



2023 Accessibility Progress Report

Canada Mortgage and
Housing Corporation

To request an alternate format, please contact us at:

1-800-668-2642
contactcentre@cmhc.ca

700 Montreal Road,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0P7

[CMHC.ca](https://www.cmhc.ca)

Canada





Table of Contents

Section 1 General	3
1.1 About CMHC	3
1.2 Our commitment to accessibility	3
1.3 Our progress to date	3
1.4 Feedback on accessibility	4
1.5 Alternate formats	5
1.6 Definitions	5
Section 2 Areas in Section 5 of the <i>Accessible Canada Act</i>	6
2.1 Employment	6
2.2 The built environment	8
2.3 Information and communication technologies (ICT).	10
2.4 Communication, other than information and communication technologies.	12
2.5 The procurement of goods, services and facilities.	14
2.6 The design and delivery of programs and services.	15
2.7 Transportation	15
Section 3 Consultations	16
Section 4 Feedback	17
Section 5 Progress Summary and Conclusion	18

Section 1

General

1.1 About CMHC

At Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), we know housing can make a transformative difference in the life of an individual, including people with disabilities. Providing access to housing that is adequate and affordable remains a major challenge of our times. As an organization, we mobilize our resources to make the greatest impact. We focus our efforts on leveraging our unique strengths to rise to the housing challenges of today and tomorrow. Our goal is to ensure everyone in Canada has a place to call home.

1.2 Our commitment to accessibility

The inclusion and equitable treatment of people with disabilities is central to CMHC's goal of ensuring everyone in Canada has a place to call home. We are committed to making the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)* a reality by taking a proactive and inclusive approach to the identification, prevention, and elimination of barriers to accessibility at CMHC. We are learning more about accessibility by listening to people with disabilities and we are harnessing these perspectives to create barrier-free and equitable access to our policies, programs, and environments for people with disabilities. We believe in treating everyone with respect and in ways that allow them to maintain their dignity and independence.

We are also applying an intersectional lens to our work at advancing disability inclusion at CMHC because we recognise that the challenges faced by people with disabilities can be magnified by other identity factors. This approach supports our commitments related to gender equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation.

1.3 Our progress to date

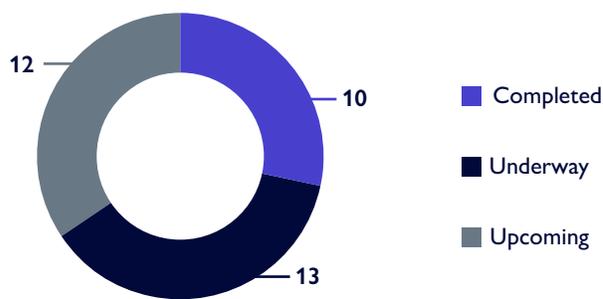
Following our consultations with people with disabilities in 2022, we identified barriers to accessibility at CMHC and we developed an Accessibility Plan that includes 35 actions that we are committing to take to improve accessibility at CMHC. These actions support CMHC's commitment to create barrier-free and equitable access to our policies, programs, and environments for people with disabilities. They are being implemented over three years (January 2023 to December 2025) and will contribute to improving accessibility and inclusivity at CMHC in the following areas:

1. employment
2. the built environment
3. information and communication technologies
4. communication, other than information and communication technologies
5. the procurement of goods, services, and facilities
6. the design and delivery of programs and services
7. transportation

We have a governance structure in place that clearly defines accountabilities across the organizations to deliver on the commitments we made in our [2023-2025 Accessibility Plan](#). Our whole of organization approach is allowing us to weave accessibility into the fabric of the organization, and to drive greater shared accountability towards advancing disability inclusion and accessibility at CMHC.

We are on track to achieve all the accessibility commitments we made in our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan. Nevertheless, we recognize that accessibility is an ongoing journey. We understand the importance of consistently evaluating opportunities to improve accessibility at CMHC, acting on feedback, and regularly consulting people with disabilities to inform our decisions. We are dedicated to listening to, and working collaboratively with, people with disabilities in our ongoing efforts to advance disability inclusion. In October 2023, we consulted people with disabilities on our progress to date and their feedback is incorporated in this report.

35 actions to improve accessibility at CMHC



Our progress and key achievements for the period of January 1 to October 31, 2023, are described in this report.

In summary, out of the 35 actions we committed to take over three years, 10 were completed in 2023 and 13 are well underway. The implementation of the remaining 12 actions is planned to start in the coming months.

