



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

CANADA WITHOUT BARRIERS BY 2040

**Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources,
Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons
with Disabilities**

Robert Morrissey, Chair

**FEBRUARY 2026
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Disabilities**

**Robert Morrissey
Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied Canada without barriers by 2040 and has agreed to report the following:

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CANADA WITHOUT BARRIERS BY 2040

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 27% of people in Canada over age 15, almost 8 million people, have at least one disability. While disability can impact anyone, older individuals are disproportionately affected, with almost half of people over 75 years old reporting having a disability.¹ People with disabilities may face barriers to participating in several aspects of society, including employment, accessing services, and transportation.²

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act) came into force in 2019, aiming “to realize a barrier-free Canada by 1 January 2040 through the proactive identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility,” in seven priority areas:

- Employment;
- The built environment;
- Information and communication technologies;
- Communication (other than information and communication technologies);
- The procurement of goods, services and facilities;
- The design and delivery of programs and services; and
- Transportation.³

To examine barriers faced by persons with disabilities, during the 44th Parliament, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (the committee) undertook a

1 Benoît-Paul Hébert et al., “[A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2022](#),” *Reports on Disability and Accessibility in Canada*, Statistics Canada, 28 May 2024.

2 Statistics Canada, “[Barriers to Accessibility in Canada: Public Spaces, 2022](#),” *The Daily*, 3 December 2024.

3 Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), [About an Accessible Canada](#).



study on progress made towards the goal of a Canada without barriers, by 2040.⁴ It held five meetings on the topic, hearing from 23 witnesses, including people with disabilities, advocates, experts, the Chief Accessibility Officer, as well as the then-Minister of Disability, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities. It also received five briefs. This report summarizes the testimony the committee received, particularly relating to the need to raise awareness, barriers faced in accessing services and benefits, including in the built environment, the need for better coordination between and across governments and funding, changes to legislation, and improved data and reporting. The committee thanks those who participated for sharing their valuable perspectives.

ENGAGEMENT, RAISING AWARENESS AND CULTURE CHANGE

The committee heard from many witnesses about the need to raise awareness about issues faced by persons with disabilities, recognizing that “[b]y focusing on social inclusion and positive representation, you’ll be able to collectively move much more quickly towards the goal of an accessible Canada by 2040. We must remove unconscious stigmas and assumptions.”⁵

Witnesses recommended that those required to adhere to the *Accessible Canada Act*, all those employed in federal sectors, be required to receive training on disability access and inclusion, and that such training be designed in consultation with people with lived experience.⁶

The committee also heard that more proactive communication is needed to better understand the *Accessible Canada Act*.⁷ According to the Accessibility Commissioner’s 2024 annual report, as of March 2024, government organizations had “very high compliance” with the requirements to publish accessibility plans, feedback processes

4 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), *Minutes of Proceedings*, 8 February 2024.

5 HUMA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, 1210 (Diane Bergeron, President, CNIB Guide Dogs, Canadian National Institute for the Blind). See also HUMA, *Evidence*, 1 October 2024, 1135 (Kevin Mills, Good Will Ambassador, Pedaling Possibilities).

6 HUMA, *Brief*, Spinal Cord Injury. See also, HUMA, *Evidence*, 26 September 2024, 1140 (Stephanie Cadieux, Chief Accessibility Officer, Office of the Chief Accessibility Officer, Department of Employment and Social Development); HUMA, *Evidence*, 1 October 2024, 1225 (Bill Adair, Executive director, Spinal Cord Injury Canada); HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1130; HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1145 (Thea Kurdi, Accessibility Educator and Policy Strategist, Level Playing Field Incorporated); HUMA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, 1210, 1215 (Bergeron).

7 HUMA, *Evidence*, 26 September 2024, 1140 (Cadieux).

and progress reports. However, only 22% of private organizations with more than 100 employees met this same requirement.⁸

Finally, witnesses indicated that people with disabilities should be included in planning, policy and funding decisions.⁹ In particular, many indicated they should be compensated for their expertise when asked to contribute. The committee heard that organizations and people with disabilities are asked by federally-regulated entities for advice on their accessibility plans or progress reports as part of a consultation mechanism. However, often this work is not financially compensated. One witness argued that “entities that must comply with the Accessible Canada Act should have a yearly budget line to do the expected work.”¹⁰ Another recommended amending the *Act* or creating regulation that “requires those who are doing those plans and reports to pay for consulting services.”¹¹

