

Accessibility Plan – Progress Report #2

OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR
2023-25

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A. General

In July 2016, the Government of Canada began consultations with more than 6,000 Canadians in order to determine what an accessible Canada means to them. Following these consultations, Bill C-81: An Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada, was tabled in June 2018. The Accessible Canada Act,ⁱ which aims to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040, came into force in July 2019. With a view to attaining that goal, all Government of Canada organizations are required to proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers in the following seven (7) priority areas:

- employment
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces)
- 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
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders)

In light of various studies conducted since 2017, it is evident that the public service as a whole has some work to do to in terms of improving representation in the public service and ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate fully and meaningfully in the workplace. The Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canadaⁱⁱ (the Strategy) lays out a vision for becoming the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world.

The Strategy's guiding principles

- “Nothing about us without us” – persons with disabilities are involved in the design and implementation of the Strategy
- Collaboration – GC organizations work in collaboration with each other, with bargaining agents and with other public, private and not-for-profit organizations
- Sustainability – the Strategy prioritizes actions that will have an enduring impact
- Transparency – the Strategy is developed and implemented transparently; and GC organizations will report openly and transparently on their efforts to remove barriers

The Strategy's goals

Five goals are key to realizing the vision:

- Employment – Improve recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities
- Built environment – Enhance accessibility
- Technology – Make information and communications technology usable by all
- Services – Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services
- Culture – Build an accessibility-confident public service

In addition to the publication of Government of Canada organizations' first Accessibility Plan, the *Accessible Canada Act* has the following planning and reporting requirements:

- Prepare and publish accessibility plans
- Establish a feedback process
- Prepare and publish progress reports

This is the Office of the Correctional Investigator's second progress report.

As with most new initiatives and reporting requirements asked of micro agencies with limited human resources capacity, the ongoing challenge revolves around maintaining the necessary momentum throughout the reporting period in order to contribute towards achieving accessibility milestones. This challenge is partially related to the number of employees who self-identified as having a disability. Of its 45 Full-time Equivalents, only 1 or 2.2% came forward in this regard. If that percentage were closer to 10% or 5 employees for instance, Accessibility and its priority areas would likely ensure more prominence within each divisional unit/activity/meeting and not primarily the purview of senior management to showcase their value. The reality for the Office is that the onus to promote and advance this initiative, remains entirely with the Champion and his ability to keep Accessibility on the front burner.

Notwithstanding these challenges, progress on the implementation of Accessibility measures did occur during year 2; however, as reported in the first progress report, the small number of employees who chose to self-identify as having a disability, continued to affect the overall speed of the implementation of this important initiative. Importantly, employee turnover, workload concerns in both Corporate Services and with the Champion himself, all added to the challenges of ensuring that Accessibility remain at the forefront for staff. This situation resulted in slow but steady progress in year 2 with achieving the Office's objectives outlined in its 2023 Accessibility Plan.

B. Organizational Context

The Office of the Correctional Investigator ("the Office") is a micro agency of 45 FTEs with one program dedicated to investigations of complaints directed to the Correctional Service of Canada by federally sentenced individuals or those supervised in the community and carries out systemic investigations of issues that affect large numbers of this population. The Office reviews all Correctional Services of Canada investigations of deaths in custody and serious bodily injury cases to ensure Correctional Service of Canada compliance with law and policy. The Office also conducts reviews of reported use of force incidents. The Office's investigative activities support a safe, lawful and humane federal correctional practice to ensure that federal correctional decisions and practices comply with human rights, law, policy, and are fair.

As a separate agency of the Federal Public Administration, the organization is listed in Schedule I.1 and in Schedule 5 for all matters related to Human Resources Management of the *Financial Administration Act (FAA)*.

