



Parole Board  
of Canada

Commission des libérations  
conditionnelles du Canada

# 2023 Accessibility Progress Report

December 2023

Parole Board of Canada



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# Table of Contents

- 1. General ..... 4
  - 1.1 Report Summary..... 4
  - 1.2 Statement of Commitment ..... 4
  - 1.3 Introduction ..... 5
  - 1.4 Contact Information & Feedback Process ..... 6
    - Submitting Feedback ..... 6
    - Alternative Formats ..... 7
- 2. What We’ve Learned..... 7
- 3. Areas Described under Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)* ..... 8
  - 3.1 Organization Wide Initiatives ..... 8
  - 3.2 Employment ..... 10
  - 3.3 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services ..... 16
  - 3.4 The Built Environment..... 17
  - 3.5 Communication, other than Information Communication Technologies (ICT) .. 17
  - 3.6 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) ..... 18
  - 3.7 Transportation ..... 18
  - 3.8 The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities ..... 18
- 4. Consultations ..... 18
  - 4.1 Consultations with Employees and Board Members who Have Disabilities ..... 18
  - 4.2 External Consultations with Persons who Have Disabilities ..... 20
- 5. Feedback ..... 20
- 6. Conclusion ..... 21



# 1 General

## 1.1 Report Summary

Since the publication of the Parole Board of Canada's (PBC or the Board) [2023-2025 Accessibility Plan](#) in December 2022, progress has been made towards improving accessibility and the PBC has implemented concrete actions which contribute towards removing and/or preventing identified barriers.

This Progress Report covers the work undertaken on the goals that were set to be completed by the end of 2023. The following list highlights some of the actions the Board has completed in the past year to advance accessibility. The PBC:

- Undertook an employment system review to identify barriers to employment for persons with disabilities;
- Added a statement to the [Job Opportunities](#) page on its website encouraging persons with disabilities to apply;
- Invited more guest speakers to discuss disabilities with employees and Board members as part of disability sensitivity training;
- Created a collaborative partnership with PBC's Network of Persons with Disabilities;
- Developed a webpage on the PBC's website with information on accessibility;
- Circulated evacuation plans to all employees and Board members; and
- Upgraded software which provides more accessible ways for employees and Board members to work and collaborate.

## 1.2 Statement of Commitment

As stated in the [PBC 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan](#), the PBC is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have equitable access to programs and services across the organization. One year after the publication of the Accessibility Plan, the PBC continues to recognize that improving accessibility is an ongoing commitment that



requires acknowledging the experiences of persons with disabilities and taking meaningful action to remove barriers in a timely manner.

Ensuring that everyone who uses the PBC's programs and services can do so fairly and equitably remains a priority. Everyone who interacts with the Board should be able to do so with dignity, independence and barrier-free.

## 1.3 Introduction

To help achieve the goals outlined in the PBC's Accessibility Plan, an Accessibility Steering Committee (Steering Committee) was established, which includes representatives from each PBC division and a member of the PBC's Network for Persons with Disabilities (the Network).

The Committee meets monthly and is led by an executive-level Champion who reports to the Chairperson and senior management. The Committee developed an action plan to ensure coordination and accountability in meeting the Plan's outlined objectives. Representatives from each division are responsible for ensuring their section is working towards implementing their accessibility goals and reporting their progress to the Steering Committee.

The PBC is focused on making effective and meaningful changes to accessibility across the organization and in delivering on our mandate. This will be an ongoing and evolving process. Accessibility is a journey that will require continuous commitment and effort.

For this reason, while we have accomplished many of the established goals for 2023, we will continue to monitor the impact of our actions and adjust and re-adjust as necessary. The ['What We've Learned'](#) section of this report outlines how the Board has adjusted its goals to better achieve accessibility for all.



## 1.4 Contact Information & Feedback Process

To capture and respond to accessibility feedback, especially from persons with disabilities, the PBC established an external feedback process in December 2022.

