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2023 Defence Team Accessibility Plan Progress Report

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Foreword

The mission of the DND/CAF is to defend Canada, its interests and its values, while contributing to international peace and security. Addressing accessibility in the DND/CAF context presents certain challenges due to the nature of the Defence Team, as it blends the public service with a military environment, which is governed under the *Defence Act* and administered by a unique set of rules.

Enclosed is the Defence Team 2023 Accessibility Progress Report, summarizing the progress made in the first year of implementation of the Defence Team's Accessibility Plan. The report also captures planned accessibility-related efforts and identifies new barriers that the organization will endeavor to remove moving forward.

The development of the progress report provided a valuable opportunity to not only reflect on organizational accomplishments but also consider areas where renewed focus is needed in the coming years. The Defence Team recognizes that although progress has been made over this past year and the organization has moved forward in meeting its accessibility commitments, there is still a long way to go in creating a Defence Team workplace that is fully inclusive and accessible.

Key to the Defence Team building on its progress to date and becoming an accessibility-confident organization will be focusing on building a culture where all Department of National Defence (DND) employees and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members perspectives and lived experiences are welcomed, and where a diversity of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and abilities are celebrated and valued. In support of this vision, the Defence Team will leverage its Culture Evolution Strategy, which aims to align, inform, coordinate, and enable culture evolution efforts across the organization, to ensure that accessibility needs and considerations are fully and proactively integrated into all levels of the organization.

Through this progress report, the organization renews its commitment to accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities, recognizing that creating a barrier-free workplace will be a long-term process that will require dedicated, deliberate and sustained action over time. Part of this commitment will involve remaining adaptable and approaching learning with openness and genuine curiosity, allowing the Defence Team to continue to evolve and create the necessary conditions that will allow all members to maximize their contribution and achieve their full potential.

General

The Defence Team: Who We Are & What We Do

DND supports the CAF who serve on the sea, on land, and in the air with the Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command to defend Canadians' interests at home and abroad.

DND and the CAF have complementary roles to play in providing advice and support to the Minister of National Defence. Together, this integrated civilian-military Defence Team works together to fulfill the Government of Canada's mission to defend Canadian interests and values, and to contribute to international peace and security.

The *Accessible Canada Act*

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA) came into force July 11, 2019 with the purpose of achieving a barrier-free Canada by January 1, 2040. The *Act* applies to all organizations under federal responsibility, including the CAF, and mandates a proactive and systemic approach to identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility for peoples with disabilities in seven specific priority areas: employment; built environment; information and communication technologies; communication; the procurement of goods, services and facilities; the design and delivery of programs and services; and transportation.

The ACA requires that all federal departments and agencies prepare and publish an Accessibility Plan every three years, prepare and publish annual progress reports on plan implementation, and establish a feedback process. The first iteration of the Defence Team Accessibility Plan was published in December 2022.

Universality of Service Principle

The [National Defence Act](#) (NDA) provides the legal basis for numerous matters relating to DND and the CAF. To support an integrated approach to the management of the functions and activities under the NDA as well as other federal Acts and regulations, Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) are developed to provide the necessary administrative direction to DND employees and CAF members.

DAOD 5023-0 outlines the principle of universality of service, which represents the absolute minimum operational standard that is required to serve as a CAF member. At its core, the principle of universality of service holds that all CAF members possess the same baseline level of capability, regardless of environmental service, rank, or occupation to perform general military duties and common defence and security duties, not just the duties of their military occupation or occupation specification.

The ACA applies to both DND and the CAF, however, it's important to note that universality of service may supersede its requirements, per the [exemption provided within the Act](#). This overlap in direction creates complexities in the application of the ACA within the Defence Team. Moving forward, as part of its commitment to accessibility, the Defence Team will endeavor to clarify points of overlap to ensure a balanced and consistent application.

Organizational Contact Information

The person designated to receive feedback on this report on behalf of DND is Sherri Wilson, Director, Inclusion, and Executive responsible for the Defence Team Accessibility Plan.