The actions we completed and the areas where we progressed the most in 2023 are the following:

- Making accessibility a corporate-wide responsibility.
- Establishing and communicating processes in place to provide and deal with feedback on accessibility.
- Reviewing our Workplace Accommodation Directive and process in collaboration with people with disabilities.
- Refreshing our career page to better highlight our commitment to accessibility and inclusion.
- Providing permanent lockers and quiet spaces in all CMHC offices.
- Maturing our procedure for routine accessibility testing of our website.
- Publishing a new page on the Granville Island website with accessibility information.
- Including contact and accessibility related information in various CMHC documents, forms, and on our Housing Knowledge Centre's webpage.
- Establishing a process for meeting requests for alternative formats.
- Formalizing a plan to improve the use of plain language in CMHC documents and webpages.
- Implementing a new Equity Considerations Toolkit to help employees apply an equity lens to the design and delivery of programs and services.
- Releasing our first Universal Design Guide.

1.4 Feedback on accessibility

CMHC wants to hear from people with disabilities, whether they are employees, clients, or stakeholders. We welcome all feedback, anonymous or not, about accessibility at CMHC, and about how we are progressing at meeting the commitments we made in our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan. We will review the feedback carefully and work to address the barriers identified and prevent future barriers where possible.

We invite clients and stakeholders to contact CMHC's Contact Centre to share their feedback on accessibility. They can be reached by phone at 1-800-668-2642, by email at contactcentre@cmhc.ca, or by mail at 700 Montreal Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0P7.

CMHC employees can also share their feedback on accessibility by contacting our Employee Relations Team by email or through our internal Human Resources Case Management system. They can also submit their feedback through our independent third-party platform that supports employees in anonymously reporting work-related issues or concerns, including those related to accessibility. Links to these feedback channels are available to employees on CMHC's intranet.

CMHC's Contact Centre and Employee Relations Team share the feedback they receive with CMHC's specialist for diversity and inclusion, so that it can be documented and actioned.

CMHC's Specialist for diversity and inclusion is responsible for managing feedback on accessibility. Our Specialist oversees the implementation of the ACA at CMHC and can be reached at DI@cmhc-schl.gc.ca.

A full description of our feedback process is available on [CMHC.ca](https://www.cmhc.ca).

1.5 Alternate formats

To request a copy of our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, 2023 Accessibility Progress Report, and/or Accessibility Feedback Process in an alternate format, please contact us at:

Telephone	Email	Mail
1-800-668-2642	contactcentre@cmhc.ca	700 Montréal Road Ottawa, ON K1A 0P7

For print, large print (increased font size) or electronic formats that are compatible with adaptive technology: CMHC commits to providing these documents as soon as possible and no later than 15 days of the initial request, as required under the ACA.

For braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers) and audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud): CMHC commits to providing these documents as soon as possible and no later than 45 days of the initial request, as required under the ACA.

1.6 Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this report:

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies, and rules in a way that allows all people, including people with a variety of disabilities, to access them.

Accessible Canada Act (ACA): A legislation that came into force on July 11, 2019. The legislation was enacted with the goal of removing barriers and achieving accessibility within areas of federal jurisdiction on, or prior to, January 1, 2040.

Accommodation: The legal obligation of eliminating disadvantages and barriers to employees, prospective employees or customers resulting from policy or practice that have an adverse impact on individuals or groups protected under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

Barrier: Anything – including anything physical, architectural, technological, or attitudinal, 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: Any impairment that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and equal participation in society. The impairment could include, cognitive, communication, functional, intellectual, learning, mental, sensory, or physical limitations. The impairment may also be permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, and either visible or hidden.

Procurement: Buying goods and services for business purposes.

Universal Design: The planning and configuration of an environment, building, product, program, or service so that it can be accessed and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.

Becoming barrier free is central to CMHC's goal of ensuring everyone in Canada has place to call home.

Section 2

Areas in Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act

2.1 Employment

Diversity of thought and of people are essential to achieving our mission at CMHC. Close to 12% of our workforce identifies as a person with a disability. We are committed to sustaining a diverse workforce and fostering a workplace culture of acceptance and inclusion where every individual can reach their full potential. We have a Workplace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Framework in place, which supports our commitment to accessibility. Our employment policies and practices are focused on creating an inclusive environment for all and continue to bring accessibility to the forefront.

