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Accessibility Progress Report 2024 for the Privy Council Office

Canada

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Accessibility Progress Report for 2024

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PCO's Accessibility Progress report for 2024

General

The Privy Council Office (PCO or department) developed a three-year comprehensive departmental [Accessibility Plan for 2023 to 2025](#). This plan is part of the PCO's continued commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and compliance with the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*.

This report provides a summary of the progress made in implementing the Accessibility Plan at the department from its launch in December 2022 to December 2024. This progress update highlights promising examples of PCO's commitment to creating a barrier-free experience for persons with disabilities in applicable accessibility focus areas. Although we celebrate this progress, we still have work to do to achieve our goals.

Feedback process and contact information

The PCO has a [feedback process](#) to accept feedback relating to accessibility barriers and the implementation of the PCO accessibility plan. You can submit feedback by contacting:

Assistant Director, Accessibility, Human Resources, Corporate Services Branch.
- Sending PCO the [accessibility feedback form](#)
- Email: accessible@pco-bcp.gc.ca
- Telephone: 343-553-5382
- Mail: 60 Queen Street, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1P 5A8

You can provide contact information or submit feedback anonymously. The PCO will acknowledge receipt in the same manner in which the feedback was received and respond directly to feedback if contact information is provided, unless it was received anonymously.

Alternate formats

You can request copies of our accessibility plan, progress report and feedback process description in an alternate version by email at accessible@pco-bcp.gc.ca, mail: 60 Queen Street, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1P 5A8 or telephone at 343-553-5382.

Formats available:
- print
- large print (larger and clearer font)
- braille (a system of raised dots that allow people who have a visual impairment to read with their fingers)
- audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud), and

- electronic formats that are compatible with adaptive technology

Areas described under section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA)

PCO's Accessibility Plan focuses on five accessibility pillars that are critical to achieving our accessibility vision and creating a barrier-free environment for PCO employees and stakeholders:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies
- communication, other than information and communication technologies
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities

As mentioned in the PCO Accessibility Plan, given the nature of the PCO's mandate and operations, the ACA's federal transportation network priority area, and design and delivery of public facing programs and services priority area are not applicable.

This ACA priority accessibility area relates to eliminating and preventing barriers to enable receipt of services that are accessible to all.

The PCO supports the Prime Minister and Cabinet in helping the government implement its vision, goals, and decisions in a timely manner. The PCO is not a front-line service department which provides services to Canadians.

The work for PCO's accessibility plan is underway, and we have achieved the following commitments for 2024.

Employment

As part of the "What we heard" section of the Employment pillar in the PCO Accessibility Plan, we heard that effective and timely accommodations are critical to supporting some persons with disabilities in their roles. Employees shared the importance of a defined, centralized, transparent, and efficient process. This includes transparent communication and engagement during the process.

Barriers or challenges identified were about the importance of education and awareness about accessibility in creating a culture of disability inclusion. Employees and management shared a desire for increased dialogue and learning around accessibility and disability inclusion. The PCO recognizes that this commitment to learning is essential as the department seeks to eliminate existing barriers.

Over the year 2024, the department:

- Completed an accessibility and disability inclusion learning needs assessment, identified learning needs and explored available training by:
  - completing specific learning sessions by the subject matter experts in Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT), and Printing and Graphics

Services with the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program; and

- o sharing relevant Canada School of Public Service training with PCO employees via our Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Corner.

- Designed and implemented talent strategies to hire, develop and retain more persons with disabilities by:
  - o delivering a presentation to senior management on the various tools and recruitment opportunities available to hiring managers;
  - o sharing recruitment strategies for hiring persons with disabilities with managers. Managers were encouraged to be purposeful in their hiring by leveraging staffing options to support employment equity. This included limiting the area of selection to specific employment equity groups, identifying employment equity as a merit criterion and using non-advertised appointment processes, etc.;
  - o introducing amendments to the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA), and having HR offer training to all PCO executives on how to conduct an evaluation of biases and barriers in a staffing assessment method. HR Advisors provide continuous support and guidance to all PCO managers to ensure that biases and barriers in staffing assessment methods are evaluated, and if identified, that reasonable efforts are taken to eliminate or mitigate their impact; and
  - o holding a session with LiveWorkPlay to educate HR Advisors on their employment services.

- Continued to diversify the talent pipeline by building upon existing partnerships with external organizations focused on employing persons with disabilities by:
  - o participating in a Justice Canada program focused on placing students with disabilities;
  - o working with HR counterparts at Health Canada to gain access to a large inventory of candidates that identify as having a disability; and
  - o providing access to tools and resources for hiring managers on the PCO's Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Corner. Resources include but are not limited to federal internship program for Canadians with disabilities, employment opportunity for students with disabilities, the virtual door to talent with disabilities, and targeted inventories.