We welcome feedback from employees and Board members, government and community partners, incarcerated individuals and the public about our Accessibility Plan and barriers experienced when interacting with the Board. Feedback helps identify, address, remove and prevent barriers in the Board's policies, programs, practices, services and physical spaces.

Feedback received is reviewed and responded to, as appropriate, and catalogued and incorporated into the PBC's annual Progress Reports. People providing feedback have the choice to do so anonymously.

### Submitting Feedback

Feedback about accessibility at the PBC or about this Progress Report can be submitted by contacting the PBC's Designated Official for Accessibility through any of the following methods:

**Online Form:** You may use the feedback form on the [Contact the PBC](#) webpage.

**Email address:** [Accessibility.Accessibilite@pbc-clcc.gc.ca](mailto:Accessibility.Accessibilite@pbc-clcc.gc.ca)

**Phone number:** 1-833-541-3063 (toll-free)

**Teletypewriter (TTY):** 613-954-7771

**Mailing address:**

Parole Board of Canada (PBC)  
Designated Official for Accessibility  
410 Laurier Avenue West, 6th floor mailroom  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R1



## Alternative Formats

Alternative formats of this Progress Report and a description of our feedback process are available by contacting the PBC Designated Official for Accessibility.

The following alternative formats are available upon request and the PBC will strive to provide them within 15 days of the initial request:

- Print;
- Large print (18 pt).

The following alternative formats are available upon request, and the PBC will strive to provide them within 45 days of the initial request:

- Braille;
- Audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud).

## 2 What We've Learned

The PBC has taken a whole-of-organization approach to making progress on our Accessibility Plan's 2023 goals. Important lessons have been learned about the complexity of improving accessibility across the organization, and how success can be achieved through tangible, incremental changes.

Upon finalizing the Plan's 2023 goals, significant effort was invested in the planning phase to ensure they would be achieved. The Steering Committee devoted the first part of 2023 to creating a framework that would help it achieve success. During the implementation phase, we found that some goals would benefit from rewording and/or adjustments to their deadlines.

As work continues towards completing the goals set out in the Accessibility Plan, we have learned that meaningful change will come from incorporating accessibility into



everything we do – as early as possible. We realize that to create a barrier-free organization, a consistent approach across national and regional offices is needed to ensure it reaches everything and everyone at the PBC. Collective action will contribute towards a shift in attitudes and processes that will in turn help engrain accessibility into how the Board operates.

## 3 Areas Described under Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*

Below is the progress the PBC has made on its goals, particularly those due by December 2023. Each goal is linked to a barrier that was identified while consulting and developing the 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan. The Steering Committee is tracking completion rates with regard to the work being done under each goal. The success rate of each goal will be measured through the next few years as we continue to consult with and receive feedback from PBC stakeholders.

### 3.1 Organization Wide Initiatives

- 1. Goal: Starting immediately, future surveys and questionnaires seeking feedback about the PBC will include questions on accessibility.**

**Progress:** We recognize that we need to conduct ongoing external consultations with persons with disabilities to maintain awareness of barriers to accessibility in our programs and services. One way to do this is by incorporating accessibility questions into surveys seeking feedback from the people we serve.

To help employees incorporate accessibility questions in surveys, we worked with an accessibility consultant to draft a guide for staff who develop surveys. This guide includes examples of accessibility-related questions, recommendations for developing specific accessibility questions and when to use them and the process for reporting on the information obtained from the surveys.





The information collected will be shared with the Steering Committee and the Designated Official for Accessibility for review and reporting purposes. We are currently finalizing the guide and an internal communications plan regarding its use. Employees will be able to refer to this guide when developing all future surveys to ensure accessibility questions are incorporated where relevant.

**2. Goal: By December 2023, the PBC will establish an external Accessibility Advisory Committee as a commitment to consult with persons with disabilities.**

**Progress:** Recognizing the importance of the principle of “Nothing Without Us” and having established a strong partnership with our internal Network, we are now focusing on taking the necessary steps to assemble an external Accessibility Advisory Group to consult on issues regarding service and program delivery.