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND BENEFITS

Witnesses discussed the challenges with accessing government benefits and services. Christopher Sutton, chief executive officer, Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility, noted that for “individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, everyday interactions, whether accessing services, attending school, going to the doctor or participating in the workforce, can be negatively impacted by communication barriers.”¹² In another example, Dominique Salgado, Chair, Comité emploi-revenu-logement, Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec, indicated that for people with certain types of disabilities, “Canadian border services aren’t always accessible.”¹³

Overall, the committee heard about the need to make existing federal programs and benefits more accessible. This includes elements such as:

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- 8 Canadian Human Rights Commission, *An Accessible Canada in the Making*, 20 June 2024.
- 9 HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1210 (Karen Madho, Manager of public relations, DeafBlind Ontario Services); HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1225 (Karen Moores, Consultant, Easter Seals Canada).
- 10 HUMA, *Brief*, Spinal Cord Injury. See also HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1105 (Christopher T. Sutton, Chief executive officer, Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility); HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1115 (Amanda MacKenzie, National director, External affairs, March of Dimes Canada); HUMA, *Evidence*, 1 October 2024, 1105 (Mills).
- 11 HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1145 (MacKenzie).
- 12 HUMA, *Evidence*, 3 October 2024, 1100 (Sutton).
- 13 HUMA, *Evidence*, 1 October 2024, 1145 (Dominique Salgado, Chair, Comité emploi-revenu-logement, Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec).



- “[B]eing able to access and use the language of ... choice” when contacting the government for benefits, (e.g., via Service Canada), “whether it's a sign language or being able to have assistance through closed captioning,” or with the support of a trained intervenor or support professional.¹⁴
- Addressing issues with inaccessible websites for people with visual impairments, for example, for those needing to complete government forms online.¹⁵
- Having clearly understandable documents with plain language. Individuals with cognitive or memory impairments may have difficulty understanding or may abandon an application form due to confusion over whom to contact, what to include, or where to submit documents. Examples were provided as notable challenges: lengthy forms, large blocks of text, or difficulty gathering required documents which may require additional supports.¹⁶
- A need for individuals with visual impairments to be able to vote independently, in secret, without support. Diane Bergeron, president of Canadian National Institute for the Blind Guide Dogs, discussed challenges in this regard, while acknowledging there are options such as Braille templates available.¹⁷

Witnesses also raised concerns with existing programs. On the disability tax credit, some discussed barriers to filing taxes, a requirement for accessing the credit, which could limit access for people who might need this credit the most.¹⁸ The committee also heard about the challenge of using the disability tax credit as the entry point to access other supports; that the barriers to applying for the disability tax credit then prevent some from accessing other benefits, such as the registered disability savings plan, the disability supplement for the Canada Workers Benefit and the Canada Disability Benefit. As Amanda MacKenzie,

14 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1140 (Sutton); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1215 (Madho).

15 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1220 (Bergeron).

16 HUMA, [Brief](#), Selena Houle.

17 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1240 (Bergeron).

18 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1140 (MacKenzie).

national director, March of Dimes, stated, “the goals of these programs are not going to be reached if they're not accessible for the people they're designed for.”¹⁹

Finally, issues were raised with the Canada Disability Benefit, with an aim to make it as accessible as possible.²⁰ Witnesses shared that other disability support programs outside the disability tax credit, including those at the provincial level, should qualify as sufficient evidence for eligibility for the benefit.²¹ The committee learnt of other administrative barriers to accessing the benefit, such as the need for “repeated clarifications in order to prove disability, inaccessible document formats, and staff who are not trained in supporting applicants with a disability.”²² Finally, the committee heard that the value of the benefit is “disappointingly low.”²³

ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Witnesses discussed challenges experienced by persons with disabilities in accessing built environments, and ways people with disabilities, as well as occupational therapists, should be involved in developing standards for improving accessibility in public spaces.²⁴ Diane Bergeron reminded the committee about the barriers that make older public spaces difficult to navigate, such as “dim lighting for those who have partial sight or low vision, and a lack of tactile indicators.... echoing sound spaces that are very disorienting; there's no Braille and there are no tactile markings in any way to figure out where you are.”²⁵

The committee also heard about the need for more accessible housing, and about “accessible-ready housing” being implemented in British Columbia. In that province, new housing must comply with accessible-ready requirements, meaning that it can later be made to be fully accessible, at a minimal cost. Bill Adair, executive director, Spinal Cord Injury Canada, acknowledged the work of Accessibility Standards Canada in releasing a

19 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1115 (MacKenzie). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1150 (Michelle Hewitt, Chair, Disability Without Poverty).