To request a copy of the enclosed progress report in an alternate format, provide feedback, obtain information on the feedback process, or for all other accessibility-related inquiries, please contact the Defence Team Accessibility Office in one of the following ways:

Mailing Address

Attn: Defence Team Accessibility Office – Chief Professional Conduct and Culture
National Defence Headquarters (Carling)
60 Moodie Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K2

Email Address: [DND Accessibility-Accessibilite MDN@forces.gc.ca](mailto:MDN@forces.gc.ca)

Accessibility Priority Areas

1. Culture

The Defence Team recognizes that accessibility is a key pillar to culture and conduct transformation for the Defence Team as it is connected to all levels of policies, programs, practices and services. To this end, the Defence Team Accessibility Office was established in July 2023 within Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC) as the functional authority and dedicated team responsible for the implementation of the ACA for the Defence Team. CPCC works to unify and integrate all culture change activities across the Defence Team and is mandated to establish an enduring capability to continuously align Defence culture to ensure professional conduct meets the standards expected of the profession of arms and the Defence Team. Under this mandate, the Accessibility Office is well positioned within CPCC to provide expert and balanced support to and enable L1s across the Defence Team to identify and remove barriers for people with disabilities in their respective organizations while ensuring alignment of efforts.

Barriers for culture identified in 2023:

- Need for greater awareness of and learning opportunities about persons with disabilities, accessibility and barriers.
- Negative beliefs, assumptions and comments about neurodivergent people.
- Derogatory terms used regularly to refer to people with disabilities.
- Application of the universality of service principle creates stigma around and discrimination against CAF members with disabilities.
- Negative attitudes towards and treatment of people with disabilities in the CAF.
- CAF members with disabilities are harassed at times for non-deployment.

Return to the office (RTO) culture related barriers:

- People with disabilities feel less safe in the physical office.
- Workplace shared hoteling stations do not consider the need for ergonomic setups and instead rely heavily on a one size fits all approach.
- Workplace hoteling stations re-enforce an unaccommodated approach to working.

Moving forward, the removal of barriers for and ensuring the intended full inclusion of persons with disabilities will require a shift in organizational culture where accessibility needs are proactively and systematically integrated into everyday business practices and embedded in all levels of decision making. It is expected that culture-related barriers will continue to be identified as these shifts occur. To ensure that the Defence Team remains responsive, it will be critical that culture is embedded into all systems and practices and that leadership is equipped to support culture. One way this will be done will be implementing and leveraging the Defence Team Culture Evolution Strategy, which aims to align, inform, coordinate, and enable culture evolution efforts across the organization, providing an opportunity to ensure that accessibility needs and considerations are fully and proactively integrated into all levels of the organization.

2. Employment

The Defence Team continues to identify and remove barriers to recruitment, retention, promotion, and career advancement for people with disabilities.

In 2023, an Employment Systems Review (ESR) was conducted for DND. The ESR consisted of a comprehensive review of the organization's policies and practices to identify the systemic and attitudinal barriers to employment opportunities for designated group members. Findings from the ESR will serve as a basis for the development of an action plan that will address the identified barriers and will also contribute to better understanding the gaps in representation for persons with disabilities. This information will also inform the department's recruitment strategy for persons with disabilities, as part of the Government of Canada (GOC) objective of hiring 5,000 new public servants

with disabilities by 2025, which will be developed next calendar year. Guidance on recruitment campaigns and pre-applications are currently being developed.

In support of ensuring persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to meet and succeed the objectives of their job, an implementation plan to introduce the GOC Workplace Accessibility Passport has been developed. An organization has been selected to pilot the initiative and the launch is expected by the end of the 2023 calendar year with planning for full implementation of the passport underway. Roll-out of the passport will include training material for managers and executives so that they are confident to support employees with accessibility needs. At this time, the GOC Accessibility Passport will only be available to employees of DND. A CAF-specific solution remains to be identified.

Barriers for employment identified in 2023:

- There are regular instances where the spirit and intent of the GOC Accessibility Passport is not honoured.
- There are multiple examples where the GOC Accessibility Passport solutions are not supported, despite it being followed by previous employers.
- There is no CAF-specific solution to the GOC Accessibility Passport.
- DND work arrangement processes are contradictory and need to be aligned.
- The mainstream culture remains that workplace accommodations are adjudicated by senior executives, causing personal information to be shared unnecessarily widely.
- Differences between CAF and Public Service privacy of personal information policies are not well understood as they relate to the accommodations process.
- Lack of subject matter expertise regarding accommodations in the assessment process.
- No proactive technical assistance offered or provided during the onboarding process to employees who self-identify with a disability and require additional assistance.
- No clear direction in accommodation processes in relation to onboarding.
- Gap in considerations for the intersection of disability and recruitment of Indigenous applicants.
- Burden is placed on hiring managers of employees with disabilities to manage accommodations, which creates a barrier to hiring persons with disabilities as it creates a culture where there is less or no incentive to hire employees with disabilities as it poses increased administrative burdens, confusion, and frustration for both the Manager and employee.
- Defence Team members with disabilities are not promoted as rapidly.