When developing the 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, we consulted with various stakeholders including advocacy groups and external partners within the judicial system, who provided a great deal of insight on our accessibility.

We intend to solicit interest from the same approximately 50 advocacy group members and external partners to join the PBC’s new external Accessibility Advisory Group. Members of the group would be compensated through individual contracts for reviewing and providing feedback on accessibility-related matters including, for example, internal policies, frameworks and accessibility progress reports and plans.

To ensure persons with disabilities outside of the PBC were consulted on the drafting of the 2023 Progress Report, the Steering Committee worked with an Accessibility Advisory Group composed of members of the public with various disabilities. This is the same group who was consulted for the drafting of the PBC’s 2023-25 Accessibility Plan.



## 3.2 Employment

- 3. Goal: By December 2023, the PBC will complete a review of its workplace accommodation process in consultation with employees and Board members with disabilities, including an examination of barriers and challenges as well as ways to simplify the process.**

**Progress:** We conducted a review of our current workplace accommodation process by identifying which policies, guidelines or practices inform the PBC's current position in relation to workplace accommodation matters. The review revealed that there is currently no standardized process in place.

Internal consultations were also conducted with the Labour Relations experts and management at the national and regional offices. We plan to send a survey to employees and Board members asking for input on what would be required to implement an efficient and standardized process to request accommodation, based on their experiences. The findings from this survey will help inform a new accommodation process. In the meantime, the current accommodation process, done on a case-by-case basis, remains active until the new standardized process is implemented.

- 4. Goal: By April 2023, the PBC will add a statement to its Job Opportunities page encouraging persons with disabilities to apply.**

**Progress:** We currently have a gap in the representation of employees with disabilities, compared to their availability within the Canadian workforce. We have been examining ways of addressing this gap and contributing to the goal set out in the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) of hiring 5,000 new employees with disabilities into the public service by 2025.

For example, we are working to make the process for applying for job opportunities easier and more user-friendly. We have added a statement to the [Job Opportunities](#) page on the PBC's website to include a commitment on providing an inclusive and



barrier-free work environment as well as a workforce that reflects Canada's diverse population. As such, we invite members of employment equity groups, such as persons with disabilities, to apply for employment with the PBC.

In addition, as part of this commitment to accessibility, the PBC states that accommodations can be made available to all candidates who need them at any stage of the staffing process.

We recognize that this commitment is one of many steps towards being truly inclusive and barrier-free. We intend to continue to refine the wording of our commitment statement on the Job Opportunities page, based on further feedback received from the Network.

Furthermore, we participated alongside other Public Safety organizations in an Ottawa Career Fair for students and recent graduates with disabilities on November 9, 2023, which was organized by the David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development. About 200 students and recent graduates with disabilities from Algonquin College, Carleton University, Collège La Cité, and the University of Ottawa who demonstrated interest in joining the federal government were expected to attend the event. We embraced this opportunity to speak with potential candidates to meet immediate staffing needs and began building relationships with high-potential talent to meet future needs of our organization and the federal government.

- 5. Goal: By December 2023, the PBC will ensure all employees and Board members know how to self-disclose if they have a disability. The organization will also ensure that disclosures are confidential.**

**Progress:** We started raising awareness of the definition of persons with disabilities, as per the ACA, by sending communications internally and offering presentations on accessibility to managers and employees. These communications and presentations included information on the definition of "disability" and how to



self-identify as a person with a disability. When employees identify themselves as such, they are made aware that the information they provide is confidential and used for statistical purposes only.

As of the drafting of this Progress Report, we are awaiting the launch of the Treasury Board Secretariat's new self-identification form for the Core Public Administration, which will further advance this goal. Once further direction is received, an all staff message will be sent to Board members and employees to remind them of the option to self-disclose if they have a disability, and the benefits of doing so.

