

COURTS ADMINISTRATION SERVICE

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

PROGRESS REPORT

2023

Courts Administration Service Accessibility Plan Progress Report 2023

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Rapport d'étape sur le plan d'accessibilité 2023.

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Cat. No. JU17-11E-PDF (Electronic PDF, English)

ISSN 2818-1891

This document is available on the Courts Administration Service website at:

https://www.cas-satj.gc.ca/en/publications/accessibility_plans/progress-report-2023.shtml

Table of Contents

- Message from the Chief Administrator and Chief Executive Officer 4
- General 4
 - Contact Us..... 4
 - Requesting Alternate Formats..... 5
 - To provide your feedback 5
- Introduction..... 5
- Priority Areas Progress Update..... 6
 - Culture..... 6
 - Employment 7
 - The Built Environment 8
 - Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)..... 9
 - Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies 9
 - The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities..... 10
 - The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services..... 11
 - Transportation..... 11
- Consultations 12
 - How we consulted 12
 - What we heard..... 12
- Feedback..... 13

Message from the Chief Administrator and Chief Executive Officer

In December 2022, we published our [Accessibility Plan 2022–2025](#), which outlined the specific actions we would take to identify and remove barriers to accessibility, while not creating new ones. The plan, which is the first of its kind to be implemented at the Courts Administration Service (CAS), reflects our commitment to supporting the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and making Canada barrier-free by 2040.

It is my pleasure to now present our first Accessibility Plan Progress Report. In this report, we highlight the progress we have made to date against the objectives identified in our Accessibility Plan. The objectives relate to all priority areas identified in the ACA, including employment, the built environment, information and communication technologies, communication, procurement, design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation. We also chose to include culture as an additional priority area given the importance of fostering a workplace in which each individual understands the importance of accessibility and plays an active role in creating and maintaining a barrier-free environment.

I am proud to say that we have made demonstrable progress over the past year in identifying and removing barriers, while recognizing that we still have work to do. As we move forward with the implementation of our 3-year plan, we will continue making concrete and measurable improvements that ensure we are fostering a diverse and inclusive environment that is accessible for all.

Darlene Carreau
Chief Administrator and Chief Executive Officer

General

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TTY access is available via Bell TTY Relay service by dialling 711 and providing our number to a Bell Relay operator, who acts as an intermediary to facilitate the call. For detailed instructions, you can visit [Bell TTY Relay Services | Accessibility Services | Bell Canada](#).

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Requesting Alternate Formats

To request an alternate format of this progress report, our [accessibility plan](#) or our [feedback process](#), please contact us using one of the methods detailed above.

To provide your feedback

You can contact the Manager, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism using any of the contact information listed above. You can also provide your feedback anonymously by completing the [Accessibility Feedback Form](#).

For more details on our feedback process and to read our privacy notices, please visit the [Accessibility Feedback Process page](#) and the [Accessibility Feedback Form page](#).

Introduction

The Courts Administration Service (CAS) is committed to advancing accessibility and contributing to making Canada barrier-free by 2040. To deliver on our commitment, we published, in December 2022, our first accessibility plan — [the Accessibility Plan 2022–2025](#) — with respect to the requirements of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA) and the [Accessible Canada Regulations](#) (Regulations).

The ACA and its Regulations state that “an entity must publish a progress report ... by the anniversary of the date by which the accessibility plan was last required to be published for each year in which there is no date by which a version of the accessibility plan is required to be published¹.”

Consequently, CAS developed this first annual progress report on CAS’s Accessibility Plan 2022–2025 in collaboration with CAS Accessibility Plan Working Group. Feedback gathered during consultations with persons with disabilities was also integrated into the report. The report details advancements made against actions identified under the different priority areas, as set forth in our three-year Accessibility Plan. These priority areas are:

- culture

¹ [Accessible Canada Regulations](#)

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

We are proud to say that we have made tangible progress towards achieving our goals. However, a great deal remains to be done as we continue to strive to make our organization barrier-free to all.

Priority Areas Progress Update

Culture

We have been actively working towards achieving our objective to “promote a culture of inclusivity at CAS where accessibility is understood, promoted and embedded in all areas”, and towards advancing its related action items as detailed in the Accessibility Plan 2022–2025.

Senior management and different divisions at CAS collaborated in order to raise awareness by sending messages to all employees and to promote events and learning activities on accessibility, diversity, inclusion and equity. A few examples of the communications sent to all employees can be found in the section entitled [Communication, other than ICT](#).

In addition, in November 2022, we launched an Accessibility Hub on CAS’ intranet, which contains learning materials and resources on accessibility and inclusion. The Hub continues to be promoted regularly.

