



Government of Canada
Privy Council Office

Gouvernement du Canada
Bureau du Conseil privé

Accessibility Progress Report 2023 for the Privy Council Office



Accessibility progress report 2023 for the Privy Council Office.

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Accessibility Progress Report for 2023

Table of contents

- General
- Feedback Process and Contact Information.....
- Areas in section 5 of the *ACA*.....
 - Employment
 - Built Environment.....
 - Information and communication technologies (ICT).....
 - Communication, other than ICT
 - The procurement of goods and services.....
- Consultations.....
- Questions received through the feedback process.....

General

The Privy Council Office (PCO or department) developed a three-year comprehensive departmental Accessibility Plan for 2023 to 2025 (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>). This plan is part of the PCO's continued commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and compliance with the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*.

This report provides a summary of the progress made in implementing the Accessibility Plan at the department from its launch in December 2022 to December 2023. This progress update highlights promising examples of PCO's commitment to creating a barrier-free experience for persons with disabilities in applicable accessibility focus areas. Although we celebrate this progress, we still have work to do to achieve our goals.

Feedback process and contact information

The Privy Council Office (PCO) has a feedback process (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/feedback-process.html>) to accept feedback relating to accessibility barriers and the implementation of the PCO accessibility plan. You can submit feedback by contacting: Assistant Director, Accessibility, Human Resources, Corporate Services Branch.

- Sending PCO the accessibility feedback form ([Accessibility feedback form - Privy Council Office - Canada.ca](#))
- Email: accessible@pco-bcp.gc.ca
- Telephone: 343-553-5382
- Mail: 60 Queen Street, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1P 5A8

You can provide contact information or submit feedback anonymously. The PCO will acknowledge receipt in the same manner in which the feedback was received and respond directly to feedback if contact information is provided, unless it was received anonymously.

Alternate formats

You can request copies of our accessibility plan, progress report and feedback process description in an alternate version by email at accessible@pco-bcp.gc.ca, mail: 60 Queen Street, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1P 5A8 or telephone at 343-553-5382.

Formats available:

- print
- large print (larger and clearer font)
- braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
- audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud), and

- electronic formats that are compatible with adaptive technology

Areas described under section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*

PCO Accessibility Plan (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>) focuses on five accessibility pillars that are critical to achieving our accessibility vision and creating a barrier-free environment for Privy Council Office (PCO) employees and stakeholders:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies
- communication, other than information and communication technologies
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities

As mentioned in the PCO Accessibility Plan, given the nature of the PCO's mandate and operations, the *Accessible Canada Act's (ACA)* federal transportation network priority area, and design and delivery of public facing programs and services priority area are not applicable.

This *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)* priority accessibility area relates to eliminating and preventing barriers to enable receipt of services that are accessible to all.

The PCO supports the Prime Minister and Cabinet in helping the government implement its vision, goals, and decisions in a timely manner. The PCO is not a front-line service department which provides services to Canadians.

The work for PCO's accessibility plan is underway, and we have achieved the following commitments for 2023:

Employment

As part of the "What we heard" section of the Employment pillar in the **PCO Accessibility Plan** (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>), we heard that effective and timely accommodations are critical to supporting some persons with disabilities in their roles. Employees shared the importance of a defined, centralized, transparent, and efficient process. This includes transparent communication and engagement during the process. Barriers or challenges identified were about the importance of education and awareness about accessibility in creating a culture of disability inclusion. Employees and management shared a desire for increased dialogue and learning around accessibility and disability inclusion. The PCO recognizes that this commitment to learning is essential as the department seeks to eliminate existing barriers.

Over the year 2023, the department:

- Continued to consult the persons with disabilities (PwD) focus group about the implementation of various initiatives to foster a more inclusive working

environment, including providing updates on the department's accessibility plan.

- Improved existing accommodations processes by creating and implementing a centralized and streamlined process and a central fund to cover costs of employee accommodation requests. All accommodation requests are now centrally managed to ensure timely and effective implementation of the accommodation requirements.
- Implemented mechanisms to communicate the PCO's commitment to accessibility and accommodations throughout the candidate recruitment process by:
 - updating communications to candidates to be gender neutral, including letters of offer;
 - ensuring all assessment templates include a point of contact for accommodations; and
 - developing a guide on employment equity (EE), diversity and inclusion for staffing advisors, which includes information on accommodations in staffing processes.
- Continued to regularly collect and track employee self-identification data to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and initiatives by:
 - providing quarterly EE data reports to branches and posting report on PCO's intranet;
 - sending regular reminder emails to all employees who had not yet completed the self-identification questionnaire; and
 - presenting and discussing EE data and representational gaps to PCO senior management through governance committees.

Looking forward in 2024 for employment

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- perform an accessibility and disability inclusion learning needs assessment to identify learning needs and explore available training;
- design and implement new talent strategies to hire, develop and retain more persons with disabilities;
- continue to diversify the talent pipeline by building upon existing partnerships with external organizations focused on employing persons with disabilities; and
- review the onboarding process with a pan-disability lens (e.g., make sure onboarding process and resources are inclusive of employees who are neurodiverse or have other invisible disabilities).