In anticipation of increased hiring of persons with disabilities, employment related efforts will be focused on improving the civilian onboarding process to ensure employees feel safe to disclose accessibility needs and that needs are met as early as possible in the process. Part of this work will involve defining, aligning, and streamlining the current workplace accommodation process. The opportunity to incorporate accessibility specific questions into the existing new employee onboarding survey will also be considered to ensure evolving needs are continuously identified.

The development of a variety of guidance documents, tools, and training for staffing advisors and subdelegated managers are already underway and these materials will continue to be refined through feedback processes. For instance, over the next year, the GOC Accessibility Passport will be made available to more employees and appropriate training on its use will be provided to supervisors and managers to ensure application of the passport honours its intended purpose. Work to identify a CAF-specific solution for the GOC Accessibility Passport will also continue to be explored.

3. Built Environment

The Defence Team continues to assess and improve the accessibility of the built environment within DND and the CAF, ensuring accessibility requirements are considered and incorporated to meet the needs of its members, employees and clients. For the 2023-24 fiscal year, 45 accessibility-related real property projects were identified and 32 are scheduled to be completed by the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 2024). These statistics exclude accessibility-related work being undertaken as part of larger built environment projects.

DND continues to assess its real property requirements using the new GOC Workplace Standard and identify opportunities for rationalizing. It is anticipated that a similar exercise will be undertaken over the coming year for CAF Bases and Wings. Regardless of potential opportunities for rationalizing, the accessibility of the built environment will remain a top area of priority.

Barriers for built environment identified in 2023:

- Built environment of bases is not accessible by design.
- Assistive technology, such as elevators, are often disabled on bases.
- Buildings lack clear and accessible labelling and signage.
- Common spaces on bases are not designed with accessibility needs in mind.
- The number of accessible housing units on bases is limited.
- Instances have been highlighted where higher-ranking officers with no disabilities are allocated accessible housing as it is more spacious and those needing accessible housing are forced to use non-accessible housing.
- The cost for accessible housing is greater.

Over the next year, the Defence Team will continue to update its current policy instruments related to accessible design for the built environment and accessible dwellings to new versions that are more inclusive of an accessibility lens. For instance, the Accessibility and Inclusive Design Standard and Guidelines is currently being developed and is expected to be finalized next calendar year. The document will build on the elements of the original Construction Engineering and Technical Order (CETO). Moreover, new contracts involving the built environment proactively consider and address accessibility requirements to ensure that the Defence Team's build environment is proactively accessible by design.

4. Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Ensuring accessibility considerations are at the core of the design and delivery of Defence Team programs and services will be integral to contributing to the goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

The Office of Disability Management (ODM) offers an impartial space for both employees and their managers to receive support and guidance through all stages of injury, impairment or illness. In line with its mandate, the ODM takes particular attention to ensuring that client-facing human resource services are fully accessible for persons with disabilities. This includes, and is not limited to, ensuring web content conforms to WCAG 2.0 standards and that all documents, tools, and resources are accessible in support of barrier-free programs and services. The ODM also remains committed to monitoring and integrating feedback from employees with disabilities to ensure programs and services remain as barrier-free as possible.

Barrier for design and delivery of programs and services identified in 2023:

- Many of the current policies place the burden on individual with disabilities to identify solutions rather than a proactive application of accessibility considerations by service providers (for example, accommodation process and fire safety and evacuation planning).

Over the coming year, the Defence Team will continue to work towards reviewing its programs and services and their related policies to help move the organization to a barrier-free workplace.

5. Information and Communication Technologies

Information and communication technologies (ICT) refers to the available software and hardware that support accessibility goals and enables employees with disabilities to perform at their best. This remains an area where the Defence Team continues to focus its efforts and strives to adopt a fully accessible standard of ICT.

In 2023, the Defence Team took steps to incorporate accessibility features into Microsoft Office 365, an integral component of the present-day work environment. For

instance, in Microsoft Teams, instant translation capabilities and live meeting captions are now available. The Office Desktop Suite, including Word, Excel and PowerPoint, offers built-in translators and dictation (speech-to-text) features to support the creation of documents, emails, notes, and presentations, including subtitle captioning specific to PowerPoint. An article highlighting these features was made available to all DND employees and CAF members. Additional Defence Team Microsoft Office 365 (D365) accessibility guides are also available to employees (i.e., D365 Hearing Aid Guide, D365 Neural Guide, and a D365 Vision Guide).

Barriers for information and communication technologies identified in 2023:

- Inconsistent approval of requests to use certain information communication technologies.
- Long wait times to obtain information communication technologies.
- Entire applications are not accessible (for example, Power BI and Adobe Acrobat).

