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# 2023 Accessibility Progress Report

Prepared by Defence Construction Canada, December 2023

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## General

Defence Construction Canada (DCC) provides innovative and cost-effective contracting, construction contract management, infrastructure and environmental services and lifecycle support to help meet Canada's defence requirements. DCC's Client-Partners are the Department of National Defence, the Communications Security Establishment and the Canadian Forces Housing Agency.

As a federal Crown corporation, DCC is subject to the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA). The ACA and its associated Regulations came into effect in 2019 to help create a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

In response, DCC formed the Accessibility Working Group, which is made up of senior leaders from various DCC functional areas and received feedback from various stakeholder on existing barriers and accessibility initiatives at DCC.

### About this plan

DCC developed and published an accessibility plan for 2023 to 2025 that outlines the actions DCC will take to prevent and mitigate accessibility barriers and comply with ACA requirements.

DCC is required to publish progress reports in 2023 and 2024 and finalize a new plan in 2025 based on the progress achieved, feedback from stakeholders and government priorities. This report provides an update on the initiatives DCC undertook in 2023, organized by key areas identified in the ACA.

### DCC's Commitment to Accessibility

DCC is committed to advancing accessibility for Canadians in a timely manner based on the principles identified in the ACA. Doing so helps DCC make progress toward its goal of removing employment-related barriers and provide accommodation supports when required.

DCC commits to maintaining ongoing dialogue with persons with disabilities and their allies. DCC incorporates this input and other feedback when possible when improving and developing initiatives.

### Alternative formats

You may contact DCC through any of the channels listed in the "Feedback" section below to request a copy of its accessibility plan, progress reports and other documents in print, large print, Braille, audio or electronic format.

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## Feedback

DCC encourages you to share your feedback on its plan, feedback process, progress reports or any other issue through any of the following channels:

- Telephone: 613-998-9548 or 1-800-514-3555 (toll free)
- Fax: 613-998-1061
- Online: <https://www.dcc-cdc.gc.ca/about-dcc/accessibility>
- Email: [accessibility@dcc-cdc.gc.ca](mailto:accessibility@dcc-cdc.gc.ca) or [accessibilite@dcc-cdc.gc.ca](mailto:accessibilite@dcc-cdc.gc.ca)
- Mail:  
Defence Construction Canada  
Constitution Square, 19th Floor  
350 Albert Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0K3  
Attn.: Governance and Legal Affairs (Accessibility)

A member of DCC's Governance and Legal Affairs team will acknowledge receipt of all feedback and follow up with respondents directly unless they choose to remain anonymous.

## Employment

DCC introduced its Duty to Accommodate Policy in 2021. This policy sets out accessible and non-discriminatory hiring and employment practices. These include eliminating employment-related barriers and providing accommodation supports to help candidates and employees fully participate in DCC's hiring and employment processes.

In 2023, DCC's Human Resources Department reviewed its employment policies and drafted an accessibility policy. DCC expects the new policy to be finalized by December 31, 2024.

During this reporting period, DCC made a concerted effort to introduce and participate in recruitment initiatives to support accessibility, such as the virtual Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion job fair in May 2023. During its 2023 summer student employment campaign, DCC entered into a partnership agreement with Specialisterne, a non-profit organization that helps match neurodiverse candidates with job opportunities. DCC hired one neurodiverse student and received support from Specialisterne during the onboarding process.

In total, DCC hired nine students with disabilities across all regions in 2023, representing 11.25% of DCC's student population for the year.

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## Built environment

DCC is not responsible for buildings and public spaces. Its 35 site offices are co-located with the Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces at all active bases, wings and area support units. DCC's regional offices and Head Office are in leased spaces. DCC's ability to successfully introduce accessibility modifications to its site offices relies heavily on DND's priorities and engagement with these initiatives. As such, the timeline to improve accessibility in DCC workplaces is expected to extend beyond 2025.

DCC's accessibility plan for 2023 to 2025 requires a review of all workplaces, including offices where DCC staff are co-located with Client-Partners, to determine existing barriers. Planning for the review began in 2023. This review will identify physical, architectural and structural features that could present barriers, including the following:

- building entrances, ramps and elevators
- washrooms
- parking.

The review will also examine noise levels, necessary communications when accessibility supports are out of service and emergency evacuation procedures.

Given its large number of workplaces, DCC expects the review to be completed in the 2024–2025 fiscal year. After that, DCC will draft a long-term plan to remove barriers from the workplaces. This plan will include timelines for developing tools and work aids to help create and maintain accessible workplaces.

In 2024, DCC will form a working group with representatives from Operations, Health and Safety, Information Technology and Human Resources. This working group will develop internal accessibility guidelines and a checklist to ensure appropriate access to all DCC in-person events and the provision of reasonable accommodations. DCC expects to complete the draft guidelines and checklist by December 31, 2024.