20 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1215 (James Janeiro, Director, Policy and Government Relations, Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence).

21 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1150 (Hewitt).

22 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1210 (Bergeron).

23 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1155 (MacKenzie).

24 HUMA, [Brief](#), Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists.

25 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1245 (Bergeron).



standard on accessible-ready housing, but noted it should be an enforceable regulation.²⁶ Some indicated the federal government should: ensure that all homes in the housing design catalogue²⁷ are universally designed (to the greatest extent possible, designed to be useable by all, without the need for adaptation); provide direct and targeted grants for home modifications and other required supports to help people with disabilities remain in their homes; and offer additional tax credits or grants to developers who incorporate universal design into new builds.²⁸ Finally, the committee was informed about the need to integrate housing with essential services, such as proximity to health care, transportation and other community services.²⁹

The committee also received testimony relating to improving accessibility in building codes, and better standardization across the country. Thea Kurdi, accessibility educator and policy strategist at Level Playing Field Incorporated, indicated: “[t]he current piecemeal, out-of-date and deficient requirements for accessibility in building codes and procurement speak volumes.”³⁰ Paul Clark, optometrist, mentioned an example of an oversight in installing an automatic door opener, and noted that “had it been mandated, the installation would have been timely and cost-effective.”³¹

Finally, Kevin Mills, good will ambassador, Pedaling Possibilities suggested creating a “truly accessible bike route across Canada.”³²

BETER GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND ENHANCED FUNDING

The committee heard that a significant barrier to progress toward a more accessible Canada is “the lack of coordination and collaboration among the [Act's] primary roles.”³³ Multiple witnesses proposed a single federal organization accountable for the Act,

26 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1250 (Adair); Accessibility Standards Canada, [CAN-ASC-2.8:2025—Accessible-Ready Housing](#). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1145 (Kurdi).

27 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [Housing Design Catalogue](#).

28 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1115, 1155 (Mackenzie); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1240 (Christina Bisanz, Chief executive officer, Community and Home Assistance to Seniors).

29 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1220 (Bisanz).

30 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1110 (Kurdi). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1230 (Moore).

31 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1240 (Paul Clark, Optometrist). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1240 (Bisanz).

32 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1240 (Clark); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1105 (Mills).

33 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1225 (Adair).

responsible for coordination, enforcement, tracking progress, and reporting.³⁴ David Lepofsky, chair, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance (AODAA), recommended that the organizations with responsibilities under the *Act* (the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, and the Canadian Transportation Agency), should not all develop procedures and regulations, which then have to be enforced across these same organizations—rather, one single organization should be accountable.³⁵ Stephanie Cadieux, the chief accessibility officer, also recognized the need for a source of “trusted information,” and recommended a “centre of excellence,” such that organizations “know where to go for advice [and] good information.”³⁶

Further, witnesses discussed challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing programs, services or benefits, housed in different departments, including across jurisdictions. They called for a “one stop shop,” and for better coordination, as people with disabilities at times face additional hurdles to access these benefits.³⁷

Witnesses also called for more dedicated accessibility funding, including in “all budgets,” that is, that accessibility should be included into every project or initiative, with funds attached.³⁸ They identified:

- skills training for sign language interpreters;³⁹
- technology and infrastructure development, to allow video capability in rural and remote areas, increasing accessibility;
- adaptive or accessible equipment;⁴⁰

34 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1225 (Adair); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1225 (MacKenzie); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1220 (Bergeron); HUMA, [Brief](#), Kaileah M. Wert; HUMA, [Brief](#), Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance (AODAA).

35 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1140 (David Lepofsky, Chair, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance).

36 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1200 (Cadieux).

37 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1140 (Lepofsky). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1220 (Bergeron); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1125 (Hewitt).

38 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1140, 1200 (Cadieux).

39 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1105 (Sutton).

40 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1235 (Bergeron).



