



Progress Report for 2023 on the Implementation of the TBS Accessibility Plan

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Message from the Secretary of the Treasury Board

It is my pleasure, as the Secretary of the Treasury Board, to present the first progress update on the [*TBS Accessibility Plan 2022–25: Our Future is Accessible*](#). The actions outlined in this report align with existing efforts in support of the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#).

Since the launch of its Accessibility Plan, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) has been hard at work finding ways to identify, remove and prevent barriers in the workplace for persons with disabilities. We are doing our part to make Canada barrier-free by 2040.

Some of these improvements include changes to:

- the built environment to address concerns about accessibility at the office
- how we obtain feedback from employees on improving the workplace accommodation process
- how we promote guidelines and best practices for accessible communication and services

In championing the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities, we are committed to providing meaningful work and fostering both professional and social inclusion.

We recognize that achieving a barrier-free workplace will be a lengthy journey. Feedback persistently indicates that employees with disabilities will face limitations in full participation until workplaces are made accessible by core design. While we make progress, we acknowledge the need for the following:

- further enhancements
- the establishment of performance metrics and greater accountability
- a thorough assessment of our actions against the priorities outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*

Our vision extends beyond compliance; it is about cultivating a workplace culture where everyone not only belongs but also has the tools to reach their full potential. Through this commitment, we strive to deliver superior results for TBS employees, the public service and, ultimately, all Canadians.

I invite you to read this progress report and actively contribute to our collective endeavour to make TBS and the public service of Canada more accessible. With optimism, I look forward to a future that is not only accessible but also genuinely inclusive for all Canadians.

Graham Flack

Secretary of the Treasury Board

Message from the Accessibility Champion

As the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's Accessibility Champion, I am pleased to reflect on the strides we have taken since the publication of our inaugural *TBS Accessibility Plan 2022–25: Our Future is Accessible*. This progress report serves as a testament to the collaborative efforts of individuals throughout our organization and their dedication to cultivating an inclusive and accessible workplace.

Embracing the theme of “Nothing Without Us,” TBS's Accessibility Plan has been enriched by the active involvement of employees with disabilities. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to members of the TBS Accessibility Network, who have been instrumental in our work since the plan's inception.

I am pleased to report progress this year in reducing representation gaps for persons with disabilities, and our commitment continues as we do our part in the government's 5,000 net new hiring goal:

- Progress has been made in improving the workplace accommodation process with the creation and support of the Workplace Accommodation Centre. This group has been building its capacity and promoting the use of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport. Its work has resulted in 39 new employees completing passports within the last year.
- We marked National AccessAbility Week and National Disability Employment Awareness Month with impactful events that featured key speakers, aiming to raise awareness and promote inclusivity.
- We celebrated outstanding efforts dedicated to fostering accessibility within our organization through the Accessibility Awards of Excellence, details of which are available in this report.

As we navigate this journey toward greater accessibility, we see the road ahead and acknowledge that work remains. Results from the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) indicate that persons with disabilities still face

higher levels of harassment and discrimination. This finding underscores the ongoing need for our commitment to making our workplace healthy, safe and inclusive, and highlights the intrinsic connection among diversity, inclusion and organizational health.

I invite each of you to delve into this report and to reflect on our progress and areas for improvement. Your feedback, whether it is positive or makes constructive suggestions, is crucial as we refine our efforts to acknowledge intersectionality and ensure a workplace that is accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Creating an accessible and inclusive work environment is a shared responsibility. I challenge all, especially those without disabilities, to become supporters in our collective pursuit of a more welcoming and respectful workplace culture, recognizing the intersectionality that exists within our diverse workforce. I eagerly anticipate our accomplishments in the upcoming year and beyond.

Karen Cahill

Champion for Accessibility

Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services, and Chief Financial Officer

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

General

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Obtaining your feedback

This is the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's (TBS's) first progress report on the implementation of its three-year departmental accessibility plan, *TBS Accessibility Plan 2022-25: Our Future Is Accessible*.

Your feedback on this progress report and on TBS's Accessibility Plan is essential to our ongoing evaluation of our progress. We value the input of employees at TBS, employees who work at other Government of Canada departments and agencies, as well as all Canadians. We welcome your comments, concerns and suggestions about our approach and initiatives to improve accessibility.

All accessibility feedback received will be acknowledged in the same way it was received, except when feedback is submitted anonymously.

You are invited to send your feedback through any of the following:

Mail

Director General of Human Resources
Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
Office 06-106
90 Elgin St
Ottawa ON K1A 0R5

Email

AccessibilityPlan-PlanAccessibilite@tbs-sct.gc.ca

Telephone

1-877-636-0656

Teletypewriter (TTY)

613-369-9371

Anonymous feedback

You can provide feedback anonymously by completing our short and easy-to-use [online form](#). You are welcome to:

- comment on TBS's Accessibility Plan and this progress report
- identify barriers you have faced at TBS work locations or with one of its programs, initiatives, tools or services
- ask questions

What we do with your feedback

We will analyze feedback to identify trends and patterns, and to address gaps to improve our efforts to remove barriers and become an accessible and inclusive employer and service provider.

We will publish annual progress reports in the years between our Accessibility Plans, allowing you to monitor our progress and enabling us, with your feedback, to continue to adjust our plan as needed to get the best results.

Request an alternate format

Use the contact information listed above to request an alternative format of the Accessibility Plan progress report or the feedback process description in an alternative format.

The alternate formats that can be requested include:

- print
- large print (larger and clearer font)
- Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
- audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud)
- electronic formats that are compatible with adaptive technology

Background

The *Accessible Canada Act* came into force on July 11, 2019. Its purpose is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040, by removing existing barriers and preventing new barriers. The Act applies to all federally regulated organizations, which includes Government of Canada departments, agencies and Crown corporations.

