RCMP External Review Committee

Accessibility Plan Annual Progress Report

2023

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Plan sur l'accessibilité 2023-2025 – rapport d'étape

For more information, contact:

RCMP External Review Committee
P.O. Box 1159, Station B
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R2

Email: corporateandhrservices-servicesgenerauxetrh@erc-cee.gc.ca

Website: https://www.canada.ca/en/rcmp-external-review-committee.html

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RCMP External Review Committee Accessibility Plan 2023 Progress Report

Background

The *Accessible Canada Act*, which aims to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040, came into force in July 2019. In order to attain that goal, all Government of Canada (GC) organizations are required to proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers in the following seven (7) priority areas:

- employment
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces)
- information and communication technologies
- communication, other than information and communication technologies
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders)

In addition to the publication of GC organizations' first Accessibility Plan, the *Accessible Canada Act* requires departments to issue regular progress reports describing the actions the organization has taken to implement these accessibility plans, including the feedback received and how the organization took the feedback into consideration.

These requirements help ensure that accessibility is an ongoing priority and that all GC organizations are continuously improving and implementing inclusive design and working towards an accessible by default end state. The responsibility/accountability for accessibility will no longer be placed on persons with disabilities but rather with all functional groups within GC organizations. The GC will establish proactive mechanisms to address accessibility systemically, from the outset.

Implementing the ERC's 3-Year Accessibility Plan

This progress report covers the first year of implementation as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee (ERC) moves forward with the implementation of our 3-year plan. In it we provide an update on the progress that has been made towards fostering a diverse and inclusive environment that is accessible to all.

A. General

The ERC is an independent administrative tribunal that contributes to fair and equitable labour relations and helps to reinforce accountability at all levels within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Other than the courts, the ERC is the only independent review mechanism available to RCMP members and management for serious labour relations matters. The ERC conducts impartial reviews of appeals of certain conduct decisions and measures imposed on

RCMP members and of written decisions regarding harassment complaints filed prior to January 1st, 2021. It also reviews appeals of revocations of appointments, discharges, demotions and ordered stoppages of pay and allowances. Case files dealing with these matters are referred to the ERC for review by the RCMP pursuant to sections 33 and 45.15 of the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act* and section 17 of the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Regulations*.

The ERC is a small organization under the core public administration with 33 full-time employees.

Feedback Mechanism

The *Accessible Canada Act* requires organizations to establish a departmental process for receiving and dealing with feedback regarding the implementation of the accessibility plan. The ERC will be regularly monitoring and evaluating feedback and ensuring that it is incorporated into its future plans when possible.

If you have any questions, feedback or suggestions, you can communicate with the ERC by:

- sending an email to the attention of the Director General of Corporate Services at corporateandhrservices-servicesgenerauxetrh@erc-cee.gc.ca
- telephone: 613-998-2134
- sending your feedback by mail to:
    RCMP External Review Committee
    P.O. Box 1159, Station B
    Ottawa ON, K1P 5R2

Alternate formats of this accessibility plan are available upon request. Please contact the ERC for information and support.

B. Priority Areas Identified by the *Accessible Canada Act*

1. Employment

In the ERC's 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, it identified the following barriers to employment at the ERC:

- more awareness and engagement are required to become a more accessible workplace;
- managers may not understand how to support persons with disabilities;
- employees are often reluctant to self-identify disability.

Over the past year, the ERC has made progress towards removing these barriers by:

- Increasing managers and employees awareness by adding related training to its list of mandatory training. This list includes training on mental health awareness, bias, addressing barriers in the workplace and Indigenous reconciliation.
- Promoting inclusion events and tools including the self-identification tool on the ERC human resources management portal (PeopleSoft).

- Reviewing its internal diversity and inclusion guide and added sections on Indigenous culture and reconciliation.
- Reviewing its staffing processes, tools and identify and mitigate biases and barriers to allow more inclusive hiring.
- Continuing to encourage hiring and promotion of persons with disabilities.
- Continuing to promote a safe work environment where employees can express themselves openly.
- Making changes to its meeting format to include time for topics and presentations of interest in order to further engage staff and support staff development and health.

2. Built Environment

Due to its 2019 redesign, the ERC had no identified barriers to the built environment as it has:

- equipped all offices with ergonomic equipment;
- created an occupational health and safety committee to ensure employee health and safety;
- reviewed the emergency and evacuation plan;
- continued open discussions at all staff meetings on diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

In addition to these, over the past year the ERC has:

- Hosted an ergonomic session for all ERC employees. The presentation, made by an ergonomic specialist, informed staff of the various ergonomic hazards associated with office work and how best to avoid or address them.
- Employees also had the option of meeting with the specialist one-on-one to discuss individual ergonomic needs or improvements/changes that could be made to their workstation. The ERC purchased all requested ergonomic items for both the employees' on-site work location and their remote work locations as requested by the employees.
- The ERC conducted an office walkthrough to identify and address potential hazards before they resulted in an issue for employee access or health.
- The ERC continues to ensure that employees are aware of the emergency and evacuation procedures by updating them if any changes were made and sending reminders of the procedures to all staff.
- The ERC has fully implemented the new Regulations regarding menstrual products in federally controlled workplaces.

3. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

ERC employees continue to work in a hybrid capacity with flexibility to work from the physical office and remotely. The ERC successfully implemented its plan for all employees to return to the physical office space by ensuring that all on-site offices were equipped with all required IT equipment, therefore ensuring that employees only need to transport their laptop to and from the office. The ERC continues to supply all employees working

remotely part-time with all equipment needed to successfully perform their duties at their remote work location.