The Human Resources Division (HRD) also provided access to diversity and inclusion awareness training and tools to all employees, including those in leadership positions. Topics focussed on unconscious bias, microaggressions and inclusive hiring practices. The HRD also offered training on anti oppression and on addressing unconscious biases in recruitment. This is in addition to the courses available through the Canada School of Public Service, which have been promoted frequently and listed on the Accessibility Hub.

In addition, the HRD has provided tools, strategies and support to managers in relation to disability and accommodation conversations and requests. The division is currently in the process of developing related training material and a mental health strategy aimed at destigmatizing disabilities and supporting psychological health and safety.

Work undertaken on culture remains an ongoing priority for CAS and will be reported on in the 2024 progress report.

Employment

In order to deliver on our engagement towards employment as a priority area, we have taken concrete actions to “promote and implement accessible human resources practices in order to enhance the recruitment, retention and development of persons with disabilities” as per the Accessibility Plan.

In working towards achieving this objective, it was crucial to review our programs, policies and practices, identify barriers to employment faced by employment equity designated groups² and determine causes of any representation gaps. Consequently, we conducted an Employment Systems Review (ESR), which involved leveraging workforce analysis results and a thorough review of CAS policies, programs and practices to identify any obstacles that may hinder employment opportunities for designated group members, including persons with disabilities. Consultations were also part of the ESR methodology. The ESR resulted in recommendations that allowed us to determine goals, initiatives and actions aimed at improving the recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities. We have reflected some of these in our Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and in our Employment Equity Plan 2023–2026, which includes hiring targets for persons with disabilities.

In order to foster trust and improve the accuracy of representation to better influence our action plans and strategies, CAS’s self-identification process will be conducted in line with the launch of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat’s new self identification process. In preparation for the launch, the HRD has been actively coordinating actions and changes to be taken into consideration for the implementation. The outcomes of this new process will help guide next steps towards updating action plans.

Actions consisting of reviewing CAS’s hiring processes, including assessments from an accessibility standpoint to remove barriers, were completed in June 2023. As per the direction and tools provided by the Public Service Commission of Canada (PSC), the HRD and CAS hiring managers have been working closely to prepare for the implementation of the amendments to the *Public Service Employment Act*, which came into force on July 1, 2023. The legislative amendments were part of several that were introduced to address biases and barriers that disadvantage people belonging to an equity-seeking group, including persons with disabilities. Consequently, hiring managers are now required to evaluate any assessment methods that they use in a hiring process (for example, interviews, written exams, etc.) to identify whether they include or create biases and barriers. If any biases or barriers are identified, hiring managers must make reasonable efforts to remove them or to mitigate their impact.

To deliver on the new legislative requirements, which allow more inclusive hiring practices, CAS has consulted with other departments to seek best practices. A focus group was also put together within our organization to work on this. As a result, the CAS Staffing Services webpage was updated with links to the tools and guides on identifying and mitigating biases and barriers that were provided by the PSC. In order to ensure compliance with the new requirements, an attestation form was developed. This

² [Section 2 of the Employment Equity Act](#) - The four (4) designated groups include persons with disabilities.

mandatory form documents that managers have reviewed their assessment tools and practices against potential biases and barriers and taken the required actions to remove or mitigate their impact. In addition, staffing advisors took relevant training in order to provide consistent support, advice and guidance to hiring managers.

Also, the HRD continues to promote the importance of hiring qualified candidates from programs, such as the Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities and the Federal Student Work Experience Program. The division provides hiring managers with updated information shared by the PSC regarding new cohorts of available and qualified candidates.

In relation to the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility passport, the HRD is encouraging managers to attend related training and information sessions. The HRD is also reviewing the workplace accommodation process and setting clear roles and responsibilities within the organization to develop a streamlined process in preparation for the passport's digital launch within the public service.

Working on employment as a priority area is ongoing and additional progress against the priority will be incorporated into the report for 2024.

The Built Environment

The Facilities and Administrative Services Division continues to collaborate with Public Services and Procurement Canada and CAS's Security Services Division to ensure advancement towards our objective to "ensure that CAS premises across Canada are accessible and barrier-free for employees and clients."

As part of the CAS National Courts Facilities Modernization Program (NCFMP) portfolio, accessibility requirements are being assessed. This will allow opportunities for accessibility improvements to be identified and implemented. The assessment will consider individuals with limited and/or hidden mobility challenges.

In fiscal year 2023–2024, CAS initiated work to engage with a third party accessibility expert, who will independently review CAS's existing portfolio and proposed designs as part of the NCFMP to ensure that CAS's facilities across Canada are accessible and barrier-free for employees and clients. The first wave of the NCFMP is projected to be completed in fiscal year 2027–2028.