We are taking 7 key actions to improve accessibility in employment by the end of 2025. These actions will address barriers to accessibility that were identified by people with disabilities as it relates to learning and development, workplace accommodation and talent acquisition. The status of each action, as well as a description of our progress to date, is provided below.

Learning and Development

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to increase employee awareness on disability inclusion and to better empower them to make products and services more accessible.

Actions:

1. By the end of 2024, CMHC will implement training for all existing and new employees on disability awareness and accessibility.

Status:
underway



Progress:

We delivered training to all teams involved in processing accessibility feedback and achieving our commitments to accessibility at CMHC. The training was about our obligations under the ACA, roles and responsibilities in meeting the commitments we made in our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, as well as the process to follow when receiving feedback on accessibility.

During AccessAbility Week, we included a spotlight on accessibility in our employee newsletter, which was focused on our Accessibility Plan, the channels available to employees to share feedback on accessibility, as well as misconceptions that contribute to the discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities. We also promoted upcoming opportunities to participate in consultations related to accessibility at CMHC.

We delivered a corporate-wide mandatory Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention training, which covered disability as a protected ground from discrimination and harassment. We also offered voluntary training aimed at creating an inclusive workplace and understanding the realities of people with disabilities, such as an unconscious bias training, as well as seminars organized by our Employee Resource Groups that featured expert speakers on topics like mental health, the impact of the social housing system on people with disabilities, and the challenges faced by aging 2SLGBTQIA+ people with disabilities. We also offered several optional self-paced disability awareness and accessibility training through our Learning Management System.

We are currently defining the scope of our project to train all employees and people leaders on disability awareness and accessibility.

Workplace Accommodation

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to improve the process for requesting and receiving accommodations. There is also an opportunity to strengthen people leaders' awareness of best practices in disability inclusion and the process to follow to provide accommodations.

Actions:

2. By the end of 2023, CMHC will complete a review of our Workplace Accommodation Directive and process. As part of this review, we will invite CMHC employees with disabilities to provide their input on the directive and process. Our goal is to ensure the process is simple and efficient.	Status: <i>completed</i> 
3. By the end of 2024, CMHC will implement and communicate changes to the Workplace Accommodation Directive and process based on the results of our review.	Status: <i>underway</i> 
4. By the end of 2025, CMHC will develop and deliver training for people leaders and employees involved in the accommodation process. This will include the legal aspects of our duty to accommodate and process for handling and considering requests.	Status: <i>upcoming</i> 

Progress:

We completed a review of our Workplace Accommodation Directive and process in collaboration with people with disabilities and subject matter experts. We identified opportunities to improve the employee accommodation experience, with a focus on simplifying the process and more clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in the process. We are starting to plan for the implementation and announcement of our revised Workplace Accommodation Directive and process.

Talent Acquisition

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to make job postings more accessible. There is also an opportunity to better integrate the process of recruiting and onboarding people with disabilities. People with disabilities also told us that we could strengthen our strategies and partnerships to recruit people with disabilities.

Actions:

5. By the end of 2024, CMHC will improve and better integrate the process of recruiting and onboarding people with disabilities.	Status: <i>upcoming</i> 
6. By the end of 2024, CMHC will conduct a job posting review and develop an action plan to ensure they are adapted to candidates with a variety of disabilities.	Status: <i>upcoming</i> 
7. By the end of 2025, the CMHC Talent Acquisition Strategy will include a plan to attract people with disabilities. This strategy will also include a training plan for the Talent Acquisition Team to increase their awareness and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.	Status: <i>upcoming</i> 

Progress:

We refreshed our career page to better highlight our commitment to having a diverse workforce, as well as equitable and inclusive employment practices. Our page and job application form complies with current accessibility standards, which are based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

We also updated our job application form to make it more inclusive for people with disabilities by adding contact information to obtain our job application form in alternate formats or to ask questions on accommodations during the hiring process. We also improved our job application form's self-identification section by making the questions and choices of answers more inclusive, including the one on disability. The question on disability now includes a wider range of types of disabilities, the option to specify a disability if not listed, as well as the option to identify as a person with a disability and not specify the type of disability.

Finally, to reduce discrimination and promote fairer compensation practices for everyone, including people with disabilities, we have increased wage transparency in our hiring process by disclosing salary ranges in our job posters.