- addressing employment barriers, such as increasing availability of grants or training programs;⁴¹ and
- supporting municipalities to “get up to speed” to make public spaces that fall outside of federal jurisdiction accessible.⁴²

Finally, the committee heard that federal funding continues to be spent on projects that do not always meet accessibility standards. Witnesses urged that funds spent or transferred to other levels of government should “never be used to create or perpetuate disability-related barriers when it is reasonable to expect that such barriers can be avoided.”⁴³

STANDARDS, ENFORCEMENT AND LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS

Overall, witnesses indicated that the implementation of the *Act* has been slow, noting that in the first five years following its coming into force in 2019, no standards that are enforceable by law had been set.⁴⁴ In their brief, the AODAA recommended that the *Act* be amended to require that standards be regulated, such that organizations must comply.⁴⁵

Certain witnesses advocated for stronger enforcement of the *Act*, with Thea Kurdi reminding the committee that “without enforcement, people are not scared,” and the *Act* is not taken seriously.⁴⁶ The committee also learnt about accessibility standards enforcement gaps, as standards are not being applied consistently across the country. Diane Bergeron called for enhanced oversight mechanisms, such as audits, and “meaningful penalties” for non-compliance to ensure organizations meet their

41 HUMA, [Brief](#), Kaileah M. Wert.

42 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1230 (Bergeron).

43 HUMA, [Brief](#), AODAA. See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1115 (Lepofsky); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1250 (Adair); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1200 (Kurdi); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1200 (Cadieux); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1120 (Paul Lupien, Chair, Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec); HUMA, [Brief](#), Kaileah M. Wert.

44 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1115 (Lepofsky). However, note that as of November 2025, seven standards and 35 draft standards have been released. See Accessibility Standards Canada, [Standards and technical guides database](#).

45 HUMA, [Brief](#), AODAA. See also HUMA, [Brief](#), Spinal Cord Injury. Note, three regulations have been established relating to accessibility plan requirements: the [Accessible Canada Regulations](#), the [Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations](#), and the [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Accessibility Reporting Regulations](#).

46 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1135 (Kurdi).

obligations under the *Act*.⁴⁷ Further, witnesses discussed the need for improved complaint mechanisms, in the case where an organization is not meeting the requirements of the *Act*. Emphasis was given to fines issued to organizations that do not develop an accessibility plan.⁴⁸

The AODAA also recommended specific amendments to the *Act*, to improve and accelerate accessibility, including:

- Amending the Principles section of the *Act* (section 6) to ensure that if there is a conflict between the *Act* or one of its regulations with another law or regulation regarding accessibility, the provision with the higher level of accessibility prevails, and no action undertaken under the *Act* should reduce the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Prohibiting federal laws from “[imposing] or [permitting] the creation of barriers against people with disabilities,” by amending the definition of a barrier, section 2, to include “law”; and
- Prohibiting the federal government from exempting itself from duties under the *Act*, by amending section 72, powers to exempt.⁴⁹

IMPROVED ACCOUNTABILITY AND DATA

A final theme discussed by witnesses was the need to improve accountability, including through better reporting and data collection. Hon. Kamal Khera, then-Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities highlighted the mechanisms established in past years to improve accountability, including the creation of the Office of the Accessibility Commissioner, responsible for receiving complaints, and the Chief Accessibility Officer, to report on progress made under the *Act*.⁵⁰ However, the committee also heard of need for improvements. In particular:

47 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1215 (Bergeron). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1110 (Lepofsky).

48 HUMA, [Brief](#), AODAA; HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1115 Lepofsky; HUMA, [Brief](#), Spinal Cord Injury. The *Act* provides that fines can be issued; however, some witnesses suggested this mechanism is not being used sufficiently. For example, see HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1225, 1245 (Adair).

49 HUMA, [Brief](#), AODAA.

50 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 10 December 2024, 5905 (Hon. Kamal Khera, Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities).



- That only one government office should coordinate between and communicate on behalf of those responsible for implementing the *Act*;⁵¹
- That requirements under the *Act* should have timelines included in legislation;⁵² and
- That the *Act* should require organizations to establish accessibility plans that comprise specific actions, timelines and accountability;⁵³

Finally, witnesses discussed collection and sharing of disaggregated data. The Chief Accessibility Officer commended the work of Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada in developing a strategy to collect better national-level data, but indicated that more is needed, describing a need for better disaggregated data pertaining to persons with disabilities on a range of topics, including employment.⁵⁴

In the context of air transportation, Paule-Anny Pierre, senior assistant auditor general, Office of the Auditor General, shared information about the audit report on accessible transportation for persons with disabilities tabled in 2023. The audit found that better access to complaint data from service providers would improve oversight.⁵⁵ Stephanie Cadieux further noted this is an issue across the air sector, including carriers that operate outside Canada.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

During this study, the committee heard that while progress has been accomplished towards a barrier-free Canada, there is more work to be done. Emphasis was placed on raising awareness about the lived experiences of persons with disabilities, aiming for culture change. Recommendations were also provided to the committee to create more accessible spaces and programs, strengthen access to benefits and credits, and improve

51 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 1230 (Adair).