Although progress is underway, significant work remains for the organization to be in a position to successfully adopt a fully-accessible standard of ICT and provide DND employees and CAF members barrier-free ICT services. To continue to advance progress over the coming year, the Defence Team will strive to publish an accessibility statement on the level of compliance of ICT and indicate, where appropriate, inaccessible content and the accessible alternative. The Defence Team will also take steps to ensure that information management (IM) and information technology (IT) policies include and set out requirements regarding accessible information and information technologies.

6. Communication (other than Information and Communication Technologies)

Various communication activities are ongoing at the organizational level to ensure that products and activities are barrier-free and support awareness of accessible communication practices. Types of initiatives undertaken include the distribution of communications to staff on the importance of accessible documents, use of sign language interpreters for events, use of plain language in written communications, and application of an accessibility lens to the development and publication of information products.

Barriers for communication identified in 2023:

- Often only single channels of communications are made available with no alternatives (for example, email-only or telephone-only communication).
- Formatting of military documents inherently inaccessible (for example, use of all caps in CANFORGENS).

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- Products are often not written in plain language.
 - Official language requirements and expectations for employees with disabilities is not accessible.

Although efforts are underway in this area, there is a need for a coordinated Defence Team enterprise approach that provides clear and consistent direction on the development and application of barrier-free communication products and activities. In the coming year, a Defence Team communications strategy will be finalized. This will be the first step in ensuring that all internal and external Defence Team communication products and activities meet the appropriate accessibility standards and will ultimately contribute to an accessibility-confident workforce.

7. Transportation

Transportation remains a complex area for the Defence Team to address due to its international footprint and the many Base and Wing Commands across Canada. While commitments have been made to remove barriers to transportation, much work remains to be done.

Barriers for transportation identified in 2023:

- Not enough accessible parking spaces in relation to the demand.
- No parking spaces for persons with temporary disabilities.
- Very few accessible parking spaces on bases.
- Often accessible parking spaces are blocked by construction, rendering them inaccessible.
- Parking is assigned by rank and not by accessibility requirements.
- No lift on vehicles used on bases.
- Accessible parking accommodation process is confusing, requests can go unfulfilled and parking lot contractors can be unresponsive.
- Onus falls to the employee to make their own arrangements for parking accommodations, which is the employer's responsibility.

The Defence Team's planned actions over the coming year include but are not limited to:

- Review designated accessible routes on campuses, bases and wings to ensure they are safe.
- Ensure adequate accessible parking is available to employees with physical/mobility disabilities and review requirements for annual renewal of accessible parking permits.

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- Consider whether physical layouts of campuses, bases and wings are accessible in winter and during inclement weather. Consider the impact of climate change and develop plans to address these challenges.
 - Ensure shuttle buses for on base transportation are accessible.

8. Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Procurement activities for DND and the CAF are complex due to the volume and scope of requests. Although efforts to modernize procurement practices to include accessibility considerations are underway for the Defence Team, there is acknowledgement that gaps remain.

The Defence Team Material Group is an active participant in the Agents of Change for Accessible Procurement Interdepartmental Working Group led by the Accessible Procurement Resource Centre at Public Service and Procurement Canada. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss best practices, existing barriers and contribute to the review of resources on accessible procurements across the Government of Canada, applying lessons learned for the Defence Team where possible. In support of continuous learning with respect to accessible procurement, a procurement bulletin was issued to the procurement community in May 2023 to disseminate information concerning accessibility-related training and events being provided by the Shared Services Canada Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) Program.

There were no new barriers identified for the procurement of goods, services and facilities identified in 2023. Over the coming year, the Defence Team will continue to work towards delivering on commitments and removing barriers identified in the 2022 Accessibility Plan under this priority area and will remain committed to proactively identifying or responding to any new barriers identified through the feedback process.

Efforts to revise procurement policies to ensure clear guidance and effective barrier-free solutions will continue over the next several years with the following planned actions:

- Review and update the Procurement Administration Manual (PAM) on Accessible Procurement, including the Accessible Procurement SharePoint page referenced within, by December 2023.
- Finalize review of the Statement of Work (SOW) standard and update content as required by September 2024.
- Develop content by December 2025 on accessibility requirements for a new section on Technical Support for Procurement Management and Social Procurement of the Technical Support Guide.

Consultations

Consultations on the Implementation of the Defence Team Accessibility Plan – Year 1 (2023)

Consultations on the first year of implementation of the Defence Team Accessibility Plan and the development of the 2023 Progress Report were undertaken with various groups to ensure diverse and representative input of persons with disabilities. The Defence Team remains committed to approaching its responsibilities under the ACA with the “Nothing Without Us” guiding principle, whereby persons with disabilities are engaged and involved when developing the policies, programs and services that impact them.