2.2 The built environment

We understand the importance of creating spaces where everyone feels welcomed, comfortable, safe, and supported. The accessibility and inclusivity of our offices, whether they are in spaces that we rent or own, continue to be a priority for CMHC. Our Ottawa office, which we own, has undergone major renovations in 2021-2022. Universal design principles were top of mind during its design and construction. As such, our Ottawa office includes many progressive features that make it inclusive to everyone, including people with disabilities. As of 2023, all the spaces that we rent – that is in Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, Calgary, and Montreal – have also undergone important renovations to improve their accessibility and inclusivity, to the extent possible, with Halifax to be completed in 2024.

We are taking 7 key actions to improve accessibility in our built environment by the end of 2025. These actions will address barriers to accessibility that were identified by people with disabilities as it relates to our offices and Granville Island, which is an artistic and cultural hub in Vancouver that is managed by CMHC on behalf of the Government of Canada. The status of each action, as well as a description of our progress to date, is provided below.

CMHC Offices

Barriers:

The open concept design of the new office spaces with no assigned workstations is posing barriers to some people with disabilities, specifically as it relates to the availability of permanent lockers and the options to work in quiet spaces. People with disabilities also told us that we could improve the measures in place to meet the needs of people with hearing impairments in emergency situations. Finally, there is an opportunity to identify and consider potential areas of improvement related to the accessibility of our offices.

Actions:

1. By June of 2024, CMHC will establish a process for all employees, including those with disabilities, to request a permanent locker in the location that is most convenient for them.	Status: completed 
2. By the end of 2024, CMHC will identify and communicate quiet workspace options at all our office locations.	Status: completed 
3. By the end of 2024, CMHC will conduct accessibility assessments of each of our buildings and office spaces. This includes spaces that are owned and spaces that are rented by CMHC.	Status: underway 
4. By the spring of 2025, CMHC will develop a plan to improve accessibility across our office spaces, based on the findings of the accessibility assessment.	Status: upcoming 
5. By the spring of 2025, CMHC will ensure that accessibility is considered throughout all phases of locating, purchasing, renting, or building new office spaces.	Status: upcoming 
6. By the end of 2025, CMHC will develop a plan to improve the accessibility needs of people with hearing impairments in evacuation and other emergency events.	Status: upcoming 

Progress:

A process to reserve permanent lockers has been established, operationalized, and communicated to employees in all our offices. Quiet workspace options, such as a Serenity Lounge, silence rooms, focus rooms, telephone rooms, and wellness rooms have also been established and communicated to employees in all our offices. We are currently defining the scope of our project to assess the accessibility of our office spaces in 2024.

Granville Island

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to assess the physical site of Granville Island as it may present accessibility barriers.

Actions:

7. By the end of 2025, CMHC will complete the background work to engage a consultant for a Granville Island Accessibility Strategy including a) engaging with municipal, provincial, federal, and Indigenous governments to figure out who is responsible for what and to coordinate communication between these groups; b) building connections with the disability community who can consult with us on the Accessibility Strategy; c) developing the requirements and criteria for a Request for Proposal to hire an accessibility consultant; and d) identifying funding options for developing the Accessibility Strategy and its implementation.	Status: underway 
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Progress:

We have undertaken preliminary work to clarify accountabilities related to the accessibility of Granville Island between municipal, provincial, federal, and Indigenous governments, and to build relationships with the disability community. We are also scoping the requirements and criteria to hire an accessibility consultant and our funding options to improve the accessibility of Granville Island.

2.3 Information and communication technologies (ICT)

CMHC's websites, mobile applications, and digital content complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA. Having said that, we recognize that accessibility is not only a matter of compliance but also a matter of social justice and human rights. We also understand that the application of universal design principles minimizes the need for assistive technology, results in products compatible with assistive technology, and makes products more usable by everyone. We want to ensure that fewer barriers exist in ICT at CMHC, which is why we are adopting a proactive approach to the way that we use and acquire ICT. Where opportunities exist to improve the full participation of people with disabilities, we are committed to working in partnership with our service providers to remove barriers to accessibility and inclusivity in our ICT.

We are taking 8 key actions to improve accessibility in our ICT by the end of 2025. These actions will address barriers to accessibility that were identified by people with disabilities as it relates to our HR management system, learning management system, website, and ICT in general. The status of each action, as well as a description of our progress to date, is provided below.

Human Resources (HR) Management System

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to assess the accessibility of CMHC's HR management system, including the job application module, to ensure it does not present barriers to those who use it, including potential applicants with disabilities.

Actions:

1. By the end of 2025, CMHC will review our HR management system to identify barriers to accessibility and make it simpler where possible.