The *Accessible Canada Act* requires federally regulated organizations to:

- publish accessibility plans every three years, in collaboration with employees with disabilities
- report annually on progress made in implementing their Accessibility Plans by publishing annual progress reports
- establish a feedback process to receive and address comments, concerns and suggestions from employees and Canadians

The *Accessible Canada Act* is one element of a framework that TBS will follow to create an inclusive, accessible and barrier-free work environment. Other elements of the framework are new accessibility standards and regulations being developed by persons with disabilities in collaboration with Accessibility Standards Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada.

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of:

- TBS's actions in 2023
- actions that TBS plans for 2024–25 to address priority areas of the *Accessible Canada Act*

This report also outlines TBS's progress in identifying, removing and preventing barriers in the seven priority areas identified in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*:

1. Employment
2. Built environment
3. Information and communications technologies (ICT)
4. Communications (other than ICT)
5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities
6. Design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation

We will also report on progress made in the following priority area that TBS has identified through consultations:

8. Workplace culture (added)

Overall themes of TBS's first Accessibility Plan included the following:

- **Workplace accommodation:** Accommodation requests at TBS go through a long and complicated process that has not been satisfactory for all employees. Persons with disabilities have reported feeling disrespected, unvalued and discriminated against when they request accommodations. Further work is required to improve TBS's workplace accommodation process.
- **Built environment:** TBS's physical work environment, such as buildings, offices and other facilities, has been identified as a stressor for persons with disabilities. Further improvements are required to address barriers reported in employee consultations and in the TBS Built Environment Action Plan.
- **Career advancement:** Persons with disabilities report having limited access to opportunities for career advancement and professional development. They also report being the subject of stereotypical thinking by colleagues and leadership, which can limit their opportunities for career progression. TBS's actions need to focus on:
 - promoting a shared awareness and understanding of the barriers to professional development that persons with disabilities face
 - hiring, retaining and promoting persons with disabilities

This report details TBS's progress in removing barriers set out in its Accessibility Plan, including the following:

- **physical barriers:** inaccessible facilities and poorly designed workspaces that can create challenges for those with mobility and sensory issues
- **procedural barriers:** inflexible work procedures and complex accommodation request processes
- **technological barriers:** outdated, incompatible or inaccessible technologies that are not user-friendly or that lack accessibility features
- **communication barriers:** insufficient information in alternative formats and a lack of accessible communication tools for those with hearing or speech impairments
- **attitudinal barriers:** negative stereotypes and a lack of awareness that hinder a supportive work environment
- **career advancement barriers:** limited professional development opportunities and unconscious biases that affect performance evaluations

Overview of progress

▼ In this section

- More people at TBS are self-identifying as persons with disabilities
- Connection between accommodation requests and discrimination
- Decreased satisfaction with how accommodation requests are fulfilled
- Increased employee stress related to the physical workplace
- Continuing to improve the work environment
- Supporting professional development
- Path forward

In 2023, TBS made overall improvements in the following:

- the employment of persons with disabilities
- its built environment
- its workplace culture

Key TBS initiatives in 2023 have been to create the Workplace Accommodation Centre and the Employment Equity Recruitment Team to:

- leverage existing momentum in improving accessibility
- proactively tackle barriers in accommodation
- enhance the recruitment of employees with disabilities

These initiatives underscore a commitment to ongoing improvement in accessibility and inclusivity at TBS. However, more work needs to be done to improve accessibility, track existing efforts and measure the effectiveness of our actions.

Since the release of its Accessibility Plan, TBS has improved how it removes barriers that hinder the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Some of these improvements were evaluated in the 2022–23 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results for TBS. The following results are consistent with feedback received from TBS’s consultations with persons with disabilities and from TBS’s internal datasets.

More people at TBS are self-identifying as persons with disabilities

Although there were some discrepancies between the figures for the number of TBS employees that identify as persons with disabilities:

- 305 TBS employees self-identified as persons with disabilities in the 2022–23 PSES
- 177 TBS employees self-identified in other internal figures

There has been an overall increase in hiring and self-identification of employees with disabilities:

- in the fourth quarter of 2022–23, 160 TBS employees self-identified as persons with disabilities
- in the second quarter of 2023, 177 TBS employees self-identified as persons with disabilities

Although there has been an upward trend in TBS employees self-identifying, TBS still falls short of its workforce availability target, which is 214 persons with disabilities.

Connection between accommodation requests and discrimination

With more TBS employees identifying as persons with disabilities in 2022–23, there were more requests for workplace accommodations:

- there were 131 requests in 2022–23, compared to 90 requests in 2020
- there were 64 reports in 2022–23 of employees with disabilities who experienced discrimination, compared to 40 such reports in 2020

Incidents of harassment and discrimination have historically been linked to the accommodation request process. For example, in 2023, the Office of Public Service Accessibility found that:

- incidents of harassment were encountered occasionally by persons seeking accommodations (for example, unfavourable attitudes from supervisors or colleagues)
- instances of discrimination were reported in relation to challenges in obtaining workplace accommodations (for example, delays, refusals, inadequate accommodations, limited support in installation of workplace adjustments, or removal of accommodation)

Decreased satisfaction with how accommodation requests are fulfilled

Among the 305 TBS employees with disabilities who completed the 2022–23 PSES:

- 131 reported requesting a workplace accommodation measure within two years of completing the survey
- 70 of those employees were satisfied with the accommodations implemented

There has been a slight decline in satisfaction since the 2020 PSES, in which 79 employees reported that they were satisfied with accommodations made. More work needs to be done to ensure employees' satisfaction with TBS's fulfillment of workplace accommodation requests.

Increased employee stress related to the physical workplace

Despite improvements to TBS's work environment, 2022–23 PSES results show that persons with disabilities reported more negative scores regarding work environment measures than the general TBS population.

Employees also reported feeling more stressed by the physical workplace in 2022–23, when a hybrid work model was in place, than they did in 2020, when fully remote work was in place. These results show that more measures can be put in place to improve the work environment at TBS for persons with disabilities.