- Reviewed the onboarding process with a pan-disability lens (e.g., to ensure the onboarding process and resources are inclusive of employees who are neurodiverse or have other invisible disabilities) by:
  - o reviewing and updating the onboarding resources to ensure alignment with accessibility standards and considerations. This review included consultations with key partners, including PCO's persons with disabilities network.
  - o establishing a review process to ensure up-to-date onboarding information on PCO's intranet; and
  - o including definitions of accessibility and accommodations, providing a demonstration of PCO's Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Corner, and

highlighting training resources related to accessibility and accommodation as well as the GC workplace accessibility passport in PCO's onboarding sessions.

Looking forward in 2025 for employment

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- Provide accessibility and disability inclusion training to all employees, managers and executives based on the results of the learning needs assessment.

The built environment

As part of the "What we heard" section of the Built Environment pillar in the PCO Accessibility Plan, barriers identified included:
- accessing accessible public parking
- providing access to washrooms and washroom accessories (paper towel and soap dispensers)
- moving through doorways due to lack of electronic buttons
- gaining access to buildings (key card and code entry), and
- using signage and wayfinding (entrances, workspaces, and elevators)

Some employees also shared opportunities for the built environment to be improved to better support neurodiverse employees.

Over the year 2024, the department:

- In partnership with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), continued to evaluate the accessibility of all departmental offices against Universal Accessibility Best Practices and Canadian Standards Association for accessibility and, developed plans for improvement as needed by:
  o completing the audit assessment of PCO's headquarter buildings;
  o working to implement findings from the audit assessment which will also continue into 2025. The strategies to be implemented on heritage buildings will take time as the solutions may involve a multi-year implementation strategy; and
  o continuing to work with PSPC to address buildings where PCO has a presence.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

As part of the "What we heard" section of the information and communication technologies pillar in the PCO Accessibility Plan, some departmental employees who self-identified as having a disability reported opportunities to improve:

- the timeliness of IT accommodations

- seamlessness of the process
- transparency in communication
- employee involvement in specification selection, and
- IT employee training on helping with specialized technology accommodations.

Over the year 2024, the department:

- Streamlined the new ticketing workflow for ergonomic IT equipment in the PCO Client Service Portal by:
    o updating new applications in a more intuitive and interactive format in the PCO Client Service Portal App Store. Accessibility applications are featured prominently in the catalogue and a self-service model allows employees to request accessibility applications by clicking a button.

- Provided training to all front-line IT employees to support persons with disabilities with accessing and setting up assistive technology by:
    o completing an overview course on accessible technologies provided by the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program; and
    o working with AAACT to deliver a tailored training session to front-line IT employees.

- Implemented the long-term information management and information technology accessibility plan to support accessibility across all digital assets by:
    o actioning many of the commitments across all digital assets, such as promoting the GC Digital Accessibility Toolkit guidance through PCO's Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Corner and reviewing current digital assets on internal and external applications and sites.

- Continued to ensure the department's social media presence is inclusive and accessible to the public by:
    o following best practices regarding accessibility by continuing to include alt text for photos and videos posted online and subtitles and closed captions in both English and French for videos. Camel case is also used when using hashtags. Plain and inclusive language is used in written communications products and posts;
    o maintaining awareness of changes to social media platforms and features that improve accessibility;
    o continuing to provide advice on, and promote awareness of, accessibility practices through varied networks and platforms as well as within the communications community; and
    o ensuring accessibility standards are met when resharing social media content from other departments.

Looking forward in 2025 for Information and communication technologies

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- Implement the electronic accessibility passport once made available by the Treasury Board Secretariat.
- Continue the implementation of the long-term information management and information technology accessibility plan to support accessibility across all digital assets.
- Finalize the assessment and update of WCAG 2.0 compliance for websites and web applications of entities the PCO supports.

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

As part of the "What we heard" section of the Communication, other than the information and communication technologies pillar in the [PCO Accessibility Plan](), employees identified an opportunity for the PCO to embed meeting option flexibility more consistently across the organization. Employees also shared a desire for increased communication about the PCO's commitment to accessibility and resources to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Some employees with disabilities also reported the following barriers, challenges and opportunities:
- Barriers and challenges with inaccessible documents and templates, and
- Opportunities to improve accessibility within departmental communications, initiatives and events (e.g., providing written material in advance of meetings, recording meetings).