Status:
underway



Progress:

We identified a project lead for this work and started reviewing documentation related to each module in SAP SuccessFactors. We engaged in conversations with SAP's accessibility team regarding accessibility features offered by SAP and potential areas of improvement. We are currently determining the scope of the project.

Learning Management System

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to improve the accessibility of training and onboarding materials.

Actions:

2. By Q1 2024, CMHC will identify best practices related to accessible learning and development and develop guidelines to improve the accessibility of all new training (in-person, virtual, e-learning, or blended) that we develop or procure.

Status:
underway



3. By Q2 2024, CMHC will integrate accessibility guidelines into our supply arrangement procurement process to ensure learning vendors meet our guidelines.

Status:
upcoming



4. By the end of 2024, CMHC will review current mandatory training materials for employees to identify opportunities to improve the accessibility of these training materials and will develop a plan to address the findings.

Status:
upcoming



Progress:

We are currently performing research on best practices related to accessible learning and development.

CMHC Website

Barriers:

People with disabilities have reported barriers when visiting our website, specifically as it relates to text-based alternatives, the layout of pages, as well as the accessibility of popups and spreadsheets.

Actions:

5. By the end of 2023, CMHC will further mature and formalize our procedure for routine accessibility testing of our website.	Status: completed 
6. By the end of 2024, CMHC will formalize a plan for website accessibility improvements including a) ensuring that images containing information have appropriate text-based alternatives where applicable; b) improving consistency of layouts throughout all webpages; c) ensuring all popups are accessible where applicable; and d) improving the accessibility of spreadsheets.	Status: underway 

Progress:

We established a formal procedure for routinely testing our website for accessibility. We are currently investing in training to upskill our web team to perform web accessibility reviews. We are also developing a plan to improve the accessibility of our website. Many improvements have already been implemented while more are underway and progressing well.

General

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to assess the accessibility of CMHC's ICT to ensure they do not present barriers to employees with disabilities, and to consider accessibility in all future acquisitions of ICT.

Actions:

7. Starting in 2023, accessibility will be considered in all ICT purchased by CMHC.	Status: completed 
8. By the end of 2025, CMHC will develop a plan to review most frequently used technology to identify barriers for employees with disabilities.	Status: upcoming 

Progress:

Starting in 2023 and onward, we are approaching ICT procurement with an eye towards accessibility and usability from the very beginning. We are working in partnership with our service providers and procurement partners to specify our accessibility requirements and validate the accessibility of our product choices prior to accepting and implementing them. We also intend to review our most frequently used technology to identify, prevent and mitigate potential barriers to accessibility in our existing ICT.

2.4 Communication, other than information and communication technologies

We recognize the value of communicating in a clear, direct, and easy to understand way, and the importance of providing equitable access to our communication products and activities. We are always trying to improve the way we interact with employees, clients, and stakeholders, so that our messages can reach everyone, including people with disabilities. We are committed to embedding accessibility into our working practices and to prioritizing simplicity and flexibility when planning and developing communication products and activities. We continue to focus our efforts on making our communication accessible by design so that no one is left behind.

We are taking 9 key actions to improve accessibility in our communication by the end of 2025. These actions will address barriers to accessibility that were identified by people with disabilities as it relates to the availability of information, the use of plain language, the availability of alternate formats, and the accessibility of our large public events. The status of each action, as well as a description of our progress to date, is provided below.

Availability of Information

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to improve Granville Island’s website to include specific information about accessibility for the purpose of visit planning. People with disabilities also indicated that information about our programs and services is offered online with no clear alternative. They also indicated that it was difficult to find information on accessible housing on CMHC’s website.

Actions:

1. By the end of 2023, CMHC will publish a section on the Granville Island website about accessibility on the Island. This will include information that is useful for people with disabilities to know before they visit.	Status: completed 
2. By the end of 2023, CMHC will provide a phone number for questions about our programs on all new documents and forms.	Status: completed 
3. By the end of 2024, and as part of our continuous website improvement journey, we will assess and ensure that accessible housing content is easily found.	Status: upcoming 

Progress:

We created a new page on the Granville Island website, which includes specific information about accessibility for the purpose of visit planning. The new page features a statement of commitment on accessibility, as well as information about the accessibility of washrooms, parking, water stations, performance venues, theatres, restaurants, entrances, and ferry docks. It also includes information on wheelchair rentals, service animals, and first aid. Given that Granville Island is a historic site, a note is included regarding the terrain. We also included contact information for any questions or feedback about accessibility.

The templates we use to publish our reports and forms were revised to include CMHC’s contact information for any questions about our programs and services, including those related to accessibility.