Continuing to improve the work environment

In general, there have been slight improvements to TBS's work environment for all employees from 2020 to 2022–23. For example, when compared to 2020 PSES results, 2022–23 PSES results show that there were improvements in:

- the workplace meeting the physical requirements of what employees need to do their job
- tools, technology and equipment
- the ability to access work tools and networks

However, more work can be done to address physical barriers at work.

Supporting professional development

In the 2022–23 PSES, persons with disabilities reported progress in:

- feeling that their immediate supervisor was supportive of their career goals
- TBS doing a good job in supporting the career development of employees

However, more work can be done to identify and address specific barriers to career advancement for persons with disabilities. Such barriers include:

- limited professional development opportunities
- the perception by persons with disabilities that their performance evaluations are biased against them

Path forward

In 2024–25, TBS will focus on progressing from discussion and awareness to measurable actions and concrete change. We will focus future reporting on:

- standardizing how we report on our progress
- identifying key performance indicators to hold ourselves accountable

Feedback

▼ In this section

- [Key takeaways](#)
 - [Targets and measurements](#)
 - [Emergency procedures](#)
 - [Career progression](#)

TBS values the feedback it receives from employees and others because it helps:

- guide TBS toward creating an inclusive work environment
- ensure that TBS's policies, products and initiatives are efficient and effective

TBS has collected feedback using several methods, outlined in the [Obtaining your feedback](#) section of this report. Most feedback received has been through a dedicated email address and an online form circulated in January 2023 that could be completed anonymously.

Feedback received has revealed three primary concerns:

1. there is a lack of clear and measurable targets for accessibility initiatives, and there are no measurements of success for such initiatives
2. there is a need to revisit TBS's emergency procedures to consider accessibility concerns
3. junior employees with disabilities need initiatives to help them progress in their careers

In November 2023, the TBS Accessibility Network provided detailed feedback on the TBS Accessibility Plan for 2022–25. This feedback:

- focused on the eight priorities identified in the Accessibility Plan
- provided detailed comments on current progress for each priority area

This feedback indicated the need for TBS to develop tangible measurements to evaluate progress for its next progress report.

Key takeaways

Targets and measurements

Feedback has indicated that TBS needs to improve how it tracks and measures its progress in implementing its Accessibility Plan. A TBS employee suggested organizing all initiatives into a table and using a strategy to measure performance, as has been done for initiatives on environmental initiatives.

TBS sectors were asked to provide updates on their initiatives in a table to clearly show:

- each initiative's status
- anticipated outcomes
- deadlines
- the individuals responsible for each initiative

These updates were then organized under each of the priority areas within this report and organized as either completed activities in 2023 or priority actions for 2024–25.

TBS plans to collaborate with the TBS Accessibility Network and internal evaluation experts in 2024–25 to enhance how aspects of the plan that are not easily quantifiable, such as cultural change, are measured.

Emergency procedures

Ensuring the safety and confidence of employees with disabilities during emergencies is essential. In the event of a crisis, everyone should have equal access to a clear and efficient evacuation plan. For employees with disabilities, such a plan means having:

- physical accommodations such as accessible exits
- a comprehensive strategy that addresses the specific needs of employees with disabilities, especially in today's hybrid work environment

To address concerns regarding emergency procedures, TBS's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Secretariat will work with TBS's security unit and the TBS Accessibility Network to collaborate on a more tailored approach for employees with disabilities. TBS employees can expect a revamped approach to be in place by summer 2024.

Career progression

Career progression for employees with disabilities is crucial for fostering inclusivity, challenging stereotypes and for highlighting such employees' growth potential. Establishing a truly inclusive talent pipeline helps ensure representation in leadership roles and enriches the organization with diverse perspectives and talents.

TBS has heard from employees with disabilities that its current career development initiatives could do more:

- some employees are not able to qualify for TBS's current programs
- some professional development initiatives need to happen sooner in the career cycle

To address the issue of career progression at TBS, the IDEA Secretariat will partner with TBS's Learning and Community Development Services team and the TBS Accessibility Network to develop a new initiative to support employees with disabilities advance in their careers.

Consultations

▼ In this section

- [What we heard](#)

It was important to TBS to include persons with disabilities when developing this report, and doing so helped us understand what the impact of our actions has been. Involving employees with lived experience at every step in planning our actions and in carrying them out fosters inclusion and ensures that our actions address obstacles effectively.

TBS initiated a consultation process in early May 2023:

- The TBS Accessibility Network, comprising employees with disabilities and accessibility supporters, solicited feedback through an *In Focus!*

article on work to improve accessibility at TBS and on TBS's Accessibility Plan.

- In late May, with senior leadership's endorsement, the TBS Accessibility Network invited all employees to a meeting during National AccessAbility Week, encouraging virtual or in-person participation. The Accessibility Champion and Deputy Minister Sponsor provided updates on progress and urged attendees to share feedback and pose questions about the Accessibility Plan and related initiatives. Those unable to attend were invited to submit feedback through an online form or email.
- On August 8, 2023, TBS asked all sectors for updates on their progress in addressing accessibility barriers in priority areas. This request sought information on:
 - what work had been done so far in 2023 to address issues outlined in the Accessibility Plan
 - what work has been planned for 2024–25

Because this is the first progress report for TBS's Accessibility Plan, comprehensive updates were not immediately available from all sectors. Supported by the TBS Accessibility Network, TBS held virtual consultations with sector representatives to help provide updates on progress so far.

TBS's continuous engagement with members of the TBS Accessibility Network during this report's development has shaped the report's structure and helped determine priority actions for the subsequent year. The network actively contributed insights on the state of current TBS initiatives and identified meaningful actions to address barriers faced by persons with disabilities. The network's input covered various aspects, including:

- emergency procedures
- career progression opportunities
- peer-to-peer initiatives

- recommendations for improvements in communication, such as adjusting language in job posters

The TBS Accessibility Network also reviewed a draft of this report in December 2023 and provided input that was integrated into the final version.