The Security Services Division reviewed the evacuation plans from an accessibility perspective. CAS's Emergency Management, and specifically, the evacuation portfolio, includes personalized evacuation plans for employees who require assistance during an evacuation.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Since the publication of CAS Accessibility Plan 2022–2025, the Digital Services Branch (DSB) continues to make progress towards its objective to “ensure digital solutions provided to CAS employees and the public are accessible.”

For instance, DSB is continuing to work with the Communications team to improve the accessibility of CAS public-facing website and ensure that publications are accessible as it prepares for a larger migration to a new website. The new website is expected to be launched in fiscal year 2024–2025.

DSB continues to provide IT equipment according to accommodation requests and has started preparing for the implementation of a new ticketing system, as a priority for fiscal year 2023–2024. The new system will ensure that there is a more reliable reporting mechanism in place and will allow for the identification of improvements in processes.

DSB provided educational materials on how to make MS Office Suite 2016 products accessible using the existing Accessibility Checker feature of the Suite. With the eventual introduction of Office 365, a refresh on this will be provided as part of the project. As it introduces new adaptive computer technologies, DSB will continue to look for opportunities to advise and inform both internal and external users of new tools availability.

DSB has planned staffing actions for fiscal year 2023–2024 to strengthen the quality management program. This will allow to better meet the needs of accessibility testing and to move towards a service design approach with a focus on user research and user design, which will ensure that future products take accessibility into account.

Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies

The Communications team made progress towards its objective of “ensuring that all internal and external communications products were accessible by default” by delivering on the action items set out in the Accessibility Plan 2022–2025. The team took steps, as exemplified below, that contributed to raising awareness among staff of the importance of accessibility and underscoring the notion that every employee, regardless of their rank or the nature of their work, has a role to play in creating accessible content.

In terms of improving the accessibility of information communicated by the team to staff, team members participated in targeted training to equip them with the knowledge and tools they need to create accessible content. The team also increased their usage of accessibility tools (e.g., Microsoft Accessibility Checker) when producing and reviewing content to ensure that it adhered to basic accessibility principles.

The team helped improve the accessibility of communications issued on behalf of other business lines by recommending, for example, formatting changes and the use of plain language, and promoting the use of the [Canada.ca Content Style Guide](#). The guide is a

set of rules for creating web content that can be easily found, understood and used; these rules are based on writing principles and techniques that help make web content clear and adapted to the needs of all people.

The team also shared guidance, tips and templates for creating accessible content, and used various vehicles (e.g., weekly newsletter, intranet site) to promote initiatives, events/activities and training opportunities, including, for example:

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- National AccessAbility Week
- Advancing Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities: Career Progression (part of a series that explores the initiatives in place to improve recruitment outcomes and meet the government's commitment to hire 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025)
- Document Accessibility Workshop

In issuing these and various other communications, the team helped ensure that information about accessibility was communicated broadly and regularly within the organization.

All of the above efforts remain ongoing in fiscal year 2023–2024 and will be reported on in the 2024 progress report.

The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

The Procurement and Material Management Services Unit made progress in terms of delivering on the action items set out under this priority area in the Accessibility Plan 2022–2025, and it continues to work towards its objective to “ensure accessible procurement is applied when purchasing goods, services and facilities.”

Employees within the unit participated in targeted training on accessibility in order to acquire needed knowledge to advise clients on accessibility requirements in procurement. For example, they participated in training offered by Shared Services Canada’s Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology team on understanding digital accessibility and disability inclusion. They also participated in training offered by the Procurement Alliance of Canada on the Directive on the Management of Procurement update in regards to accessibility.

The unit has been providing advice to business owners to ensure that accessibility considerations are included in the evaluation bid criteria for goods or services being procured. Accessibility tools (for example, the Justification Accessibility Requirement form and Accessibility in Procurement Guidance document) are also used more regularly by the unit’s employees who continue to provide support and guidance to business owners on including accessibility in their requirements.

All of the above efforts remain ongoing in fiscal year 2023–2024 and will be reported on in the 2024 progress report.

The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

In our endeavour to deliver on our objective to “design and deliver programs and services that are accessible”, we have held consultations with employees with disabilities, analyzed feedback and survey results, and consulted with the Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Committee in order to inform reliable and accessible programs and service design and delivery. For instance, as described in the “Employment” section above, consultations with employment equity groups, including persons with disabilities, were part of the methodology of the ESR, which contributed to a sound assessment of the following employment systems:

- recruitment, selection and hiring
- training and development
- promotion
- retention and termination
- reasonable accommodations

Consequently, barriers were identified and recommendations formulated; this process subsequently led to the development of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and the Employment Equity Plan. These recommendations will also support the design and delivery of different programs and services at CAS.