Plain Language

Barriers:

Some people with disabilities told us that the language we use is sometimes technical and difficult to understand.

Actions:

4. By the end of 2023, CMHC will formalize a plan to ensure all new documents or webpages produced by CMHC and meant for the public will be written in plain language. This will include a plan for internal training in plain language writing.	Status: completed 
5. By the end of 2024, CMHC will make sure that our frequently accessed documents and webpages are written in plain language.	Status: underway 

Progress:

We have a plan in place to improve the simplicity of the language we will use in all new documents or webpages produced by CMHC. The first step in our plan is to upskill our communications and marketing team in plain language writing. We are currently doing a scoping exercise to procure training. We are also currently identifying our most frequently accessed documents and webpages so that we can prioritize their review once our team is trained.

Alternate Formats

Barriers:

Given that documents contained in the Housing Knowledge Centre, CMHC's housing library, are widely available and that some may not have been assessed for accessibility, there is an opportunity to include information about how to obtain the documents in alternate formats on the main page of the Housing Knowledge Centre. There is also an opportunity to formalize a process for meeting requests for alternate formats for any document produced by CMHC.

Actions:

6. By the end of 2023, CMHC will include an accessibility statement that explains how to request a copy of CMHC documents in alternative formats on the main page of the Housing Knowledge Centre.	Status: completed 
7. By the end of 2024, CMHC will be able to meet requests for alternative formats (electronic, print, audio, or braille) for any document that is produced by CMHC.	Status: completed 

Progress:

We included a statement of commitment to accessibility on the main page of the Housing Knowledge Centre, internally and externally, as well as information on how to request documents in alternate formats. We have sourced a vendor to meet requests for alternate formats that cannot be produced in house. We have also formalized an internal process with the Contact Centre to handle these requests.

Public Events

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to improve the accessibility of CMHC external (public-facing) events, live-streamed virtual and in-person, by making live-captions and sign language available to participants upon request.

Actions:

<p>8. Commitment revised as follows: By the end of 2024, the registration process to external (public-facing), live-streamed virtual or in-person events hosted by CMHC and which require official pre-registration will include the option to request accommodations, including live-captions.</p> <p>Note: The original commitment was revised due to the challenges we are facing using our current technology to deliver on this commitment. The original commitment was as follows: By the end of 2023, CMHC will include live-captions for all external (public-facing), live-streamed virtual or in-person events or meetings upon request.</p>	<p>Status: underway</p> 
<p>9. Commitment revised as follows: By the end of 2024, the registration process to external (public-facing), live-streamed virtual or in-person events hosted by CMHC and which require official pre-registration include the option to request accommodations, including sign language interpretation.</p> <p>Note: The original commitment was revised due to the challenges we are facing using our current technology to deliver on this commitment. The original commitment was as follows: By the end of 2023, CMHC will make sure to offer sign language interpretation, upon request, for all live-streamed events and meetings.</p>	<p>Status: underway</p> 

Progress:

The platforms we are currently using to host live-streamed virtual events cannot accommodate live-captions and sign language interpretation in both official languages. In addition, we currently do not own any event registration software. Our communication and IT teams are working to identify more inclusive platforms that we could use to deliver on our commitment to improve the accessibility of our external virtual events which require official pre-registration. In the interim, we have improved our event planning guide by including a commitment to accessibility and factors to consider in the design and delivery of CMHC events to make them accessible and inclusive.

2.5 The procurement of goods, services and facilities

We are committed to improving our procurement practices by including accessibility considerations in our procurement process. We are taking 3 key actions to improve accessibility in our procurement of goods, services, and facilities by the end of 2025. These actions will address barriers to accessibility that were identified by people with disabilities as it relates to our procurement practices. The status of each action, as well as a description of our progress to date, is provided below.

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to formally consider accessibility in CMHC's procurement process to ensure that all new products and services purchased by CMHC are accessible from the start.

Actions:

<p>1. By December 2023, CMHC will ensure that accessibility considerations are added to procurement checklists, procurement policy, requirement templates and template contracts.</p>	<p>Status: underway</p> 
<p>2. By December 2023, procurement and contracting officers will receive training on how to support their clients to incorporate accessibility into procurement.</p>	<p>Status: underway</p> 
<p>3. From January 2024 onwards, accessibility will be explicitly considered in all procurements by either documenting the decision to not incorporate accessibility requirements or by including accessibility requirements.</p>	<p>Status: upcoming</p> 

Progress:

We are currently finalizing the review of our procurement checklists, procurement processes, requirement templates and template contracts to include accessibility considerations where appropriate. This work is on track to be completed by the end of the year and will come into effect starting in 2024. We will be holding information sessions with procurement and contracting officers by the end of the year to ensure they can support their clients in systematically considering accessibility in the procurement of all new products and services purchased by CMHC.