What we heard

Through consultations with sectors and the TBS Accessibility Network, it became clear that there is a lack of information about what TBS's activities in 2023 have accomplished, specifically, how TBS's actions have addressed barriers to accessibility. The network reiterated this concern in its review of a draft of this report. Consequently, the emphasis for the 2024–25 progress report will be on:

- obtaining information from TBS sectors on how their activities align with TBS's Accessibility Plan
- implementing standardized reporting with universal measurements for straightforward and consistent assessment across sectors

Following are some key takeaways from TBS's consultations with its employees:

- The TBS Accessibility Plan outlines critical initiatives that have the potential for impactful change if they are acted upon promptly. However, some employees are frustrated because they perceive that discussions are excessive and do not lead to meaningful results.
- Employees highlighted the need for improving accountability and providing clear and measurable targets in the Accessibility Plan and progress reports.
- Employees want to see performance commitments for senior management tied to specific and measurable accessibility targets.
- Employees still have concerns about the accommodation process, which frequently has delays in fulfilling accommodation requests and

implementing solutions that meet the needs of the employee making the request (for example, ergonomic equipment requests).

- Employees want to see data on accommodations at TBS, including data on the use of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport, to be tracked and measured more effectively.
- Employees with disabilities want TBS to design better and more timely programs to help them advance in their careers, especially at junior levels.
- Employees want stronger emphasis on recognizing the need for all TBS employees to understand how to work accessibly, especially in Microsoft Office 365. Training is available but is optional and largely self-driven.

Addressing priority areas in section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

▼ In this section

1. Employment

- The Workplace Accommodation Centre
- The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport
- Employment Equity Recruitment Team
- Career development programs

2. Built environment

- Completed activities in 2023 that address the TBS Built Environment Action Plan
- Priority actions for 2024-25

3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

- Completed activities in 2023
- Priority actions for 2024-25

4. Communication (other than ICT)

- Completed activities in 2023
- Priority actions for 2024-25

5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities

- Completed activities in 2023
- Priority actions for 2024-25

6. Design and delivery of programs and services

- Completed activities in 2023
- Priority actions for 2024-25

7. Transportation

8. Workplace culture

- Completed activities in 2023
- Priority actions for 2024-25

This section outlines:

- TBS's activities in 2023 to address accessibility barriers identified in our consultations
- actions to be completed by 2024-25
- updates on work to address the **eight priority areas** of the Accessibility Plan, seven of which derive from the Accessible Canada Act

For each of the following priority areas, completed actions and future actions are outlined.

1. Employment

TBS is addressing barriers that:

- impact the recruitment, retention of employees with disabilities
- limit professional development and career advancement
- reduce the effectiveness of workplace accommodations

TBS will address these barriers by:

- making the job application and assessment processes more accessible
- increasing hiring of persons with disabilities and other equity-seeking groups, including those with intersectional identities

- improving the accommodations process by offering clear guidance to employees and managers on how to submit requests, streamlining the processing time, and ensuring respectful treatment of employees throughout the process

The Workplace Accommodation Centre

TBS created the Workplace Accommodation Centre in 2023 to:

- improve TBS's accommodations process by focusing on user experiences
- reduce wait times for the review and completion of workplace accommodation requests
- make outcomes generally more positive for persons with disabilities

Completed activities in 2023

- Started offering services related to the duty to accommodate through the Workplace Accommodation Centre, such as actively supporting management in procuring ergonomic equipment for employees.
- Hired three full-time employees as of spring 2023: a new manager, a case manager and an ergonomic coordinator.
- Transferred the case management function in April 2023 from TBS's Human Resources Division.
- Started the transfer of responsibilities related to injuries on duty from TBS's Occupational Health and Safety Services.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- Finalize the structure and business model of the Workplace Accommodation Centre and define its first-phase service offerings.
- Continue the transfer of responsibilities related to injuries on duty from TBS's Occupational Health and Safety Services.
- Finalize a memorandum of understanding with the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology program of Shared

Services Canada to enhance the provision of technical support and specialized equipment for TBS employees.

- Create a TBS intranet site to provide information on the workplace accommodations process, including the promotion of available support and services, such as information on how to request workplace accommodations.
- Improve the process for requesting accommodation, specifically, service standards, client satisfaction and achieving appropriate resolutions.

The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport

Persons with disabilities across the public service have been encouraged to use the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport to:

- document barriers they face at work
- work with their manager to find solutions to overcoming these barriers

The passport is an initiative of the Centralized Enabling Workplace Fund to facilitate recruitment, retention and career advancement for employees with disabilities. It provides employees with a tool that can identify barriers and help them work with their managers to ensure they have the support they need to be successful at work.

Completed activities in 2023

- TBS continued to promote the use of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport through communications, awareness activities and educational events.
- TBS's Workplace Accommodation Centre has received accommodation requests through the passport program, and has reviewed, actioned and recorded these requests.
- Promotion of the passport has led to its increased use, with 39 TBS employees using it in 2023.

Priority actions for 2024-25

- Launch a digital version of the accessibility passport in 2024 on the TBS Applications Portal (TAP) for all government employees to provide a centralized location to:
 - record work situations, barriers and solutions
 - allow central agencies to analyze trends and challenges in removing barriers
- Continue to promote and encourage the use of the passport when onboarding persons with disabilities.
- Improve tracking and reporting on the use of the passport through the Workplace Accommodation Centre.
- Aim to have an additional 20 completed passports by December 31, 2024.

Employment Equity Recruitment Team

TBS's Human Resources Division established an Employment Equity Recruitment Team in March 2022 to:

- address accessibility barriers by increasing the recruitment and hiring of persons with disabilities and other equity-seeking groups
- enhance employees' overall experience by making the application and competition process for jobs at TBS more accessible

Completed activities in 2023

- Incorporated accessibility considerations into collective staffing processes and recruitment and professional development programs.
- Developed draft staffing posters for all classification levels to ensure that the information they contain is accessible and clear to users; the Employment Equity Recruitment Team collaborated with employees with disabilities on ensuring the posters' accessibility.
- Conducted research to improve the accommodation of employees with disabilities during an advertised process (for example, developing assessment tools to be inclusive by design).