**6. Goal: By December 2023, the PBC will aim to include diverse members within selection boards for employee staffing processes, including individuals with disabilities.**

**Progress:** During internal consultations in 2022, we learned that some employees feel that persons with disabilities do not have the same employment opportunities as those without disabilities. To address this, we have introduced new human resources procedures for hiring managers, to increase their awareness and accountability, as well as remove or mitigate biases and barriers for candidates in staffing processes.

An important part of the staffing process is the establishment of a selection board, which is comprised of people responsible for assessing a candidate. We recognize that the level of diversity of the people who sit on a selection board, (including gender, race, and disabilities, etc.) can impact on the candidate's experience in, and influence on, the outcomes of the process.

Diversity in selection boards brings a broader range of backgrounds, lived experiences and perspectives that can contribute towards a candidate's assessment. For example, the inclusion of people from employment equity groups, such as those with disabilities, would be beneficial in this regard.



To meet our goal, Human Resources Advisors are available to support hiring managers in their selection processes. Through their advice and guidance, Human Resources Advisors emphasize the importance having diverse selection boards to support inclusive assessments.

Additionally, the Public Service Commission of Canada offers a tool for Human Resources Advisor and hiring managers to identify potential biases and barriers in the planned assessment method which could disadvantage people belonging to any equity-seeking group. If the tool identifies a lack of diversity on the selection board as a potential barrier, then mitigation strategies are proposed.

To support managers in assembling selection boards, we are currently developing processes and an inventory of a diverse range of employees across the organization who are interested in being selection board members. Those interested in being a selection board member can voluntarily choose to disclose that they belong to an employment equity group.

Furthermore, a learning plan covering topics such as inclusive hiring practices, understanding and overcoming biases and barriers, and tools for mitigating biases and barriers has been developed and will be mandatory for those interested in joining the inventory. When hiring with the goal to increase representation of persons with disabilities, managers will be encouraged to include one or more selection board members with disabilities.

**7. Goal: By December 2023, the PBC will undertake an Employment Systems Review to identify barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.**

**Progress:** An Employment Systems Review (ESR) identifies and examines barriers that disproportionately disadvantage designated and equity-seeking groups in employment and undermines their participation in the workplace. In November 2022, we hired an external consulting firm to complete an ESR to identify



employment barriers against persons in designated groups that result from systems, policies and practices. The objectives of the review were to:

- better understand why the PBC has gaps in the representation of designated employment equity group members (e.x., Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, women and racialized groups);
- review employment systems policies and practices to identify and address inclusivity and accessibility barriers; and
- make recommendations to remove barriers and use more positive actions.

In April 2023, focus group consultations were held with employees of equity or equity-seeking groups, as well as union representatives, senior executives, managers, the PBC Network and Human Resources Advisors. Their recommendations focused on the duty to accommodate, closing representation gaps in hiring, governance, planning and accountability and changing workplace culture.

Upon receipt of the report, the proposed recommendations were shared with the same focus group members for their review. This form of monitoring enables us to evaluate the effectiveness of PBC's proposed accessibility initiatives.

**8. Goal: Starting immediately, the PBC will invite a greater number of guest speakers to discuss disabilities with employees and Board members as part of disability sensitivity training.**

**Progress:** This goal is part of a new, ongoing commitment to create a workplace where persons with disabilities working at the PBC feel fully included, respected, and free from risk of discrimination and fear of asking for accommodations. The PBC's Network has been very involved in planning opportunities for speakers with disabilities to raise awareness amongst staff by speaking about their lived experiences. We hosted events with guest speakers during National AccessAbility Week from May 28 to June 3, 2023, which were well attended with an engaged



audience. Similar events are planned to recognize International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December 2023 and in the years to come.

**9. Goal: The PBC’s leadership will continue to commit to improving accessibility across the organization through practical actions.**

**Progress:** In support of this commitment, our leadership team has focused on establishing measures to practically support accessibility actions within the organization and accountability at the executive level for effecting positive change.