2.6 The design and delivery of programs and services

Accessibility is an important part of how CMHC sees the future of housing. We are committed to creating a better, more inclusive, and equitable housing system for everyone, including people with disabilities, by integrating accessibility considerations in the design and delivery of our programs and services. We also understand the importance of enabling people of all ages and abilities to stay in their community as long as possible, which is why we are actively contributing to the advancement of accessible and adaptable housing in Canada.

We are committed to improving the way accessibility, and the impact on people with disability, are considered when designing and delivering our programs and services. The status of our commitment, as well as a description of our progress to date, is provided below.

Barriers:

There is an opportunity to improve the way accessibility, and the impact on people with disability, are considered when designing and delivering programs and services that aren't specifically related to accessible housing.

Action:

1. By the end of 2024, CMHC will focus more on accessibility and the effects on people with disabilities whenever we create a new government housing policy, program, or initiative.

Status:
underway



Progress:

We implemented a new Equity Considerations Toolkit to guide employees in their efforts to consider and apply equity, anti-racism and intersectionality, including accessibility and disability considerations, in our programs, policies, processes, services, and products. We also continue to support government priorities, including the Government of Canada's commitment to apply a rigorous, evidence-based Gender-Based Analysis Plus in the design of all our housing policies and programs.

The National Housing Strategy (NHS) seeks to address the housing needs of equity deserving populations, including people with disabilities. Accessibility considerations are deeply factored into the design and delivery of initiatives under the NHS. For example, every project funded through the NHS must meet minimum accessibility criteria and those that exceed the minimum or achieve full universal design are prioritized. We also have a rigorous process in place to assess project applications and ensure all NHS resources are used as allocated.

We released our first Universal Design Guide for new multi-unit residential buildings, which includes input from industry leaders, and illustrates how innovative, flexible, and adaptable housing design can better respond to diverse needs and abilities, including those of people with disabilities. Our Guide asks designers, builders, and developers to think proactively about a resident's future needs in creating multi unit residential buildings. It does not replace NHS program requirements but helps to provide a better understanding of universal design in the built environment.

We collaborated with Accessibility Standards Canada and CSA Group to develop a new standard, CSA/ASC B652, Accessible dwellings, which contains recommendations for accessible home design, to help set the standard for affordable, adaptable, and accessible homes. CMHC is pleased to have contributed to this important step towards removing barriers to accessibility in home design and ensuring that individuals have access to the essentials for daily life.

2.7 Transportation

While no specific barriers related to transportation were identified by people with disabilities, in the spirit of continuing to enhance accessibility, we are committed to regularly reviewing our travel policy and communications about transportation to ensure they are barrier-free.

Section 3

Consultations

We consulted employees with disabilities on our draft 2023 Accessibility Progress Report. Their feedback was incorporated in our final 2023 Accessibility Progress Report.

The opportunity to participate in consultations on our 2023 Accessibility Progress Report was promoted through CMHC's internal newsletter, as well as through various Teams channels and divisional meetings. The consultations were in the form of small focus groups, where participants were invited to share their views on the progress described in our draft 2023 Accessibility Progress Report. Participants were also invited to share feedback on how to improve our progress report. Finally, participants were welcomed to share barriers to accessibility that they have encountered or observed and that are not captured in our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan and 2023 Accessibility Progress Report. The consultations were held virtually, and in confidential, psychologically safe environments. The participants received the draft report, reflection questions, and guiding principles for the conversation in advance of the consultation sessions. Participants also had the opportunity to make accommodation requests in advance of the consultation sessions so that we could best support their full participation during the sessions. The perspectives of consultation participants stemmed from a diverse range of disabilities, including physical disabilities (mobility, flexibility, and dexterity), cognitive disabilities (neurodiversity, mental health, and learning), and sensory disabilities (vision, hearing and speech). All consultation participants received appreciation points through our internal recognition and reward system for their time and contribution at advancing disability inclusion at CMHC.