- Promoted the right to request accommodation in advertised posters and applications.
- Established pools of qualified candidates for employee equity groups, including persons with disabilities (for example, AS-01, AS-02, EC-05, EC-06, EX-01 and EX-03).
- Attended career fairs for students and new graduates.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- Promote to hiring managers the pools of qualified candidates who have disabilities.
- Review the number of persons with disabilities in each hiring process, identify lessons learned, and determine how to improve future processes.
- Continue to review employment systems, as required under the *Employment Equity Act*, to identify and remove systemic and attitudinal barriers to employment opportunities for designated group members.
- Enhance recruitment and retention support for students with disabilities in partnership with academic institutions.

Career development programs

In 2023, several TBS initiatives focused on supporting the professional development and career advancement of employment equity groups, including persons with disabilities, as they prepare for leadership opportunities at the executive level.

Completed activities in 2023

- **Mentorship Plus:** Mentorship Plus is an initiative that has been co-developed by members of employment equity and equity-seeking groups to better support leadership development. It has a specific emphasis on supporting members of underrepresented groups who aspire to leadership and executive positions:

- the program's third cohort was launched in fall 2023 and consists of 28 mentee-mentor pairings
- employees who self-identified as members of employment equity groups, such as persons with disabilities who were also identified as ready for advancement, were prioritized as potential mentees and contacted to be a part of the program
- TBS sent communications to all employees to promote the program and highlight the prioritization of employment equity groups as mentees for the third cohort
- mentors are at the EX-01 level and above to give increased visibility to mentees
- **Mosaic Leadership Development Program:** Mosaic is a program for equity-seeking employees at the EX minus 1 level that aims to address barriers to entering the EX group or other EX-equivalent leadership groups. TBS received 12 applications and submitted two candidates for consideration, one of whom was selected to participate in the program.
- **Talent Enabling Strategies:** The Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) has initiated its Talent Enablement Strategies program, which aims to increase the representation of equity-seeking executive groups and overcome identified barriers. Executives, acting executives and other individuals in EX-equivalent positions who have lived experience with disability were invited to contribute their insights on accessibility. This involved sharing experiences related to challenges in career progression, the impact of the pandemic, transitioning to hybrid work, and considerations for wellness in the work environment. The engagement took place through online surveys and sessions conducted between August and October 2023.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- Explore career and mentorship opportunities for junior and intermediate employees who may not qualify for the Mentorship Plus

program, and actively recruit participants for future mentorship cohorts who identify as persons with disabilities.

- Provide information on the Mentorship Plus program to employees with disabilities to promote inclusivity and increase participation in the program.
- Aim to approve in spring 2024 the Talent Enabling Strategy, to be co-developed in fall 2023 and winter 2024 by OCHRO and interested participants to increase representation and address barriers.

2. Built environment

This section outlines completed and upcoming actions to address physical barriers identified at TBS, as outlined in the TBS Built Environment Action Plan developed in collaboration with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC). Some of the barriers involve issues such as inadequate accessible signage and limited visual contrast in seating areas and for doorways. These challenges particularly impact individuals who have mobility and sensory issues.

Completed activities in 2023 that address the TBS Built Environment Action Plan

- **Parking garage remote devices:** remote-controlled devices for the parking garage at 90 Elgin are now available upon request
- **Signage:** bars have been added at the base of large Government of Canada signage to make them detectable by using a cane
- **Doorstops:** doorstops that obstruct the path of travel have been removed
- **Microwaves:** new plugs have been installed and height-adjustable tables have been provided so that microwaves can be moved as required
- **Listening aids:** microphones and speakers have been installed at the security desk at 90 Elgin to help improve communications for people who are hard of hearing; this measure has reduced background noise

and decreased instances of words being inaudible through the acrylic screen

- **Power-assisted door openers:** assisted door openers have been added to the larger conference rooms at 90 Elgin
- **Visibility of entrance doors:** solutions that have been endorsed by a consultant and that align with PSPC guidelines will be implemented by the fourth quarter of 2023–24
- **Reduced visibility through glazed walls and doors:** a consultant's recommendation, in line with PSPC standards, will be implemented, with additional glazing to be installed by the fourth quarter of 2023–24
- **Space for mobility aids in meeting rooms:** meeting areas and rooms have been assessed and verified to ensure their compliance with space requirements for accommodating mobility aids

Priority actions for 2024–25

Physical barriers

- **Resolve a trip hazard at escalators:** the stair nosing on escalators does not have a visually contrasting marking and presents a tripping hazard; remedial action will be to paint the nosing or install a visually contrasting marking
- **Make stop buttons for the escalator accessible:** TBS's escalator emergency stop buttons are not accessible for everyone because they are positioned between the escalator railings, which a person who uses a mobility aid or who has a short reach may not be able to access; actions to be considered include repositioning the emergency stop buttons to the open side of the escalator
- **Provide barrier-free washrooms:** all washrooms at 90 Elgin will be assessed and improved upon to ensure they are accessible and barrier-free
- **Provide clearance underneath kitchen sinks:** the knee recess below kitchen sinks does not provide the recommended knee clearance

between the bottom of the counter and the floor; actions to consider include increasing the knee clearance below the sink by removing the cabinet skirting below kitchen sinks

- **Promote a scent-free environment:** TBS will provide information to employees to raise their awareness of the impact of scented products on the health and well-being of their colleagues who have environmental or chemical sensitivities