An executive Accessibility Champion was appointed to lead the Board’s accessibility portfolio, which falls under Human Resources. The portfolio includes the organizational oversight of accessibility actions, as well as the coordination of the Accessibility Plan, the implementation of its goals and reporting on progress in accordance with the ACA. The Accessibility Champion gives regular updates about organizational accessibility at executive committee meetings. In addition, our Network appointed an executive Champion to work with, support and advocate for the needs of its membership and the needs of persons with disabilities at the Board.

All of our executives are measured on their leadership performance in implementing measures to address systemic barriers identified in the PBC’s Employment Equity Plan and the PBC’s 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan. More specifically, our executives are accountable for creating a work environment that is inclusive and respectful of individual differences; promoting an accessible and barrier-free work environment; encouraging self-identification; enabling employee participation in employee networks and communities and/or offering language training to employees from equity-seeking communities.

The actions the Board has taken since the implementation of the plan and which are outlined throughout this report have been approved and supported by our



leadership team, which has demonstrated consistent engagement in improving accessibility.

**10. Goal: Starting immediately, the PBC will hold ongoing consultations with its Network of Persons with Disabilities, which is a resource group within the organization made up of employees and Board members with disabilities, with the end goal of developing a plan by 2025 for better incorporating accessibility issues within its corporate culture.**

**Progress:** We have been consulting with our Network regularly since the implementation of our Accessibility Plan. Currently, the Network organizes events to educate and raise awareness about disability and accessibility to our employees and Board members. The Network has also been involved in the implementation of our accessibility goals and the preparation of this Progress Report.

### 3.3 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

**11. Goal: By December 2023, the PBC will develop a webpage with information on accessibility at the PBC.**

**Progress:** The PBC developed and published a [webpage](#) on its website which includes our Accessibility Plan and information about the Accessibility Feedback Process. Looking forward, additional information about the PBC's accessibility initiatives will be added to this webpage, to serve as a resource for persons with disabilities accessing our programs and services. One of the goals in the Accessibility Plan is to identify employees who will be responsible for providing necessary accommodations to people who interact with the PBC. Once this process is established, additional information on requesting accommodations while interacting with the PBC will be published on this webpage.





## 3.4 The Built Environment

### **12. Goal: By December 2023, each PBC office will circulate its evacuation plans to all employees and Board members.**

**Progress:** We have seven offices across Canada, each with its own unique characteristics and logistical considerations. Our initial assessment of accessibility in the workplace revealed that not all employees were aware of the procedures for evacuating their office building during an emergency and Building Emergency and Evacuation Plans (BEEPs) that were in effect did not fully take accessibility needs into consideration.

The PBC had to ensure a BEEP was in place for each office. For regional offices, the PBC worked with the major Government of Canada tenant in each building. The National Office developed its own in consultation with many stakeholders, key among them the employees with disabilities who work there.

All BEEPs were reviewed to ensure all employees and Board members with disabilities who need assistance, either when evacuating or in other emergency situations, are considered. For instance, employees who need help to exit their building in the case of an evacuation have been asked to identify themselves to the PBC. Currently, all plans have been circulated to employees, including persons with disabilities.

## 3.5 Communication, other than Information Communication Technologies (ICT)

Board members receive extensive training throughout their appointment, which includes decision-writing and the use of plain language. We actively review training and develop reference tools to support plain language writing for Board members. A review of the Board Members' Handbook: Policy and Decision Writing Guide is underway, which will include consultation with persons with disabilities. Further



information on the progress of our internal communication goals will be included in the next Progress Report.

### 3.6 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

During the past year, we focused on raising awareness on digital accessibility standards. The PBC has a Master Service Agreement with Correctional Service Canada, which has confirmed that Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for the development of forms are being acted on, and hardware accessibility standards are part of, the services being provided.

Employees and Board members have new software which provides additional collaboration and accessibility tools. The updated software includes accessibility standards embedded within their products, which help to improve staff's awareness of accessibility issues and considerations in their documents.

### 3.7 Transportation

No goals related to transportation were due in the first year of the plan.

### 3.8 The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

We did not identify any goals related to procurement in the 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, but we recognize this may change over time.