Consultation participants told us that, overall, they were encouraged by the progress we made during the reporting period, particularly as it relates to the review of our accommodation directive and process, and the improvements to our built environments. They said that the progress report was easy to read, and the information was clear. They also appreciated that the actions outlined in the report were seeking to address barriers related to a wide range of disabilities. They also shared ways that we could improve the report, which were incorporated into the final version of our 2023 Accessibility Progress Report. These include:

- Improving some of the design elements of the report, including the selection of photos on the cover and the compartmentalization and color coding of the information
- Including a summary of achievements so far and future areas of focus at the end of the report
- Providing a direct link to our full accessibility feedback process, and our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, within the report
- Acknowledging the relation between disability inclusion and other commitments such as gender equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation
- Indicating the current representation rate of people with disabilities at CMHC
- Indicating that we commit to providing audio and braille formats sooner than what is legislated, when possible

As mentioned above, consultation participants were invited to share barriers to accessibility that they have encountered or observed and that are not captured in our 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan and 2023 Accessibility Progress Report. Participants indicated that, when CMHC's Accessibility Plan was developed in 2022, CMHC employees had the option to work from home. In addition, many of our office spaces, including the Ottawa office, had not yet been renovated and opened to CMHC employees. As a result of these changes, employees are now facing additional barriers to accessibility. These barriers are being documented and actioned. They will be reflected in future accessibility progress reports.

Section 4

Feedback

We have a process in place to receive and deal with feedback on accessibility. A full description of our feedback process is available on [CMHC.ca](https://cmhc.ca).

All feedback we receive is carefully acknowledged, considered, and actioned. Below is a description of the feedback we received on accessibility at CMHC during the period of January 1 to October 31, 2023, and the actions we are taking to address the feedback. The feedback is centered on three themes: 1. part-time employment; 2. workplace accommodations; and 3. ergonomics. We did not receive any feedback related to the implementation of our Accessibility Plan.

1. Part-time employment

- **Feedback:** CMHC could improve the availability of part-time positions to provide more career progression opportunities for people with disabilities who can only work part-time.
- **Action:** The feedback was shared with our HR Teams. As part of our workforce planning discussions and strategy to attract and retain people with disabilities, we will explore possibilities to offer part-time roles at CMHC to meet our operational needs.

2. Workplace accommodations

- **Feedback:** There is an opportunity to improve people leaders' understanding of accommodation needs and disability inclusion.
- **Action:** The feedback was shared with our Well-Being Team and will be considered as part of the revisions being implemented to the Accommodation Directive and process by the end of 2024, as well as the training being developed for people leaders on this topic by the end of 2025.

3. Ergonomics

- **Feedback:** CMHC could improve employee access to ergonomic assessments and equipment by clarifying and simplifying the process to request support. There is also an opportunity to improve communications around the supports in place and process to follow, as well as to increase awareness and understanding around ergonomic needs.
- **Action:** The feedback was shared with our Well-Being Team, and they have put forward a recommendation for a comprehensive ergonomic program that proactively identifies and addresses ergonomic related hazards to reduce risks of injury. The recommended program design also seeks to ensure consistent application, an increased understanding of workplace ergonomics, the removal of unnecessary barriers (i.e., medical notes) and an overall improved employee experience.

Section 5

Progress Summary and Conclusion

At CMHC, we are bound by our goal of ensuring everyone in Canada has a place to call home. We understand that providing barrier-free policies, programs and environments to our employees, clients and stakeholders is critical to our mission. While we recognize that accessibility is an ongoing journey, we are proud of our progress to date at advancing disability inclusion.

In 2023, we made important progress in making accessibility a shared responsibility and consideration in everything that we do at CMHC. We put inclusion at the centre of our employer value proposition, we identified ways to improve our accommodation directive and process and we established a procedure to obtain alternate formats, which was included in key CMHC documents, forms, and webpages. We improved some features in our built environment, like lockers and quiet rooms. We also matured our procedure for routinely testing our website for accessibility. We published a new page on the Granville Island website about accessibility on the Island to help people with disabilities plan their visit to the Island. We integrated accessibility considerations in our procurement process, and we created new resources to help employees and stakeholder consider accessibility in their work, such as our Equity Considerations Toolkit and our Universal Design Guide.

In 2024-2025, we will focus our efforts on the implementation of corporate-wide training on accessibility and disability inclusion, as well as the implementation of our revised accommodation directive and process. We will make improvements to our hiring practices and develop a plan to attract people with disabilities. We will also assess the accessibility of our built environments and key information and communication technologies.

We remain dedicated to making accessibility a priority and we will continue to listen to people with disabilities to become more accessible.

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