## Information and communication technology

DCC created the Information Technology (IT) Accessibility Working Group, co-chaired by the Director, Information Technology, and DCC's Microsoft 365 system architect. This group will develop DCC's IT accessibility plan and report on the status of IT-related accessibility activities.

In 2023, DCC's IT Department worked with other business units to incorporate accessibility requirements when selecting and purchasing new software and applications, where possible.

Training materials for Microsoft 365 posted on DCC's intranet include a section on accessibility features available to all employees. The IT Department is also planning targeted communications to all employees on this topic by December 2025, with support from DCC's training and development subject-matter experts.

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## Communication, other than ICT

Although its website meets most essential requirements of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA, DCC strives to improve compliance and increase accessibility. DCC commissioned a web accessibility audit, which was completed on June 26, 2023. DCC's Communications Department meets regularly with its external web supplier to address accessibility gaps identified during this audit and other web-related work. Communications expects to make necessary accessibility changes before the next progress report in 2024.

As of January 2023, DCC publishes its corporate reporting documents as accessible PDFs on its website.

The Communications Department responds to all requests for documents in accessible formats. The timeline for delivery depends on the size and complexity of the document and the desired format.

While the Communications Department uses plain language in all its materials, DCC found in 2023 that this was not the case for all business units. In 2024, the Communications Department will develop a plan to address barriers and improve general awareness of plain language among all business units by 2025.

## Procurement of goods, services and facilities

In 2023, DCC incorporated accessibility requirements into the IT software procurement process. DCC selects as mobile devices Android or iOS products that meet accessibility standards. DCC regularly refreshes or replaces devices to make sure employees have the latest accessibility tools and features.

Although some of DCC's legacy applications do not meet accessibility standards, the IT Accessibility Working Group will consider accessibility requirements in its search for replacements as they are needed.

DCC's Communications Department increased the number of suppliers able to provide accessible formatting of documents in 2023 and will continue to source new suppliers to meet increasing demand.

## Design and delivery of programs and services

In 2023, several business units identified a lack of awareness of accessibility standards across DCC.

In response, DCC began researching accessibility awareness training programs for employees and supervisors. This research revealed several challenges. First, although DCC requires training on federal accessibility legislation, many programs focus on provincial legislation, which has been in place longer. Second, there is limited availability of training in both official languages of equal quality and content.

DCC's 2024 progress report will include an update on the status of DCC's continuing search for suitable training.

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DCC's Governance and Legal Affairs (GLA) Department began in 2023 to develop a standard operating procedure to use when applying accessibility filters or requesting accessible formatting to documents. GLA will complete this procedure before the next progress report in 2024.

With support from DCC's training and development subject-matter experts, GLA will research training and accreditations in the area of accessibility law in 2024 and develop a plan to pursue appropriate options. DCC's 2024 progress report will contain an update on these activities.

## Transportation

DCC's accessibility plan for 2023 to 2025 did not discuss barriers to transportation, since it is not a regular job requirement for all DCC employees. However, in response to online feedback, DCC will work to identify barriers associated with transportation at in-person events, when employees drive DCC-issued vehicles and when they are required to provide their own transportation to job sites. DCC will complete this review as part of the work described in "Built Environment," above.

## Consultations

In preparing this report, DCC relied on feedback received during internal consultations on its accessibility plan for 2023 to 2025 and on public feedback through DCC website.

DCC received feedback from 36 individuals grouped as follows:

- citizens interested in accessibility
- persons with disabilities
- caregivers of persons with disabilities.

## Feedback

In 2023, DCC reviewed the feedback received through the online form regarding DCC's accessibility plan.

DCC incorporated the following suggestions into the "Employment," "Built Environment" and "Transportation" sections of this report:

- Add more details about the initiatives in place to review employment policies
- Acknowledge DND's shared commitment to DCC's accessibility plan and the fact that DCC's ability to implement changes depends in some instances on DND's willingness to address desired changes
- Review all physical office spaces to ensure they are accessible
- Include mention of ensuring access to all key office locations, including via ramps and elevators, to support employees with temporary disabilities

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- Consider transportation barriers that could impact participation at in-person events
  - Define clear timeframes for taking various actions.

DCC's Accessibility Working Group will review the remaining feedback and incorporate it as appropriate into DCC's next progress report in 2024 or into its new accessibility plan in 2025. The following are some of the recommendations DCC has received to date:

- Describe how DCC will engage with the Department of National Defence on implementing the initiative
- Consider hotelling stations and temporary workspaces to help overcome systemic barriers that could otherwise undermine the accessibility plan
- Consider the needs of neurodivergent employees
- Increase education on options for dampening sound and reducing intrusions into peripheral vision at the office
- Outline expectations for accessing workplaces when barriers exist
- Continue to coach staff on the attitudinal side of accessibility
- Develop a checklist of accessibility features available to staff and visitors (e.g., stairs, telephones, doors).