52 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2024, 1215 (Bergeron); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1125 (MacKenzie); HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1125 (Sutton).

53 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1155 (Cadieux). See also HUMA, [Brief](#), Kaileah M. Wert.

54 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1205, 1210 (Cadieux). See also HUMA, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2024, 1210 (Madho).

55 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1145 (Paule-Anny Pierre, Senior Assistant Auditor General, Office of the Auditor General).

56 HUMA, [Evidence](#), 26 September 2024, 1155 (Cadieux).

the way in which the government can work to better support people with disabilities and their families.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

44th Parliament – 1st Session

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As an individual Paul Clark, Optometrist	2024/09/26	125
Department of Employment and Social Development Stephanie Cadieux, Chief Accessibility Officer, Office of the Chief Accessibility Officer	2024/09/26	125
Office of the Auditor General Milan Duvnjak, Principal Susie Fortier, Director Paule-Anny Pierre, Senior Assistant Auditor General	2024/09/26	125
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance David Lepofsky, Chair	2024/10/01	126
Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence James Janeiro, Director, Policy and Government Relations	2024/10/01	126
Community and Home Assistance to Seniors Christina Bisanz, Chief Executive Officer	2024/10/01	126
Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec Paul Lupien, Chair Dominique Salgado, Chair, Comité emploi-revenu-logement	2024/10/01	126
Disability Without Poverty Michelle Hewitt, Chair	2024/10/01	126

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Pedaling Possibilities Kevin Mills, Good Will Ambassador	2024/10/01	126
Spinal Cord Injury Canada Bill Adair, Executive Director	2024/10/01	126
DeafBlind Ontario Services Karen Madho, Manager of Public Relations	2024/10/03	127
Easter Seals Canada Karen Moores, Consultant	2024/10/03	127
Level Playing Field Incorporated Thea Kurdi, Accessibility Educator and Policy Strategist	2024/10/03	127
March of Dimes Canada Amanda MacKenzie, National Director, External Affairs	2024/10/03	127
Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility Christopher T. Sutton, Chief Executive Officer	2024/10/03	127
Canadian National Institute for the Blind Diane Bergeron, President, CNIB Guide Dogs	2024/11/07	135
Department of Employment and Social Development Saajida Deen, Director General, Employment Program Policy and Design, Skills and Employment Branch Hon. Kamal Khera, P.C., M.P., Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities Kristina Namiesniowski, Senior Associate Deputy Minister Elisha Ram, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development	2024/12/10	141

APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

44th Parliament – 1st Session

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists

Houle, Selena

Spinal Cord Injury Canada

Wert, Kaileah

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meeting No. 21](#)) from the 45th Parliament, 1st Session and ([Meetings Nos. 125, 126, 127, 135 and 141](#)) from the 44th Parliament, 1st Session is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Morrissey
Chair

HUMA

Conservative Supplementary Report Canada Without Barriers by 2040

Introduction

The Conservative members of the HUMA committee want to start by thanking the witnesses who contributed to this study on Canada Without Barriers by 2040.

The testimony reinforced what so many within the Canadian disability community already know: people with disabilities are being left behind by the federal government. Evidence brought to committee showed the *Accessible Canada Act* fails to enforce barrier-free policies and creates bureaucratic backlogs.¹

The *Accessible Canada Act* is missing key components to make it a stronger, wholistic, and more effective piece of legislation. Conservatives fought to improve this bill by proposing amendments when it came to committee. These amendments were unfortunately voted down by the Liberal members in 2018.²³⁴

This supplementary report outlines the Conservative response to the evidence presented to the *Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities*, with the goal of supporting people with disabilities, and creating a more accessible Canada in mind.