Directional barriers

- **Install a map on the main floor:** a map that shows key building amenities and services is required at the main-floor reception; actions to be considered include providing such a map at entry points to the building, with alternate information formats provided (for example, tactile information and audio)
- **Provide signage with Braille:** most room signage at 90 Elgin does not have Braille and raised lettering; actions to consider include producing new signage that includes Braille and raised lettering for commonly used rooms
- **Provide a directory board in the main lobby:** there are no directory boards or building maps available at building entrances; actions to consider include installing building directories, including a map of the main floor, with highlighted pathways to key facilities
- **Provide alternative formats for floor directories:** floor directories in elevator lobbies on individual floors do not have tactile or other alternate information; actions to consider include adding a tactile or other alternative format for floor directories, including variable heights and visual, tactile and audible formats for floor-specific directories
- **Provide identifiers that show the location of the security desk:** the location of the security desk is not clear when entering the building; actions to consider include providing directional signage at entry points and using symbols on this signage where possible

- **Provide signage to indicate the purpose of the security desk:** clear signage is required to indicate the purpose and functions of the commissionaires at the security desk; actions to be considered include signage that has:
 - clear directions on how and when to engage with commissionaires
 - notice of further information available on the [GWL Realty Advisors web page for 90 Elgin](#)

Seating concerns

- **Provide accessible tables in the lobby:** meeting tables in the main lobby are labelled as accessible but may not be accessible to everyone; actions to consider include buying new tables that have been verified to have accessible height, clear width and knee clearance
- **Improve visual contrast for seating:** the floor surfaces in seating areas in the lobby do not have any visual or tactile contrast with the rest of the lobby, and people with low vision may inadvertently walk through or into these seating areas; actions to consider include providing visual and tactile contrast for seating and surrounding areas, including floor surfaces
- **Provide greater seating options:** there is a lack of seating options in kitchen areas; actions to be considered include providing a variety of seating options to accommodate height and support requirements (for example, chairs with and without armrests)

Visual barriers

- **Provide clearer markings for washrooms:** the locations of washroom facilities are not clearly indicated and should be able to be quickly identified at all entrances; actions to be considered include directional signage with symbols at building entrances
- **Provide contrasting colours for washroom doors:** the washroom doors on the lower level and main floor do not visually contrast with the surrounding walls; actions to consider include painting washroom

entrance doors, door frames or surrounding walls to create a visual contrast

- **Provide greater visual contrast for urinals:** urinals do not visually contrast with the surrounding wall surfaces; actions to consider are painting surrounding walls with a visually contrasting colour
- **Provide greater visual contrast for emergency exit doors:** many emergency exit doors at 90 Elgin do not visually contrast with surrounding surfaces; actions to consider include adding a highly contrasting colour to emergency exit doors
- **Consider installing visual emergency alarms:** visual fire alarms warn disabled people that there is an emergency when there is no one else around; actions to consider include installing visual fire alarms in washrooms, showers and other areas where a person may be expected to be alone

Procedural barriers

- **Review emergency preparedness procedures:** there is a need to better ensure the safety of employees with disabilities who work in a hybrid workplace; actions to consider include reviewing emergency procedures in collaboration with employees with disabilities and industry experts
- **Simplify common on-site accommodations:** there is a need to streamline and simplify common accommodation requests (for example, lighting adjustments, reservation of closed-door offices); actions to consider include reviewing TBS's process to request such accommodations

3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Outdated, incompatible or inaccessible technologies make it difficult for employees with disabilities to do their job well. TBS is reviewing current and new ICT products, services and content, ensuring compliance with accessibility requirements. The success of this effort depends on getting

continuous feedback from persons with disabilities to help ensure that accessibility is taken into account from the beginning to the end of the life of any ICT product or service.

Completed activities in 2023

- **Accessibility Hub:** The Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA) manages the Accessibility Hub, a centralized online repository of resources, best practices and tools accessible to all federal public servants. Covering several topics such as accessibility plans, employment, accommodations, ICT and culture, the hub enhances accessibility capacity across the Government of Canada. It fosters collaboration, is regularly updated to meet user needs, and addresses concerns related to accessibility.
- **Accessibility of communications:** TBS has developed and issued various internal resources to provide information on accessibility features of existing ICT products. For instance, an article titled "Accessibility in M365" has been published internally.
- **Reviewing standards:** TBS has been reviewing the Standard on Web Accessibility and has concluded a licensing agreement with the European Telecommunications Standards Institute to use the Harmonised European Standard (EN 301 549) for accessibility. Organizations are encouraged to use this standard and follow guidance available in the Guideline on Making Information Technology Usable by All to determine accessibility rules to follow when buying or developing ICT systems.
- **Worksite booking tool (TBSpaces):** TBS's Corporate Services Sector consulted with employees with disabilities to develop its worksite booking tool, TBSpaces. This tool was designed to help employees locate workstations at 90 Elgin that match their needs, helping to create a barrier-free experience in the built environment. The tool includes information on accessibility, including online maps that outline barrier-free paths in TBS buildings. TBS conducted two rounds of testing with a

volunteer who has a visual disability to help TBS improve the tool's accessibility. Further improvements were implemented based on user feedback.

- **“Update your pronoun” feature:** TBS introduced a new feature in September 2023 called “Update your pronoun.” It lets TBS employees choose to show their preferred pronouns in Microsoft 365, both inside and outside the organization, using the My Profile Self-Service application. Members of the TBS Accessibility Network actively participated in the working group that helped create this feature. They were consulted during user testing to ensure that the language and functionality of the features were accessible, for example, the use of a button to acknowledge and accept the privacy notice.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- **Accessibility Hub:** Ensure timely updates of the Accessibility Hub (accessible only on the Government of Canada network) with new resources and promote widespread use by departments and agencies. In addition:
 - explore the possibility of transitioning the hub to a more accessible platform, such as SharePoint
 - emphasize the value of the Digital Accessibility Toolkit as a resource for managers and employees
- **Highlight available training:** Circulate information about training on how to make Microsoft 365 documents accessible to all employees and consider making this training mandatory.
- **Promote accessibility features in Microsoft 365:** Encourage teams to use the accessibility features in Microsoft 365 to help create an inclusive digital environment for all employees.
- **Ask for user feedback:** At every step of the procurement process, get feedback from people who use ICT. Doing so will help procurement specialists:
 - understand barriers

- identify accessibility requirements
- conduct user and accessibility testing
- ensure the final product meets all requirements
- **Review and improve ICT procurement:** Thoroughly evaluate all ICT-related procurements, standing offers and supply arrangements to make sure that accessibility requirements are included, as outlined in the Guideline on Making Technology Usable by All. Taking this proactive approach will contribute to continuous improvement in accessibility standards.