## 4 Consultations

### 4.1 Consultations with Employees and Board Members who Have Disabilities



In 2022, we established a Network of Persons with Disabilities for employees and Board Members who have disabilities, or who are active supporters of persons with disabilities. The Network currently has 14 members, including two Co-Chairs and an executive-level Champion. This group has been providing valuable input to the Steering Committee which contributes towards decisions on accessibility issues via regular meetings and consultations.

The Network was actively consulted throughout the implementation of the Accessibility Plan's 2023 goals, as well as for the content of this Progress Report via a virtual round-table session with an external consulting firm. While the Network has expressed satisfaction with the progress so far, they underlined the importance of ensuring that progress should be tangible, sincere and sustained on a long-term basis. The Network suggested that experts be brought in to help the PBC accomplish our goals until accessibility considerations are truly incorporated into our processes. The Network also indicated its support for our efforts to encourage the use of more plain language. Members pointed out that they have assisted persons with disabilities who could not understand communications they received from the PBC and were too afraid to ask for help. The Network hopes plain language becomes standard in our reports, publications and messaging, both internally and externally.

The Steering Committee is aware that consultation fatigue is an important consideration when returning to the same people for feedback and will make every effort to ensure that requests for consultation with the Network are done in a manner that respects their time and effort, as well as their existing workloads. The Network was pleased to hear that their time and energy is being valued by the Steering Committee.



## 4.2 External Consultations with Persons who Have Disabilities

PBC held consultations during the development of this Progress Report to ensure it is easy to understand and provides enough detail of the progress that has been made. We consulted with a focus group of persons with a variety of disabilities from across Canada. The group was presented with a draft of the Progress Report to review, followed by an opportunity to provide comments in a virtual round-table discussion which was led by a third-party consultant.

The members of the focus group shared similar concerns to that of the Network. Mainly, ensuring that the work is being prioritized while also recognizing employees' existing workloads. The focus group also recommended that when we bring in speakers and external consultants, that we make sure they have lived experiences and are compensated fairly for their time. The focus group emphasized that the PBC as an organization, and staff, need to apply plain language principles into all forms of our communications. Some members found our Accessibility Plan used language that was too complex, making it difficult to read.

In the spirit of the theme “Nothing Without Us”, the PBC is committed to working in partnership with persons with disabilities. We greatly appreciate the feedback we received from both the Network and the focus group. We will be referring to the input and suggestions we received as we continue to remove barriers to accessibility.

## 5 Feedback

Since the launch of the PBC's Accessibility Plan in December 2022, we received two pieces of accessibility feedback regarding:



- The Accessibility Plan’s employment goals and self-identification. The question, which was received by email and thereby acknowledged, was about how this information was used and why it needed to be collected.
- An individual who found it very difficult to locate the contact information and the procedures for contacting the PBC/Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). This feedback was left anonymously by phone, and therefore the PBC was unable to collect more information to identify the barrier, especially given that the feedback received referenced two federal organizations. We will take this opportunity to review our webpages to ensure that the contact information for our programs and services remain simple, easy and accessible to all. The PBC also shared this second feedback with CSC’s accessibility team.

We also received several requests for help with the process of applying for a record suspension or notices of appeal. While the requests didn’t mention accessibility directly, we will be using this information to consider whether the process for applying for record suspension and to appeal a decision is accessible to all.

We are aware that there are barriers to accessing our programs and services online for people with disabilities, and that people may not yet be aware of our new feedback mechanism. We will continue to make efforts to promote our feedback mechanism.

## 6 Conclusion

The PBC is committed to being an inclusive organization where anyone who uses our programs and services can do so with dignity, independence and barrier-free.

Thus far, substantial progress has been made towards achieving the 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan’s goals, by making tangible changes that directly impact the level of accessibility for our employees, Board members and the public.



In the coming year, we will address the goals scheduled for 2024 and will review the progress made in 2023. Specifically, efforts will focus on expanding our external accessibility network, developing a plain language reference guide, further developing our external website and providing specific accessibility training to employees who provide accessible services.