Enforcement

Witnesses repeatedly mentioned the lack of enforcement or consistency with the barrier free policies since the adoption of the *Accessible Canada Act*. One witness specifically stated the following;

“The act does not, at present, require any disability barrier to ever be removed or to be prevented in any organization that the federal government can regulate. Not one single accessibility standard that is enforceable in law has been enacted in the five years since this law was passed. As a result, progress towards accessibility has been glacial and agonizingly slow.”⁵

¹ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:12 (Lepofsky)

² HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:12 (Lepofsky)

³ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 8 November 2018, 08:10 (Falk)

⁴ HUMA, [Meeting 124](#), Minutes of Proceedings, 8 November 2018

⁵ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:12 (Lepofsky)

This is a key example of the act not being enforced in a meaningful way since it was adopted. Conservatives supported this bill through the legislative process and continue to stand with the disability community.

Bureaucracy

In addition to the lack of enforceable measures in the *Accessible Canada Act*, witnesses expressed the bureaucratic complexities of the law, making it difficult to access and understand, as well as create a burden to barrier-free progress. In particular, witnesses pointed out the fragmentation of power between three agencies rather than a central agency responsible for implementation and enforcement. The division of powers between the three agencies becomes less clear, creating confusion and bureaucratic backlogs. As the witness stated, "...this law's implementation and enforcement is splintered incoherently across three different organizations: the accessibility commissioner, the CRTC and the Canadian Transportation Agency, the CTA. Those agencies are in a race to see who can go the slowest."⁶ The witness also furthered by explaining these three agencies all have their own separate, and different procedures which create another layer of confusion.⁷

Disability Tax Credit and Disability Benefit

Another key component missed by the *Accessible Canada Act* is the barriers to government benefits for people living with a disability in Canada. Witnesses pointed out the shortcomings of the disability tax credit with no shortage of examples. One pointed out the disability tax credit is a prerequisite to access other government benefits, particularly, "...the Canadian dental care plan and the new Canada disability benefit..."⁸ but continues to call the program "woefully inadequate"⁹ due to the overly bureaucratic measures in place which creates significant barriers for Canadians with disabilities. Witnesses expressed that the process should be simplified for the disability tax credit. Some ideas included removing the requirement to reapply if your disability will never change, for example if you are born without a limb.¹⁰ Other ideas include recognizing the receipt of provincial disability benefits as proof of disability in order to qualify for federal benefits.¹¹

⁶ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:12 (Lepofsky)

⁷ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:41(Lepofsky)

⁸ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:26 (Hewitt)

⁹ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:26 (Hewitt)

¹⁰ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 12:39 (Janeiro)

¹¹ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:53 (Hewitt)

The witnesses were very clear in this study: the disability tax credit needs to be simplified and more accessible to Canadians with disabilities. As one witness pointed out, only 500,000 Canadians were expected to receive the disability benefit as of 2024 while an estimated 1.5 million Canadians had a severe disability at the time.¹² This is a clear indicator that the disability tax credit is failing to reach the people it was meant for, and as a result programs like the disability benefit cannot be accessed by the disability community.

Conservative policies are already supporting a reform of the disability tax credit by seeking to streamline and simplify it as well as making enrolment to other disability support programs automatic when receiving the disability tax credit.

Lack of Cooperation

It became clear during the consideration of the *Accessible Canada Act* the government was not ready to listen to many of the amendments put forward by Conservatives to help create a more holistic, stronger, and enforceable piece of legislation. These amendments were largely inspired in cooperation with many disability advocacy groups which continued to suggest the same amendments during the 2024 study.¹³ The witness went on to explain the weaknesses identified by disability advocates in 2018 are the same issues preventing efficient progress toward a barrier-free Canada at the time of the study.¹⁴

This closely reflects the amendments put forward by Conservatives when the *Accessible Canada Act* was being reviewed by the committee. Had the government been willing to cooperate and consider with Conservatives and the disability community during attempts to improve the legislation, the disability community would be living with less day-to-day barriers in Canada.

Conclusion

Conservatives support Canadians with disabilities having a fair chance to live their lives freely, with dignity, and with the ability to participate as well as contribute fully within Canadian society. Conservatives support removing and limiting future barriers for people with disabilities, both physical and bureaucratic. The Conservative members of the committee support the reform of the disability tax credit, and continues to advocate for the support of persons with

¹² HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:26 (Hewitt)

¹³ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:12 (Lepofsky)

¹⁴ HUMA, [Evidence](#), 1 October 2024, 11:59 (Lepofsky)

disabilities. The cost of living crisis caused by a decade of Liberal spending has been particularly devastating to vulnerable communities, including the disability community- many of whom have fixed or limited incomes and cannot afford Liberal inflation. Conservatives continue to support real solutions to support people with disabilities and their right to dignity, prosperity, and participation within Canada.