CAS also continues to leverage the results of the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES), with a focus on results for persons with disabilities, and results from other internal surveys to make additional recommendations on programs and services, as required. For instance, results from questions related to diversity and inclusion, discrimination and the duty to accommodate are used as performance measures to assess progress made against set objectives of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

Different offices of primary interest partnered together to raise awareness on accessibility issues and provided tips and tools on how to be more accessible in specific areas. For example, tips were provided on the use of the Accessibility Checker feature in different types of documents to correct any issues hindering their accessibility. Moreover, the HRD is currently reviewing CAS’s occupational health and safety and labour relations programs and policies with an accessibility lens.

We will continue to partner with different subject-matter experts and offices of primary interest and make greater efforts both to ensure continuous consultation with persons with disabilities and to increase their participation in the design and delivery of our programs and services.

Transportation

As mentioned in our Accessibility Plan 2022–2025, CAS does not provide transportation or parking to employees or to the public. Therefore, this section is not applicable and there is nothing to report on in this priority area.

Consultations

We have maintained consultations with persons with disabilities and incorporated their input and feedback into this Progress Report.

The information gathered through consultations, guided the development of this progress report. It was also shared with the offices of primary interest and with subject-matter experts in order to allow them to take into consideration provided recommendations in their ongoing work towards achieving identified actions in their priority area.

How we consulted

- Voluntary consultations were conducted with employees with disabilities through one-on-one meetings, as part of the ESR.
- A call-out message was sent to CAS employees, inviting colleagues with disabilities to participate in accessibility consultations through a digital survey or an individual meeting to share their comments with one of the project leads. These consultations took place prior to drafting this progress report in order to get input aimed at:
 - assessing our progress in implementing the Accessibility Plan for each priority area
 - identifying any accessibility barriers encountered at CAS for each priority area and collecting any suggestions for eliminating and preventing them
- An invitation to share ideas concerning accessibility has been posted on the diversity, Inclusion and Anti-racism page (including the Accessibility Hub) since November 2022. In addition to the generic accessibility email inbox, the contact information for each of the project leads is also provided.
- A follow-up email from an external organization, which was consulted as part of the process leading to the development of the Accessibility Plan 2022-2025, is also considered part of the information obtained through consultations. It provided guidance on improvements that can be brought to the information available on our website in regards to planning a visit to CAS facilities.
- The PSES results, particularly results obtained for persons with disabilities, were reviewed and taken into consideration.
- Consultations were held with functional communities, such as human resources professionals and the CAS Accessibility Plan Working Group, in order to assess achieved actions and the work that is still in progress as per the Accessibility Plan and identify any needed changes/updates to the plan.

What we heard

Feedback received through consultations helped shed light on improvements to accessibility, including progress made towards our Accessibility Plan 2022–2025. It also highlighted some remaining barriers to accessibility that still need to be addressed. However, indicators show that by continuing the implementation of the actions in the

priority areas of our action plan, we will continue to advance towards eliminating the identified barriers and preventing new ones from being created.

Below, we have summarized what we heard from our employees through individuals meetings, surveys and received emails:

- The increased number of awareness messages and the promotion of events and learning activities on accessibility, diversity, inclusion and equity have contributed to increased knowledge and more discussions among our employees and managers are taking place. While there has been a greater effort and more openness on the part of managers to meet the needs of employees with disabilities and those who submit requests for accommodation, it has been observed that more consideration must still be given to a person's disability, especially when it comes to training and development, in order to ensure that each person gets the proper training to perform their job and to reduce their performance related stress.
- Although efforts are being made to improve information technology for accessibility purposes, it has been observed that some work tools still need improvement (for example, the use of bigger fonts).
- Despite the fact that efforts and progress are being made in regards to the accessibility requirements of current sites and the planning of new facilities, some remaining issues in relation to the built environment still need to be addressed.

Received feedback has been provided to the relevant offices of primary interest to ensure that appropriate actions are taken.

Feedback

In keeping with the principle of judicial independence, CAS Accessibility Plan applies to the functions of the organization as part of the public service. In addition to the feedback presented above, the public also had the opportunity to provide feedback on the Accessibility Plan and encountered barriers using the accessibility feedback process. CAS has not received feedback from the public about the organization as part of the public service. However, some feedback was received in relation to judicial functions, which are not under our purview. This feedback was sent to the concerned parties, who immediately took actions to address specific situations.