Over the year 2024, the department:

- Continued to foster awareness and education on accessibility and disability inclusion by:
  - reminding employees who require assistance to identify themselves to their immediate supervisor and Security so that monitors can be assigned to assist them during an evacuation;
  - advertising AAACT workshops to PCO employees;
  - promoting national Accessibility Week and featuring profiles of employees from the PCO Employees with Disabilities' community during that week; and
  - launching a self-identification campaign to promote the importance of the self-identification process, how it contributes to a diverse and inclusive workplace, and communicating the definition of non-visible disabilities.

- Provided guidance to employees on accessible communication techniques and inclusive practices by:
  - developing reference material to help with the review of web content.

- Continued updating PCO templates to follow accessibility standards by:
    - providing two relevant training courses to all employees from the Printing and Graphics Services team on PDF accessibility; and
    - conducting a comprehensive review of all forms on PCO's intranet to ensure they meet accessibility standards.

- Shared the plain language, accessibility and inclusive communication toolkit with all employees via the Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Corner on PCO's intranet to support plain language writing.

Looking forward in 2025 for communications

Looking forward, the PCO is committed to:

- Finalize the updating of PCO templates to follow accessibility standards; and
- Continue developing and promoting guidance to employees on accessible communication techniques and inclusive practices.

Procurement of goods and services

The PCO procures goods and services from suppliers when needed and follows PSPC procedures. As needed, Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are issued through the Government of Canada's buyandsell.gc.ca site using standard Government of Canada templates.

As part of the PCO Accessibility Plan, the organization has identified opportunities to:
- improve communication of the department's commitment to accessibility;
- increase supplier awareness of the department's accommodation processes; and,
- upskill the procurement team's understanding of accessible procurement leading practices. This includes recommended practices for supporting and communicating with suppliers with disabilities.

Over the year 2024, the department:

- Reviewed and updated the procurement process, including documents, forms, templates, and communications for accessibility by:
    - applying the PSPC revised template for ProServices RFP that will serve as a useful tool that considers accessibility criteria related to a competitive process. This language can be used by the PCO procurement team for other requirements not directly linked to ProServices;
    - implementing the new "Contract Modernization Initiative" which includes "Standard Contract Clause Inventory" (SCCI) rather than the previous "Standard Acquisition Contract Clauses" (SACC). This new initiative promotes more accessible contracting and will implement new accessibility clauses into the SCCI inventory on an ongoing basis; testing of the PCO

client procurement team portal.
- o implementing requested changes and suggestions in relation to portal functionality and launching of the PCO client procurement team portal.

- Provided accessibility guidance to the procurement team on leading practices for accessible procurement and supporting suppliers with disabilities by:
  - o providing Accessible Procurement Resource Centre training for procurement officers to have a better understanding of accessibility in procurement and how it relates to PCO specifically; and
  - o completing additional training to educate new procurement officers on accessibility and refresh understanding of existing members to be able to better communicate the need to clients.

Consultations

The PCO persons with disabilities network

The persons with disabilities network was consulted on the accessibility and disability inclusion initiatives at the PCO on:

- o the annual progress report on PCO accessibility plan for 2024; and
- o the overview of the Accessibility and disability Inclusion corner on PCO's intranet and the passport.

Feedback received on these initiatives was positive and constructive, identifying areas of improvement that will be incorporated where possible. Further consultations will be scheduled in 2025 to receive ongoing feedback on our initiatives and deliverables for 2025.

PCO internal consultations

The pillar leads collaborated and consulted with various internal groups to move forward on the following commitments:

- the implementation of the PCO digital asset accessibility plan; and
- the accessibility guidelines to ensure web content meets the WCAG 2.0 compliance standards.

Consultations with external stakeholders

PCO consulted external accessibility area leads for input on our commitments. The consultations included:

- Key stakeholders at AAACT and followed their recommendation to start assessing the five essential WCAG 2.0 compliance criteria as the first priority;
- Engaging AAACT to deliver a tailored training session to front-line IT employees;
- Checking in with PSPC on timing for new procurement clauses that will be incorporated into directed contracts;

- Continuing to collaborate with PSPC experts on improving existing accommodations building processes; and
- PSPC's Accessible Procurement Resource Centre training to the procurement team to gain a better understanding of accessibility in procurement and how it relates to PCO specifically.

Questions received through the Feedback Process

The PCO received limited requests through their [feedback process](#) on accessibility barriers, including the following:
- An accessibility barrier was identified about the updated menu items on PCO's intranet. The concern was with the font size and how to easily navigate the main web page.
  - PCO has addressed the barrier by increasing the font size. We will also work to improve the expand and collapse menu.
  - We are in the interim stage of planning a new Intranet site by changing to a new platform that has built-in accessibility features which will make the new Intranet site easier to navigate.