The ERC has:

- continued to promote accessible technologies and software for its employees.
- considered accessibility and adaptability in all new software/hardware acquisitions.
- supported operations in being able to provide reports in alternate formats, upon request.
- provided access to assistive ICT as requested either through internal procurement or through the Government of Canada's assistive devices lending program.

4. Communications Other than ICT

The ERC is committed to ensuring that all communications are accessible. To this end, the ERC has continued to ensure that it adheres to all Government of Canada style guidelines, including its directive on producing communications using plain language. In order to maintain accessibility, the ERC has continued to update communications and the ERC's website in compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) updates and has ensured that its communications continue to meet all Government of Canada accessibility guidelines.

5. The Procurement of Goods and Services

The ERC understands the importance of timeliness in the procurement of adaptive equipment and providing an accessible environment. In the last year, the ERC has continued to provide a rapid and simplified procurement process and has implemented a 10-day service standard in replying to all requests that are identified as meeting an adaptive or accessibility need. All items requested by employees following the presentation on ergonomics (see section B.2) were procured within one month and were delivered and installed within two months. The ERC has also procured the services of ergonomic assessors to make visits to employees' remote work locations as requested.

6. The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

The ERC is an administrative agency with the mandate of reviewing appeal cases relating to labour relations within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and issuing Findings and Recommendations (F&Rs) and has only one ongoing program. Its mandate is to review grievances, discipline and discharge and demotion matters involving RCMP members and to provide Findings and Recommendations to the RCMP Commissioner.

In the last year, the ERC's Corporate Services Directorate (Corporate) has:

- Considered accessibility in the development and implementation of all policies and practices and reviewed/updated its diversity and inclusion guide and its policy on performance management to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.
- Developed policies and practices using an accessibility foundation so services are accessible.

7. Transportation

This priority area under the *Accessible Canada Act* does not apply to the ERC.

C. Consultations

The GC's commitment to "Nothing without us" was imperative in the implementation of the ERC's Accessibility Plan. Due to the ERC's size as a micro-organization it was not possible to consult solely and specifically with employees who identified as persons with disabilities, as it would not be possible to ensure their confidentiality. Combined with the knowledge that there may be several employees of the ERC who are not comfortable self-identifying, all employees of ERC were consulted through anonymous surveys and discussions to gain their opinions regarding accessibility at the ERC and the implementation of the ERC's Accessibility Plan.

The formal consultation of the implementation of the ERC's Accessibility Plan was conducted using an anonymous survey which had a response rate of 81%. The ERC specifically used survey programming that would be accessible for all participants and was conducted in the spring/summer of 2023 with an aim to receive feedback on the implementation and inform changes and adjustments needed for the remainder of the calendar year. The survey sought feedback on employee wellbeing, working remotely and on-site, resources that employees utilize, support by management, the communication of support options, accommodation and a request for suggestions regarding accessibility and inclusion. The ERC also specifically sought feedback on a potential online reservation system that was proposed as a potential accommodation option.

Informal feedback was possible through confidential meetings and through touch base sessions in which the only agenda item was feedback from staff. The ERC has also installed a suggestion box at the office in order to allow for completely confidential communication from employees who are not comfortable sharing their thoughts or concerns in person.

D. Feedback

Since the publication of the ERC's Accessibility Plan, the ERC has not received any inquires or feedback using the feedback mechanism listed in section A of the ERC's Accessibility Plan and in this progress report. All feedback was received through anonymous surveys, anonymous suggestions received in the ERC's suggestion box and through informal and formal conversations between employees and management.

In general feedback from ERC employees was very positive. ERC employees communicated that they felt supported and that the steps the ERC was implementing to increase accessibility were successful. ERC employees expressed that they thought an online reservation system would not increase accessibility and would not be welcomed by staff.

The feedback that the ERC received indicated that employees believe that the ERC has done a good job implementing the Accessibility Plan and that they feel the ERC is an accessible and inclusive place to work. Ninety percent (90%) of ERC staff reported that they feel that they have management support and that the ERC provides all of the resources that they need to support

themselves and their overall wellbeing. ERC plans to implement the GC Accessibility Passport in response to this feedback, the current projected launch of this application is fiscal year 2024-2025.

Eighty-one percent (81%) of staff agreed that the ERC shared accommodation options and support. In response to this feedback the ERC has modified the format of the all-staff meetings to further incorporate and enhance a segment dedicated to presenting topics of interest suggested by employees. This will provide an additional avenue in which the ERC can share accommodation options and supports with staff as well as increase communication between employees and management and between employees where they can raise concerns or ask questions on any topics, including accessibility and accommodation.

A significant majority of ERC employees value the flexibility afforded by working in a micro-organization.

E. Glossary

Barrier

"means anything—including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice- that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation."

Disability

"means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society."

"**Nothing without us**"

"Nothing without us" is a guiding principle used across the Government of Canada to communicate the message that no policy should be decided by a representative without the full and direct participation of the members of the group affected by that policy.

Self-Identification Modernization Project

In September 2020, the Treasury Board Secretariat launched the Self-Identification (self-ID) Modernization Project to increase the accuracy, depth and breadth of the data across government. The project explored ways to reduce stigma associated with self-identification for all employment equity groups. Following extensive research and consultations, a new questionnaire was co-designed with employees from various diversity networks.