The National and Local co-chairs of the Defence Advisory Group for Persons with Disabilities (DAGPWD) was consulted on the 2023 Progress Report over a one-day retreat, held in-person and virtually. Progress against commitments were discussed, as well as barriers that were not captured in the original plan. Co-chairs of the other Defence Advisory Groups (DAGs) – the Defence Indigenous Advisory Group; the Defence Visible Minority Advisory Group; the Defence Women’s Advisory Organization; and the Defence Team Pride Advisory Organization – were also included in the consultation to ensure that an intersectional perspective was included in barrier identification.

To support a further coordinated and integrated approach to accessibility within the Defence Team and build on the momentum of this past year, a Director-level accessibility working group has been established. The working group brings together key stakeholders from across the Defence Team and provides a forum to discuss matters of mutual interest as they relate to and intersect with accessibility. The working group also provides an opportunity for accessibility stakeholders to coordinate and leverage efforts across the Defence Team, where possible.

The way accessibility fits into the existing governance structure is being reconsidered to ensure the Defence Team is positioned to continue to make meaningful change in addressing the barriers identified and preventing others from arising in the longer term. Specifically, an inclusion sub-committee has been re-established which will provide a forum for accessibility-related issues to be discussed at the executive level. This forum will be key to ensuring that executives are made aware of barriers identified and that solutions receive the approvals and traction that will allow service providers to take the necessary actions to removing the barriers.

It is recognized that moving forward there is a need for more regular consultation with persons with disabilities to ensure that the Defence Team remains agile in its efforts to remove barriers for persons with disabilities while also ensuring that planned activities and those underway remain relevant. The timing of the establishment of the Defence Team Accessibility Office in July 2023 did not offer sufficient time to undertake the

desired level of consultation for this reporting period. However, with the dedicated office now in place, a comprehensive consultation and engagement plan to ensure success in the way we move forward as a Defence Team will be designed and implemented in the next 12 months.

Feedback

Assessments on the Defence Team's Implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act*

As part of its commitment to accessibility, the Defence Team has been proactive in conducting its own internal assessment on implementation of ACA while also remaining open and compliant to participating in mandatory external assessments. The feedback and recommendations received through these assessments have been consistent and can be summarized under the following areas:

1. Defining Roles and Responsibilities

The current and first iteration of the Defence Team Accessibility Plan was co-produced between various stakeholders. In the absence of a clear single lead, an external contracted resource was engaged and a working group was established to support the development of the plan.

Findings from the Defence Team internal assessment of the implementation of the ACA highlighted that moving forward, the organization would benefit from introducing and defining clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders to ensure that efforts are coordinated and unified. Second to this recommendation was to establish a clear lead and functional authority for accessibility for the Defence Team, aligning with the Public Service of Canada Accessibility Strategy that outlines the expectation that an executive lead be appointed to coordinate the department's accessibility plan.

In 2023, the Defence Team Accessibility Office was established as the dedicated team responsible for the implementation of the ACA and Defence Team accessibility plan. The team resides outside of the human resources space and instead within CPCC, who's mandate is to establish an enduring capability to continuously align Defence culture to ensure professional conduct meets the standards expected of the profession of arms and the Defence Team. A Director level accessibility working group was also established to bring together key stakeholders from across the Defence Team. The working group provides an opportunity for roles and responsibilities to be defined and applied. These efforts of establishing a single lead and identifying clear roles and responsibilities across stakeholders will be integral to the successful implementation of the ACA and the long-term sustainability of the current plan and its future iterations.

2. Measuring Progress

Insights from the Office of Public Service Accessibility's (OPSA) 2023 analysis of accessibility plans across the public service identified that there was room for improvement in how departments were measuring and tracking progress against its accessibility commitments and barrier removal. Although some departments referred to ways that progress and success would be tracked, most plans did not include details on a measurement strategy or measurement indicators.

The Defence Team is committed to developing a measurement strategy and is currently working to identify meaningful and longitudinal indicators. The inclusion of accessibility indicators in future reports and plans will be important to supporting the Defence Team's efforts in removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities. As a large and complex department, a defined accessibility measurement strategy will be key to not only measuring its progress over time, but it will also provide an opportunity for the Defence Team to ensure that its efforts are having the intended affect to barrier removal and that the organization is well positioned to adapt to the evolving accessibility landscape. Central to the development of the Defence Team's measurement strategy is ensuring that the strategy is integrated into the larger culture space and initiatives. Understanding and leveraging the intersections of accessibility and culture will help further ensure that accessibility considerations are proactively and systematically considered across the Defence Team.