The built environment

As part of the “What we heard” section of the Built Environment pillar in the **PCO Accessibility Plan** (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>), in terms of barriers and challenges, some departmental employees who self-identified as having a disability shared that they do not have difficulties accessing or navigating PCO offices, others reported challenges. Barriers identified include:

- accessing accessible public parking
- washrooms and elements
- moving through doorways due to lack of electronic buttons
- gaining access to buildings (key card and code entry), and
- using signage and wayfinding (entrances, workspaces, and elevators)

Some employees also shared opportunities for the built environment to be improved to better support neurodiverse employees.

Over the year 2023, the department:

- Completed the review of all emergency and evacuation processes from an accessible lens and evaluated the experience of persons with disabilities during practice drills by:
 - messaging Persons requiring Assistance (PRAs) to remind them that hosts of visitors requiring assistance are responsible for supporting them while they are at the Privy Council Office (PCO);
 - performing an evacuation drill in the fall and evaluating the experience of employees requiring assistance through a survey; and
 - quarterly reminder emails to increase employee awareness and education, providing information that includes what is a person requiring assistance (PRA), how many monitors they need to be assigned to a PRA, the process for identifying a PRA, employee responsibilities when hosting visitors who require assistance during evacuations.
- Improved the existing occupational health and safety (OHS) built environment inspection process by updating PCO’s checklist items to monitor the ongoing accessibility of all departmental offices based on consultation with other government departments. The updated OHS checklist was shared with the OHS committees at PCO.
- Improved existing accommodations processes by creating a centralized and streamlined process grounded in leading practices: the assessment of accessibility of PCO buildings has been completed in partnership with the Public Services and Procurement Canada of the PCO’s three main buildings (where most employees work). PCO is working with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to implement improvements. This commitment is an ongoing item.
- Identified and communicated a list of accessible parking nearby PCO buildings on PCO’s intranet.

Looking forward in 2024 for the built environment

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- in partnership with the Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), continue to evaluate the accessibility of all departmental offices against Universal Accessibility Best Practices and Canadian Standards Association's (CSA) Standards for accessibility and, develop plans for improvement as needed.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

As part of the "What we heard" section of the information and communication technologies pillar in the PCO Accessibility Plan (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>), some departmental employees who self-identified as having a disability reported opportunities to improve:

- the timeliness of Information Technology (IT) accommodations
- seamlessness of the process
- transparency in communication
- employee involvement in specification selection, and
- IT employees training on helping with specialized technology accommodations.

Over the year 2023, the department:

- Developed a self-serve comprehensive catalogue of approved assistive technology to streamline and expedite the IT portion of the accommodations process. This catalogue is available on the PCO client service portal.
- Developed a list of training that front line IT employees need to take to support persons with disabilities with accessing and setting up assistive technology. IT service desk employees took the following online course: "Overview of accessibility features on smartphones and adaptive technology in the workplace".
- Implemented the Government of Canada's workplace accessibility passport for PCO employees. The passport and resources are available on PCO's intranet.
- Began assessing Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA compliance for websites and web applications of entities the PCO supports by:
 - following the mandatory accessibility requirements on the PCO external web publishing established by Service Canada; and
 - completing an inventory of all PCO's content on Canada.ca to identify accessibility gaps and including the information as part of the digital assets accessibility plan for remediation; and
 - developing an inventory of supported web sites and web applications that includes a total of thirty-three internal and external assets.
- Continued to ensure the department's social media presence is inclusive and accessible to the public. The communications community office uses analytical tools to implement automated accessibility checks for all communication products.

- Developed a long-term information management and information technology accessibility plan to support accessibility across all digital assets. This plan will be implemented in 2024.

Looking forward in 2024 for Information and communication technologies

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- implement the long-term information management and information technology accessibility plan to support accessibility across all digital assets;
- continue to provide training to Information Technology (IT) employees on supporting persons with disabilities with accessing and setting up assistive technology;
- implement the digital accessibility passport once launched by Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). PCO is an active participant in the Government of Canada (GC) workplace accessibility passport adopter community of practice; and
- continue to make sure the department's social media presence is inclusive and accessible to the public.

