year's launch of the new self-identification questionnaire for House Administration employees produced positive results. As of November 2024, 8% of employees had self-identified as having a disability, which represents a significant increase compared to less than 3% in May 2023. This encouraging result is an indication of the effectiveness of recruitment practices and processes implemented within the House Administration. By comparison, in 2023, public service representation for persons with disabilities was 6.9% and the workforce availability estimate stood at 9.2% (see Government of Canada [Employment equity public service representation for persons with disabilities by department or agency with departmental workforce availability estimates](#)).

Built environment

In 2024, the House, in collaboration with Public Services and Procurement Canada and its parliamentary partners, completed, continued and initiated various projects aimed at improving accessibility within the Parliamentary Precinct. Over the course of the year, the House achieved the objectives established in its Accessibility Plan with regard to:

- improving and adding signage;
- improving the operation and visibility of interior doors;
- adding cane-detectable guards;
- adding and improving washrooms;
- adjusting the timing on elevator doors;
- identifying transitions on carpeted floors;
- improving circulation widths in corridors;
- providing furniture that better accommodates universal accessibility; and
- providing accessible service counters.

The objectives set to improve the Queen's Gate entrance and the north entrance doors of the Confederation Building and to add tactile indicators at the top of open stairways have not been achieved yet. They will be carried over to 2025 as priority objectives.

In alignment with the Accessibility Plan, significant progress has been made with regard to the Centre Block Rehabilitation Project. The House, in partnership with Public Services and Procurement Canada, has been refining its approach to universal accessibility on many fronts, such as landscape design, exterior furniture and lighting, and the integration of assistive technology. The House also continues to consult with advisory committees and advocacy groups to further explore tools and best practices and to validate its solutions.

In an effort to continue enhancing the accessibility of the Parliamentary Precinct, new procedures are being established to improve the use of wheelchair-accessible lifts, coatrooms

have been modified to be more accessible, and vision strips have been added to glass doors and partitions to increase visibility. A significant improvement made this year was the addition of a universally accessible washroom in the Confederation Building that includes change tables for babies and adults and adheres to the most stringent accessibility codes, guidelines and best practices.

Members' constituency office leases

The assessment of Members' current constituency office leases in relation to the inclusion of accessibility clauses has been completed. The overall results are positive—more than 90% of all leases include these clauses. It is expected that this figure will increase as leases expire over time and Members are able to negotiate the inclusion of these clauses in their new leases.

Fire prevention and emergency preparedness

The Fire Prevention and Emergency Preparedness team strengthened its standard emergency procedures by developing emergency evacuation plans for persons with disabilities who require assistance when evacuating a building. Selected staff members and security personnel have been trained to assist persons with disabilities when evacuating via an emergency stairwell. Customized plans also include adjustments for people with non-visible disabilities, such as physical, cognitive, learning, sensory and mental health disabilities. These can include anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, pulmonary or heart disease, and respiratory difficulties.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs)

Social media

The House ensures that alt-text is added to photos and that captions or transcripts are available for videos posted on most corporate social media accounts supported by the House Administration (X and Instagram). Work is underway to ensure that all corporate social media channels follow the same standard.

Websites

The House continued its work to ensure that its public and internal websites adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). In 2024, the House adopted the new WCAG 2.2 (level AA) standard and established independent external audits for digital products. External audits revealed significant improvement to digital product accessibility throughout the year. In 2024, the technical team has continued to increase testing and remediation efforts for internal and

external websites. As a result, the most visited sections of the public website reached an average of 85% compliance with accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA), compared to last year's 52%. Investments continue to be made in training and tools for our development teams. This change in organizational culture and approach is supported by the recruitment of employees with lived experience and specialized expertise.

Live captioning

Since January 2024, visitors have access to eight tablets distributed throughout the House galleries. These tablets display live captioning of House proceedings in the galleries and have several customizable settings. Work is currently underway to improve the user experience and provide usage metrics to identify features for future releases.

Assistive technologies

Consultations are underway with organizations representing users with disabilities to identify current trends in assistive technology. These consultations are also providing a better understanding of the most suitable assistive technologies to integrate into the Centre Block Rehabilitation Project. Findings are being assembled in a catalogue, which will be used to support users with various disabilities. The range of available assistive technologies, tools and accommodations have been enhanced, ensuring users have the appropriate resources to meet their needs.

Non-web documentation

Work to improve access to non-web documentation started in 2023 and is ongoing. Documents continue to be audited to ensure adherence to accessibility standards and corrective action is being taken where needed. The tools, templates and guides available to Members' offices and the House Administration for the creation of accessible documents continue to be improved and distributed. Expert advice is also available from the Accessibility Secretariat in response to specific questions from Members' offices or the House Administration. Moreover, as of November 2024, over 100 employees had completed the training developed by the House Administration on the creation of accessible digital documents. This training will be offered to Members' staff as part of the permanent training catalogue starting in early 2025.

Communication, other than ICTs

Training on plain language and sign language

In-depth training sessions on plain language and sign language were provided to over 50 employees across the House Administration in key positions involved in recruitment, multimedia, committee witness relations and communication.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

- A corporate accessibility directive for the procurement of goods and services has been developed and is being implemented. The directive promotes the inclusion of accessibility requirements in procurement processes and identifies the aspects to be considered when developing those requirements. It defines the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in procurement processes with the objective of ensuring accessibility requirements are systematically taken into consideration in the procurement of all goods and services by the House Administration.
- Mandatory training has been developed to support the implementation of the corporate accessibility directive and its objectives. This training has been completed by procurement officers.

Design and delivery of programs and services

Guidance for committee witnesses

- An initiative was launched to conduct an in-depth review of communications and processes for witnesses participating in committee proceedings. One of the priorities of this initiative is to improve accessibility for committee witnesses. Changes have already been implemented in communications with witnesses, emphasizing the availability of accommodations and clarifying the technical requirements for virtual appearances.
- As of November 2024, mandatory customer service training was introduced for committee staff who work with witnesses.

Services to Members

A centralized, multidisciplinary contact centre opened in September 2023 to provide a simplified and seamless experience to Members and their staff. In addition to simplifying access to services and offering additional accessibility options such as appointment-based services, the contact centre has implemented a case management system with the ability to send clients useful information on the status of their enquiries and give them the opportunity to provide feedback on the centre's services. The case management system also ensures that service trends can be tracked over time, allowing for the identification of issues and opportunities in service improvements.

Services available to visitors in the galleries

The House has improved communications with the public and the parliamentary community about the various services and accommodations available to visitors in the galleries. A web page has been added describing the available services and related communications have been issued. A seating area has been set up to accommodate visitors who are required to wait before entering the galleries on very busy days. The House also worked in partnership with the Parliamentary Protective Service and the Library of Parliament to ensure better coordination and communication in providing accessibility services to visitors.

Transportation

The House provides a shuttle bus service for Members, their staff and House Administration employees who travel between buildings within the Parliamentary Precinct. Currently, one shuttle bus is equipped with a mechanical lift. As part of its commitment to review shuttle bus functionality and improve accessibility, the House Administration has initiated a process to acquire a new accessible shuttle bus with space for a wheelchair.