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2024 Accessibility Progress Report

Prepared by Defence Construction Canada, December 2024

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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.

DCC's [Accessibility Plan](#) for 2023 to 2025 outlines the actions DCC is taking to prevent and mitigate accessibility barriers and comply with requirements set out in the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA). This report provides an update on the initiatives DCC undertook in 2024, organized by key areas set out 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 progress towards removing employment-related barriers and providing accommodation supports when required.

DCC commits to creating opportunities for ongoing dialogue with persons with disabilities and their allies. DCC incorporates this input and other feedback, when possible, as it develops and improves 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.

Feedback

DCC encourages you to share feedback on its accessibility 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)
- Online: <https://www.dcc-cdc.gc.ca/about-dcc/accessibility>
- Email: accessibility@dcc-cdc.gc.ca or accessibilite@dcc-cdc.gc.ca
- Mail

Defence Construction Canada
Constitution Square, 19th Floor
350 Albert Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0K3
Attn.: Human Resources, Accessibility

A member of DCC's Human Resources team acknowledges receipt of all feedback and follows up with respondents directly unless they choose to remain anonymous.

Activities described under Section 5 of the ACA

DCC's Accessibility Working Group comprises representatives from Operations, Health and Safety, Information Technology, Communications, Governance and Legal Affairs and Human Resources.

The Working Group met quarterly in 2024 and focused on prioritizing activities and building capacity to advance DCC's accessibility goals. Progress made in 2024 will lay the groundwork for DCC's second accessibility plan, to be published in December 2025.

Employment

In 2024, DCC's Human Resources team prepared for the upcoming assessment of DCC's employment policies, programs and practices, including the draft accessibility policy. Human Resources also began searching for a consultant to assist with this task. The results of the review will inform DCC's next accessibility plan and help establish accessibility standards for design and delivery of DCC's programs and services.

DCC's Talent Acquisition team participated in career fairs on accessibility and autism in early 2024. DCC representatives also attended the Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion's annual neurodiversity event and the Government of Canada's information session on Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities.

DCC hired 10 students with disabilities across all regions in 2024, representing 13% of DCC's student population for the year.

Built environment

Because its 35 site offices are co-located with the Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces at active bases, wings and area support units, DCC's ability to successfully introduce accessibility modifications to its site offices relies heavily on DND's priorities and engagement with these initiatives.

DCC began its search for an accessibility consultant to assist with a review to determine existing barriers in DCC workplaces. This work, expected to begin in 2025, will involve an in-person visit to one of DCC's regional offices and virtual interviews with approximately 30 facilities management staff across Canada to do the following:

- determine the current state of accessibility at a representative sample of DCC workplaces
- obtain staff perspectives on what can and should be prioritized to improve accessibility
- identify actions DCC can take in leased or co-located spaces.

In a report, the consultant will set out key findings and include feedback and recommendations from the site visit and interviews. DCC will use this report to shape its next accessibility plan and develop internal guidelines for the following:

- accessibility in the built environment
- access to all DCC in-person events
- provision of reasonable accommodations.

Information and communication technology

In 2024, the Information Technology (IT) Accessibility Working Group adopted the practice that new purchases must conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) requirements.

The IT Accessibility Working Group incorporated accessibility requirements into end user device selections. Group members also discussed ways to proactively provide accessibility aids and devices to remove the stigma around asking for accommodations.

Another priority for the IT Accessibility Working Group was to inform DCC employees about which accessibility features are available to them. This work involved identifying available training materials for Microsoft 365 products, cataloguing accessibility features available to DCC employees and working with Communications to determine the best way to present this information on DCC's new Accessibility intranet page.

DCC's IT Department prepared communications to all employees on this topic in December 2024, with support from DCC's training and development subject-matter experts.

Further, DCC's newly procured learning management system with WCAG 2.1 AA standards. DCC's learning platform, Skillsoft Percipio, also generally conforms to both Section 508/WCAG 2.0 and WCAG2.1 accessibility standards.

Communication, other than ICT

Although its website meets most of the essential requirements of WCAG 2.1AA, DCC commissioned a web accessibility audit in August 2024 to test the functionality of the site. This exercise identified required updates to coding and styles to ensure the site meets accessibility standards.