4. Communication (other than ICT)

TBS is committed to making sure that the information it gives to employees is easy to understand and accessible. TBS has taken some actions to better follow accessibility standards and use clear, simple language, but there is still more to do to standardize accessibility requirements so that TBS's communications are accessible to all TBS employees.

Completed activities in 2023

- **Resources to support accessibility:** TBS's internal communications have offered guidance on accessible communications and practices. An example is the "Make your meetings more accessible" (available only on the Government of Canada network) *In Focus!* article. TBS's Digital Services Division has established a position to give expert advice and oversight on web accessibility. This position includes training communications professionals and equipping partners to develop products that are accessible by default.
- **Accessible digital products:** Strategic Communications and Ministerial Affairs (SCMA) is working to ensure that TBS's communications products are accessible for employees and the public. For example:
 - TBS now uses accessible HTML versions instead of PDFs for annual reports

- SCMA has partnered with the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology program of Shared Services Canada to assess the accessibility of the Digital Privacy Playbook and has implementing recommendations from its evaluation
- SCMA has had individuals from various equity groups test several products, such as the Digital Privacy Playbook, Departmental Plans, and documents about public service pension and benefits to see how easy it is to find and use information on the TBS website
- **Intranet renewal:** SCMA is working to modernize the department's intranet website. It is focusing on making it easier to find things, making it more user-friendly and ensuring it is accessible to everyone. Employees, including members of the TBS Accessibility Network, have participated in testing to provide their insights on the accessibility of the website.
- **Representativeness:** SCMA arranged two photo sessions in 2023 to create an image bank that accurately reflects the diversity of TBS, including persons with disabilities. SCMA uses these images to produce various communications products for TBS and the public.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- **Expertise:** SCMA will continue to offer expert advice to communications staff and partners to help ensure that communications are accessible on all platforms and channels. SCMA will ensure that:
 - videos are accessible, incorporating appropriate colour contrast and subtitles and manually verifying audio descriptions
 - all images, whether static or animated, meet *Accessible Canada Act* requirements
 - the Government of Canada wordmark complies with alternative text requirements
 - all web content on the Canada.ca website that is under SCMA's responsibility is published using public service design and plain

language and meets accessibility standards, including the choice of wording for URLs

SCMA will also look into improving the accessibility of social media posts, such as using SRT (SubRip Subtitle) files to create open captions in videos, using alternative text for images that contain text, and limiting the use of emojis.

- **Linguistic services:** Personnel working as writers and editors at SCMA will continue to represent TBS on the Committee on Clear and Simple Language and the Interdepartmental Terminology Committee on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Their involvement includes contributing to the development of the *Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology*.
- **Accessible digital products:** SCMA will prioritize creating accessible HTML versions for larger corporate reports, such as TBS's Departmental Plan and Departmental Results Report, with the intention of phasing out non-accessible PDF versions.
- **Promotion of best practices for accessible meetings:** SCMA will create resources or promote existing ones to provide information on making meetings and supporting documents more accessible. Aspects to consider are:
 - using clear language
 - providing bilingual documents ahead of meetings
 - using the accessibility feature of PowerPoint files
 - using PowerPoint Live to screen-share presentations via Microsoft Teams

5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities

The goods and services that the government buys must be easy to use for everyone, especially for persons with disabilities. TBS is working to:

- simplify processes
- use clear language when describing goods and services

- add accessibility features where needed

Completed activities in 2023

- **Making procurement courses more accessible:** The Acquired Services and Asset Sector (ASAS) of the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG) reviewed the accessibility of the Canada School of Public Service's (CSPS's) procurement courses. Working with CSPS, TBS has developed a plan to integrate accessibility and the latest best practices into CSPS's procurement courses. So far, seven courses have been updated.
- **Guide to accessibility in procurement:** ASAS has created a draft guide that outlines tools to incorporate accessibility considerations into government procurement. ASAS:
 - has worked with various stakeholders, including Public Services and Procurement Canada, Shared Services Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, and others
 - is conducting a second round of outreach to complete content development for the guide
- **Engagement and outreach:** OCG has been working to communicate requirements for accessibility in procurement. A group called Agents of Change for Accessible Procurement Centre of Excellence has helped with this goal.

The Financial Management Sector, with OPSA, is developing guidance to help departmental transfer payment specialists ensure their procurement programs incorporate accessibility. The sector has also included aspects of accessibility in its policy consultation process and will consider suggested changes from stakeholders.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- **Update CSPS's procurement courses:** ASAS is currently assessing what content needs to be updated in CSPS's procurement courses.

- **Guide to accessibility in federal procurement:** A guide on accessibility in procurement is being developed and is expected to be available in spring 2024.

6. Design and delivery of programs and services

Many government programs and services have not previously considered accessibility in their design and delivery. The result has been that persons with disabilities experience barriers when using these programs and services.

TBS prioritizes accessibility and inclusion while addressing barriers identified by employees and subject matter experts across the public service. These barriers include accessibility challenges due to a lack of consideration for persons with disabilities when designing and delivering programs and services.

Without consulting persons with disabilities or making accessibility a requirement when developing programs, accessibility challenges will remain.

Actions for this priority area are focused on addressing existing barriers that may create challenges for persons with disabilities by ensuring inclusive procurement practices with technology that incorporates the use of clear and accessible communication. Some examples of completed actions and future activities that may create challenges for persons with disabilities are identified below.

Completed activities in 2023

- **Changes to the duty to accommodate process:** OCHRO collaborated with OPSA to develop Duty to Accommodate: A General Process for Managers, published in January 2023. This tool provides information on how to assess and respond to accommodation requests.