3. Expanding Consultation Efforts

A recommendation from the Defence Team's internal assessment on the implementation of the ACA concluded that the department could benefit from formalizing and expanding its accessibility consultation process. The consultations undertaken as part of the development of the inaugural Defence Team accessibility plan in 2022 were conducted in accordance with the ACA, Accessible Canada Regulations, and the Public Service of Canada Accessibility Strategy requirements. Nonetheless, consultations were limited considering the size of the organization. This feedback was also raised by members of the Defence Advisory Group for Persons with Disabilities (DAGPWD).

Although efforts were taken to expand the consultation progress in the development of the enclosed 2023 progress report, for instance through a full day consultation with the DAGPWD, the process still had gaps and was not as robust as it will need to be moving forward. It is recognized that ongoing and intentional consultations with persons with disabilities and lived experience is key to the Defence Team's commitment to a barrier-free workplace by 2040. A diverse and representative consultation process will help ensure that planned and ongoing initiatives consider all disabilities, the different ways that persons with disabilities interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities.

Moving forward, the Defence Team will be reviewing its consultation process and ensure that mechanisms and opportunities are in place for persons with disabilities to

provide feedback on a regular basis and not only in response to the development of plans or progress reports. The consultation process will be transparent whereby consulted groups and individuals will be informed on how they can provide feedback throughout the year, how and when they will be consulted and how their feedback will be used. Various means for consultation will also be considered to ensure that the process remains accessible to all who wish to participate. It is essential that feedback from persons with disabilities and those with lived experience is continuously reflected in the Defence Team's accessibility efforts to ensure that efforts continue to meet the needs of the communities.

Defence Team Member Feedback

New barriers were also identified by members of the Defence Team through the various consultation mechanisms and the feedback process. These barriers have been summarized under each of the respective accessibility priority areas above.

The Way Forward

In the first year of its Accessibility Plan, the Defence Team has taken the necessary time to consider the commitments and actions outlined in the plan and analyze the best way forward in their implementation. Needs assessments have been undertaken, engagements have been conducted, and gap analyses have been performed all with the goal of ensuring that the approach to implementation is calculated and meets the desired results. Although this approach has been essential for the Defence Team to plan its way forward, it is recognized that there is a growing need for the organization to shift its focus to the implementation phase and focus on taking further concrete action.

Over the next year, the Defence Team will find the balance in an approach to implementation that moves the organization forward in an intentional way while also prioritizing the tangible work that requires attention. The organization will leverage the design of the accessibility planning and reporting cycle to fine-tune its approach, where needed, and document these adjustments so that efforts remain transparent and evergreen. The planned implementation of a robust consultation plan and development of an accessibility measurement strategy will also offer opportunities to assess progress and impact, and signal where adjustments are needed. There may be setbacks, missteps, and disappointments, but these will be opportunities for learning, improvement, and growth, and the Defence Team will remain dedicated to continuing to move forward with this important work.

Annex A – Defence Team Accessibility Plan Commitments

Pillar 1 – Culture					
Build an accessibility-confident public service					
Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
1.1	Increased awareness of and support for persons with disabilities and the value they bring to the organization—shaping the perspective of public service employees towards an accessibility-confident workforce	Develop and implement communications strategy to build an accessibility-confident Defence Team	CPCC ADM(PA)	-	FY 2023/24
1.2	DAGPWD has the opportunity to provide accessibility lens on initiatives impacting personnel	Support employee networks, such as the Defence Advisory Groups for Persons with Disabilities (DAGPWD)	CPCC	All L1s	Ongoing

Pillar 2 – Employment					
Improve recruitment, retention, and promotion of Persons with Disabilities					
Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
2.1	Persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to public service staffing processes	Remove any systemic barriers from DND public service recruitment and promotion policies and practices	ADM(HR-Civ)	-	FY 2024/25

2.2	DND Public Service workforce represents Canadian labour market availabilities	Increase public service representation of persons with disabilities to meet or exceed workforce availability by 2025/26	All L1s	ADM(HR-Civ)	FY 2025/26
2.3	Public Service employee's pre-onboarding and onboarding experience considers and integrates accessibility needs	Improve civilian onboarding (including pre-onboarding) guidance to ensure employees feel safe to disclose accessibility needs, and needs are met as early as possible	ADM(HR-Civ)	-	FY 2023/24
2.4	DND's executives and managers support employees with disabilities by meeting accessibility and accommodation needs	Improve supports to managers and executives in meeting employee needs	ADM(HR-Civ)	-	FY 2023/24