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

As part of the “What we heard” section of the Communication, other than the information and communication technologies pillar in the PCO Accessibility Plan (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>), employees identified an opportunity for the PCO to embed meeting option flexibility more consistently across the organization. Employees also shared a desire for increased communication about the PCO's commitment to accessibility and resources to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Some employees with disabilities also reported the following barriers and challenges:

- challenges with inaccessible documents and templates, and
- opportunities to improve accessibility within departmental communications, initiatives and events (e.g., providing written material in advance of meetings, recording meetings)

Over the year 2023, the department:

- Developed and implemented an accessibility communication strategy to foster a culture of accessibility and disability inclusion intended for executives, managers and employees. The strategy focused on offering workshops, tools and guides through PCO's accessibility and disability inclusion corner.
- Built upon past initiatives and delivered events focused on raising awareness about disability inclusion by:

- delivering two events open to all PCO employees to mark important accessibility commemorations: 1) National AccessAbility Week in May 2023 (theme: Disability inclusion: from possibilities to practice) and 2) International Day of Persons with Disabilities (theme: Beyond the stigma: Building and inclusive Public Service); and
- promoting and encouraging employees to take trainings offered by the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) to improve accessibility, accommodation and adaptive computer technology, and disability inclusion.
- Increased employee awareness of accessibility standards and resources by launching an accessibility and disability inclusion corner on PCO's intranet, which includes the accessibility plan, an inventory of existing accessibility guides, tools, and other resources available to all PCO employees. This corner provides clear accessibility standards, practices and checklist for events and meetings (both in-person and virtual).
- Started the review of PCO's templates on PCO's intranet. Completed the review and update of PowerPoint templates to ensure they meet accessibility standards.

Looking forward in 2024 for communications

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- continue to foster awareness and education on accessibility and disability inclusion;
- provide guidance to employees on accessible communication techniques and inclusive practices;
- provide and communicate toolkit to support plain language writing; and
- continue updating the rest of PCO templates to follow accessibility standards.

Procurement of goods and services

The PCO procures good and services from suppliers when needed and follows PSPC procedures. As needed, Requests for proposals (RFPs) are issued through the Government of Canada's buyandsell.gc.ca (<https://buyandsell.gc.ca/>) site using standard Government of Canada templates.

As part of the PCO Accessibility Plan (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/plan.html>), the organization has identified opportunities to:

- improve communication of the department's commitment to accessibility.
- increase supplier awareness of the department's accommodation processes; and,
- upskill the procurement team's understanding of accessible procurement leading practices. This includes recommended practices for supporting and communicating with suppliers with disabilities.

Over the year 2023, the department:

- implemented a mechanism for communicating the PCO commitment to accessibility and information about the accommodations process to suppliers by including language in all Request for Proposal (RFP) and aligned clauses with PSPC phrasing for contracts;
- reviewed Accessibility phrasing utilized by PSPC under specific procurement vehicles and consulted with PSPC's Accessible Procurement Resource Centre to receive updates on new clause development;
- examined documentation, standardized emails for contract award and forms against available Accessibility standards information; and
- implemented mandatory completion of the Accessibility Form for all procurement requirements regardless of dollar value or complexity.

Looking forward in 2024 for procurement of goods and services

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- Provide accessibility guidance to the procurement team on leading practices for accessible procurement and supporting suppliers with disabilities.

Consultations

The PCO persons with disabilities focus group

The Focus Group was consulted on the implementation of the plan and about the accessibility and disability inclusion initiatives at the PCO. During 2023, the persons with disabilities focus group were consulted on:

- the planning of the events and the choice of guest speakers for the National Accessibility Week and for the International Day for person with disabilities;
- the centralized accommodation process and the GC accessibility passport;
- the PCO's accessibility communications strategy;
- the accessibility and disability inclusion corner;
- the new standard wording developed throughout the job advertisement process; and
- the annual progress report on PCO accessibility plan for 2023.

Feedback received on all initiatives was positive, constructive and was incorporated, where/when possible.

PCO internal consultations

The pillar leads collaborated and consulted with various internal groups to progress on the following commitments:

- the accessibility and diversity inclusion corner and GC workplace accessibility passport content and communications;
- the new standard wording to be used throughout the candidate recruitment process;
- the development of a comprehensive catalogue of approved assistive technology to streamline and expedite IT accommodations process;
- the compliance for websites and web applications of entities the PCO supports;
- the web publishing on the Canada.ca platform to assess compliance for websites and web applications of entities the PCO supports; and
- The PCO digital asset accessibility plan.

Consultations with external stakeholders

PCO consulted external accessibility area leads for input on our commitments. The consultations included:

- various departments to gather information and lessons learned about their centralized accommodation process. This included reviewing templates, process maps and communication material from these organizations;
- key stakeholders such as the Public Service Commission's diversity and inclusion center of expertise team and the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) were consulted on the accommodations process for staffing processes;
- various departments on the content included in their occupational health and safety (OHS) checklists;
- collaborating with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) experts on improving existing accommodations building processes;
- various government departments on how they are defining a digital asset in order to inform PCO's long-term information management and information technology accessibility plan; and
- PSPC's Accessible Procurement Resource Centre (APRC) to confirm available standardized clauses for use in directed contracts to suppliers.

Questions received through the Feedback Process

The PCO received limited requests through their feedback process (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/accessibility/feedback-process.html>) on accessibility barriers, including the following:

- Advice was requested on making a pdf consent form accessible. An internal subject matter expert was provided as a resource.

- An accessibility barrier was identified about a magnet door anchor on one of PCO floors. The issue was resolved over the next few days of the feedback, where the defective magnetic system in the anchor was fixed.