- **Guide to auditing the duty to accommodate:** OCG and TBS's Internal Audit Sector have drafted a guide to help internal audit teams in the federal public service evaluate how well their duty to accommodate processes are working, including accessibility.

TBS's Internal Audit Innovation Committee consulted OPSA when developing the guide to make sure it addresses challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the duty to accommodate process. The guide:

- includes background information and information on potential risks
- provides audit criteria, assessment approaches and interview questions to help teams review their processes for the duty to accommodate

A draft guide will be sent for review to all federal chief audit executives in fall 2023.

- **Risk-Based Audit Plan:** OCG's Risk-Based Audit Plan 2023–25 will include an assessment of whether governance structures and management practices align with accessibility requirements. This planning exercise, started in fall 2023 with OCHRO and OPSA, considers government-wide priorities and risks when selecting audit engagements in large and small departments.
- **Self-ID Application:** TBS is updating the form it uses to collect information on employment equity groups in the public service, including employees with disabilities. The goal is to improve the quality and quantity of TBS's self-identification data to help us design, deliver and evaluate plans and programs to make the Government of Canada more diverse and inclusive. An advisory panel with members from various networks ¹ is helping with this project. Once the content and testing of the questionnaire is finalized, TBS will announce the launch of the new Self-ID Application to departments.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- **Guide to auditing the duty to accommodate:** TBS is developing a guide on auditing and the duty to accommodate, to be distributed throughout government. The guide will be continuously updated, with TBS's Internal Audit Sector working with OPSA and the internal audit community.
- **Risk-Based Audit Plan:** TBS will:
 - conduct horizontal engagement to determine whether governance structures and management practices have been designed, implemented and aligned with accessibility requirements to support barrier-free workplaces, using a risk-based approach in consulting employees with disabilities
 - consult employees with disabilities throughout this engagement to identify ways for departments to improve governance, risk management or controls that support accessibility goals
- **Self-ID Application:** Once the project's initial phase is completed, TBS will switch to the new Self-ID Application. The transition will shut down separate departmental self-ID systems and make the application available on the TBS Applications Portal (TAP) as the government's sole method to collect self-ID data.
- **Encourage a proactive approach to improving accessibility:** TBS will actively promote accessibility as a key part of designing and providing all programs and services, while taking steps to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

In cases where barriers cannot be eliminated, TBS will address accommodation needs on a case-by-case basis.

7. Transportation

TBS does not provide transportation services or direction to departments on such services, so there are no accessibility barriers related to transportation for which TBS is responsible.

8. Workplace culture

People may hold negative stereotypes or judgmental attitudes toward persons with disabilities when they have no or little awareness or understanding of the experiences of others. In the past year, TBS has worked to make people more aware and understanding of the experiences of persons with disabilities. TBS is also working to foster a supportive work environment that is barrier-free for all employees.

Completed activities in 2023

- **TBS Accessibility Network:** In February 2023, Graham Flack, Secretary of the Treasury Board, was appointed as the Deputy Minister Sponsor for the TBS Accessibility Network. The network is working on an action plan that outlines priorities, steps for addressing issues, timelines for improvements and budget considerations. Over the past year, more than 70 people have joined the network and are supporting its goals.
- **Accessibility Awards of Excellence:** In 2023, working with the TBS Accessibility Network, TBS's Human Resources Division started the Accessibility Awards of Excellence. These awards highlight best practices to foster a more inclusive, equitable and accessible workplace culture. The inaugural awards ceremony was held on May 31, 2023. At the event, Graham Flack, the Treasury Board Secretary, and Karen Cahill, TBS's Chief Financial Officer and Accessibility Champion, presented two awards:
 - the Luna Bengio Accessibility Award of Excellence
 - the Yazmine Laroche Team Accessibility Award of Excellence
- **Other activities:** OPSA arranged an activity on May 30, 2023, as part of National AccessAbility Week 2023. The event, along with other activities, was promoted through employee networks such as the National Managers' Community, the Federal Youth Network, the Persons with Disabilities Chairs and Champions Committee, and through communications with the Canada School of Public Service. The aim was

to have 1,500 people register for National AccessAbility Week 2023, but this goal was surpassed, with 2,527 registrations and 1,707 attendees at the event.

Priority actions for 2024–25

- **TBS Accessibility Network:** The network is developing its action plan for 2024, with a focus on implementing the following short-term priorities:
 - establishing a GCXchange presence to engage its membership on accessibility issues
 - advocating for improved emergency procedures, disability inclusion commitments, more efficient accommodation procedures, and better use of the accessibility features in the ICT that employees use
 - establishing targeted interest-based task forces for its members
- **2024 Accessibility Awards of Excellence:** The ceremony for the 2024 Accessibility Awards of Excellence will take place during National AccessAbility Week 2024, from May 26 to June 1.

Conclusion

As we examine the progress made since TBS’s Accessibility Plan was issued, we have seen improvements in key areas such as employment, the built environment and workplace culture.

We recognize that our employees have valuable insights, and we are paying attention to their feedback. TBS’s next steps will focus on:

- improving emergency procedures
- career advancement for persons with disabilities
- linking senior executives’ performance evaluations to specific accessibility targets

TBS will also be doing more to:

- track work being done in sectors

- engage with employees to see how well our efforts are working
- determine what we should do next as we move toward a barrier-free Canada by 2040

TBS understands that this work is just the beginning. TBS also understands that the real impact of what we've done this year will not be clear until important initiatives such as the Workplace Accommodation Committee and the digital version of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport are fully up and running. When these are working well, we will have a better idea of how successful our plan has been so far.

Looking ahead, TBS is ready to maintain the momentum from these early stages of its Accessibility Plan. The journey continues, and we have set the foundation for a future where accessibility, inclusion and success are the norm at TBS.

Footnotes

- 1 Includes chairs, champions and representatives of interdepartmental employment equity and diversity and inclusion networks, such as OPSA, the Public Health Canada's Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability, and the Interdepartmental Network of Accessibility and Disability Chairs.

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