Pillar 3 - Built environment

Increase the accessibility of the built environment within the Defence Team

Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
3.1	Assess and improve the accessibility of the built environment within DND/CAF	Conduct accessibility audits and triage the results	ADM(IE)	-	5-year cycle
3.1.1	-	Perform pilot project/study with Rick Hansen Foundation to conduct accessibility audit	ADM(IE)	-	2024-25

3.1.2	-	Prioritize funding within budget for built environment accessibility deficiencies	ADM(IE)	All L1 (support for prioritization)	Annual
3.1.3	-	Create and implement a national office reservation system which identifies accessible spaces and equipment	ADM(IM)	ADM(IE)	-
3.1.4	-	Designate a person responsible for accessibility at each base/wing	L1 Comd (with Base responsibilities)	ADM(IE)	2023
3.1.5	-	Create an open and transparent system for tracking accessibility requests and solutions	ADM(IE)	All L1 (support for identification / prioritization)	-
3.1.6	-	Assess real property requirements in view of flexible work arrangements	L1s/ Commands	ADM(IE)	-
3.2	Continue to improve and develop documents related to accessibility in the built environment	Continue to ensure any new contracts involving the built environment have considered requirements for accessibility	ADM(IE)	-	-
3.2.1	-	Revise Barrier Free – Minor Variance process and form	ADM(IE)	-	-
3.2.2	-	Transition current policy instruments related to accessibility to the new format (CETO, policy, directive, standard, guidelines)	ADM(IE)	-	Perpetual updates

3.2.3	-	Develop inclusive design guidelines, including accessibility in the built environment	ADM(IE)	-	2023
3.2.4	-	Create signage for buildings that clearly designates inclusive spaces	ADM(IE)	-	-

Pillar 4 – Services

Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services

Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
4.1	Persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to meet or succeed at the objectives of their job, barrier-free	Remove accessibility barriers from public service accommodation and performance management program	ADM(HR-Civ)	-	FY 2024/25
4.1.2	-	Develop implementation plan to pilot /introduce and implement Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport as deemed appropriate	ADM(HR-Civ)	VCDS ADM(IE) ADM(IM) CPCC	FY 2023/24
4.2	Client-facing HR service channels are fully accessible for persons with disabilities	Ensure accessibility of HR service channels and program materials	ADM(HR-Civ)	-	FY 2023/24
4.3	Persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to provide feedback regularly	Monitor and integrate feedback from employees with disabilities into programs and services	All L1s	-	Ongoing

4.4	DND provides access to a suite of learning products on accessibility to create a barrier-free workplace	Create a suite of learning products on accessibility	ADM(HR-Civ)	-	FY 2025/26
4.5	persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to participate in DND's hybrid workforce	Ensure accessibility considerations and feedback are included in all hybrid workforce policy and guidance	ADM(HR-Civ)	ADM(IM) ADM(IE) VCDS	FY 2025/26

Pillar 5 - Information and Communication Technologies

Create a fully-accessible standard for information and communication technologies

Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
5.1	Adopt a fully-accessible standard of information and communication technologies	Increase accessibility of accessible technologies and ICT at the organizational level	ADM(IM)	-	-
5.1.1	-	Enforce accessible communication standards already in place	-	ADM(PA)	-
5.1.2	-	Incorporate accessibility check add-ons into frequently used technologies and services	-	DGIMTSP/ DIMCD	-
5.1.3	-	Incorporate accessibility features into Microsoft Office 365	DGIMTSP/D365	-	-
5.1.4	-	Standardize the equipment that allows for videoconferencing	SSC	-	-

5.2	Support the integration of accessible technologies into high-security environments	Document functional solutions to create a resource for procurement	VCDSGDGS DGIMTSP/DIM ADM(Mat)	DIMCBM/IM Proc	-
5.3	Provide DND employees and CAF members barrier-free computing services	Procure and provide technical aids, equipment, and services (repairing technical aids and equipment) for persons with disabilities	ADM(IM)/CIO	-	-
5.3.1	-	Allow persons with disabilities to retain technical aids, equipment and support materials when moving to another position within the GC or the CAF, and when the accommodation is still required	DGIMTSP/DIM CD	All SMCs	-
5.3.2	-	Ensure that IM and IT policies include/set requirements with regard to accessible information and information technologies	-	DDIMP (IM/IT) DIM Security	-
5.3.3	-	Ensure that accurate and comprehensive data on the accessibility of ICT is available to support analysis, decision-making, monitoring and performance reporting	-	-	-