DCC prepares corporate reporting documents (e.g. Annual Report, Corporate Plan) in an accessible .pdf format. However, DCC's website contains older .pdf documents, such as contracting forms used by industry, that are not accessible. Together with its service provider, DCC is determining the number of these documents and considering how to manage the issue of accessible formats with the document owners. Actions stemming from this analysis will be included in DCC's next accessibility plan.

All corporate communications from DCC undergo a plain language review during the editing process. In 2024, DCC engaged a supplier to assess a sample of written corporate materials to evaluate DCC's use of plain language. This review began with English documents, followed by an assessment of French-language materials. The results of these assessments, expected in early 2025, will help DCC select plain language guidance materials and training to offer its employees and inform actions to be taken under DCC's next accessibility plan.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

In 2023, DCC incorporated accessibility requirements into the IT software procurement process. DCC will incorporate similar requirements into end-user device selections by December 2025.

DCC's Communications Department found additional suppliers able to provide accessible formatting of documents in large print, Braille, audio or electronic format and established a procedure for creating documents in accessible formats.

Design and delivery of programs and services

In 2024, DCC's Human Resources Department compiled a list of training programs available to increase accessibility awareness for employees and supervisors. Human Resources will work with DCC's Training and Development team in 2025 to prioritize accessibility training courses based on findings from consultations with employees with disabilities and the built environment assessment.

Transportation

DCC began searching for an external accessibility consultant to assess the state of its transportation and transportation-related infrastructure at sites that will be part of the built environment assessment and site visits. The transportation-related review will include looking at parking infrastructure (e.g. accessible parking spaces, security gates), pedestrian and transit accessibility, and transportation and vehicles. DCC plans to begin this work in 2025. The findings and recommendations for improving transportation-related accessibility will be used to inform DCC's new accessibility plan.

Consultations

Because DCC has a limited public-facing presence, DCC's consultations focus on employees with disabilities. This approach will allow DCC to fulfill its obligations under the ACA and continue to build meaningful relationships with its employees on workplace issues that matter to them.

To this end, DCC has leveraged the enhanced capabilities of its new intranet platform to provide ongoing opportunities for employees to access and comment on DCC's accessibility plan and progress reports. DCC also began discussions with an accessibility consultant to conduct surveys and focus groups with employees with disabilities. The feedback and suggestions collected during these consultations will inform DCC's next accessibility plan.

Feedback

For the consultation, DCC contacted 104 employees who had self-identified as having a disability and consented to being contacted through DCC's self-identification questionnaire. These employees were asked if they would like to review the 2024 Accessibility Progress Report and provide feedback.

DCC employees provided valuable feedback on the first draft of the 2024 Accessibility Progress Report. Some highlights of the feedback collected is included below. All comments were reviewed by the Accessibility Working Group. Where possible, changes and clarifications were made to the 2024 Progress Report. The Accessibility Working Group will revisit other recommendations as part of their action items for 2025. The Accessibility Working Group will also share the feedback collected with the accessibility consultant as part of the initial accessibility assessment in 2025.

Highlights:

- Increase training and improve awareness about accessibility, neurodiversity and non-visible disabilities.
- Include more accommodations and objectives for neurodivergence, mental health, sensory impairments and non-visible disabilities.
- Include temporary or urgent accommodations.
- Simplify the process to request an accommodation and introduce strategies to reduce stigma. Where possible be proactive in offering accommodations to new employees.
- Offer more accessible training opportunities for neurodiverse employees.
- Ask staff and visitors to not wear fragrances such as cologne, perfume, or scented products to DCC offices or events.
- Provide more support for employees with a hearing disability.
- Job permitting, allow additional flexibility in work location for those with neurodevelopmental disorders.
- Provide more information on how DCC will work with DND on accessibility.
- Offer writing support for neurodivergent employees (software, time management tools, etc.).
- Modify the self-identification questionnaire to remove stigma around non-visible disabilities such as ADHD.
- Provide more information on accessible documentation.
- Ensure accessibility documents are provided in both official languages for review.
- Provide more information on the built environment assessments and reflect the reality that different spaces have different barriers.