5.3.4	-	Publish an accessibility statement on the level of compliance of ICT and indicate, where appropriate, inaccessible content and the accessible alternative	-	-	-
5.3.5	-	Have a feedback mechanism for users to flag accessibility issues or ask for an accessible alternative of the content	-	-	-

Pillar 6 – Communications

Provide access to fully-accessible communications systems

Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
6.1	Ensure equitable access to information through accessible communications systems for all Defence Team members	Leverage existing resources to provide all Defence Team members with the tools required to create accessible documents	ADM(PA)	-	-
6.1.1	-	Promote the use of resources to create accessible documents	All L1s	DGEAS/DKIM	-
6.1.2	-	Use plain language in communications and ensure all images that are shared come with an Alt text description that is accessible by screen readers	All L1s	-	-

6.1.3	-	Use Translation Bureau services to access sign language interpretation as needed	All L1s	-	-
6.1.4	-	Use Accessibility Checker or other tools to verify standards are being met	DGEAS/DKIM	-	-
6.1.5	-	Distribute communication materials in accessible formats in advance of meetings or courses wherever feasible	DGEAS/DKIM	-	-
6.1.6	-	Be confident in requesting accommodation and/or accessible formats	ADM(PA)	-	-
6.2	Ensure all communications meet Accessible Canada Regulations standards	Align all communications with WCAG standards	ADM(PA)	All L1s	-
6.2.1	-	Conduct random survey of widely distributed materials to test for accessibility	CPCC	-	-

Pillar 7 – Transportation

Provide equitable and accessible transportation

Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
7.1	Facilitate accessible transportation for Defence Team members	Ensure adequate accessible parking is available to employees with physical/mobility disabilities as required	VCDS	ADM(IE)	-

7.1.1	-	Review requirements for annual renewal of accessible parking permits	-	-	-
7.1.2	-	Ensure shuttle buses for on base transportation are accessible	-	-	-
7.1.3	-	Review designated accessible routes to ensure they are safe and reasonable	-	ADM(IE)	-
7.1.4	-	Consider whether physical layouts of campuses, bases and wings are accessible in winter, inclement weather, and the impact of climate change, and develop plans to address these	-	ADM(IE) / Commands	-

Pillar 8: Procurement of Goods and Services
Facilitate accessible procurement for the Defence Team

Action #	Desired Result	Action	Lead L1	OCI	Timeline
8.1	Modernize procurement practices to include accessibility considerations	Revise procurement policies in consultation with the disability community in order to streamline acquisition of goods and services	ADM(Mat)	CPCC	-
8.1.1	-	Compile guidance and advice to create a handbook of accessible procurement solutions	ADM(Mat)	ODM/DIMEUS Corp Sec	-

8.1.2	-	Streamline the procurement of resources, software and equipment in support of accommodations for persons with disabilities	ADM(Mat)	CPCC	-
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Annex B – Glossary

accessibility

The degree to which a product, service, program or environment can be accessed or used by all.

accommodation

Any change in the work environment that allows a person with functional limitations to do their job. Accommodations can be temporary, periodic or long-term, including:

- adjusting the physical workspace
- adapting the equipment or tools
- working flexible hours or job-sharing
- moving the workspace
- working from home
- removing or changing some non-essential tasks for others
- time off for medical appointments

assistive or adaptive device/technology

A device, system or equipment designed to help a person do a task. Examples include canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, hearing aids and personal emergency response systems. They can also be IT-related items such as screen-reading software.

barrier

Anything 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. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological, attitudinal or based on information or communications. They can also be the result of a policy or practice.

(Source: [Accessible Canada Act](#))

clients

People, businesses or their representatives served by, or using services provided by a government department.

disability

A disability is 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. (Source: [Accessible Canada Act](#))

equity-seeking group

A group of persons who are disadvantaged based on one or more prohibited grounds of discrimination within the meaning of the Canadian Human Rights Act. (Source: [Public Service Employment Act](#))

inclusion

The act of including someone or something as part of a group. An inclusive workplace is fair, equitable, supportive, welcoming and respectful.

Inclusion values and leverages differences in identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences and perspectives that support and reinforce Canada's evolving human rights framework. (Source: [Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion](#))

nothing without us

"Nothing without us" is one of the guiding principles of the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#). It means that persons with disabilities need to be fully and directly involved in the design of policies, plans, programs and services.

self-identification

Providing employment equity information for statistical purposes. The federal public service uses this information to monitor the progress of employment equity groups and to report on workforce representation.

systemic barrier

A systemic barrier is a pattern of behaviour in the policies and practices of an organization, which puts equity-seeking groups at a disadvantage.