C. Priority areas identified by the *Accessible Canada Act*

The Office of the Correctional Investigator contributed toward the Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy and its goals, in the following areas:

1. Employment

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Build accessibility awareness and capacity within the organization.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Corporate Services, Accessibility Champion and Management</p>	<p>The Office appointed an executive as its Accessibility Champion to ensure the engagement with interdepartmental networks, employees and support for the ongoing implementation of this plan, as well as to further the goals of the <i>Accessible Canada Act</i>. He continued the work in this regard.</p> <p>Provided Government of Canada-focused Accessibility training for all new employees.</p> <p>Engaged staff (including persons with disabilities) to solidify a culture of continuous improvement that supports diversity and inclusion. This included quarterly discussions at the senior management table on progress achieved and initiatives introduced in support of diversity, inclusion and accessibility commitments.</p> <p>Promoted self-identification through available tools, to ensure that representation within the Office is accurately captured.</p> <p>Continued to support flexible work arrangements that address the diverse needs of all employees, while aligning with Government of Canada obligations and operational requirements. Managers continued to review and adjust flexible work arrangement agreements as required to strengthen dialogue and ensure that appropriate accommodations are in place and are working.</p>
<p>Provide services and tools needed to support persons with disabilities as well as management.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Corporate Services, Accessibility Champion and Management</p>	<p>Adjusted the recruitment approach where required, while ensuring employee health and safety. This included the organization's commitment and promotion of Accessibility on staffing posters.</p> <p>Ongoing review and update of Human Resources recruitment/staffing procedures to offer hiring managers guidance, training and tools in support of staffing and accommodating of persons with disabilities.</p>

2. Built environment

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Collaborate with Public Services and Procurement Canada as well as Facility Management to review safety and resource plans with the mindset of “inclusive by design and accessible by default”.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Corporate Services, Management</p>	<p>Completed a review of the organization’s floor plans (both floors) to ensure mobility requirements are aligned with Principles identified in the <i>Accessible Canada Act</i>. Specifically, section 6...</p> <p><i>(e) laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.</i></p> <p>This review led to several changes including the addition of accessibility buttons to main entry doors which are now accessible to all individuals, including those with mobility challenges.</p>

3. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Assess Information Management and Information Technology environment with a view to identifying challenges relevant to accessibility barriers.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Corporate Services and Management</p>	<p>Updated and communicated the organization’s hybrid workplace approach to reflect new Government requirement for employees to be in the Office up to 3 working-days per week. As was the case in year 1, this workplace approach considered recommendations stemming from the IM/IT assessment which reflected the challenges faced by employees with disabilities.</p> <p>Conducted a review of the organization’s public-facing communication platforms to ensure accessibility by visually impaired Canadians.</p>

4. Communications other than ICT

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Public feedback mechanism.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Corporate Services</p>	<p>Leveraged established channels with stakeholders with a view to contributing to the Office’s continued improvement of accessible external communication. Examples include conversations with service providers regarding the inclusion of accessibility requirements in their products and services.</p>

5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Consider barriers to accessibility in the procurement and facilities space.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Corporate Services and Management</p>	<p>As and when required, liaised with the Accessible Procurement Resource Centre at Public Services and Procurement Canada for guidance on how to meet obligations regarding the consideration of accessibility factors in procurement.</p>

6. Design and delivery of programs and services

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Support the prevention of barriers in relation to third-party design and delivery of programs and services.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Policy and Research, Operations, supported by Corporate Services</p>	<p>Ongoing consultations and discussions with service providers as required.</p> <p>Inclusion and promotion of accessibility considerations and questions within stakeholder consultations.</p>

7. Transportation

OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION in YEAR 2
<p>Identify barriers to persons with disabilities in the Investigative function.</p> <p>Office of Primary Interest: Accessibility Champion, Operations and Policy and Research</p>	<p>As a senior member of the investigative function, the organization's Accessibility Champion continued the work with operations and policy and research groups to assess accessibility barriers as well as a mitigation approach to support persons with disabilities in the role of investigators.</p>

D. Consultations

The Office of the Correctional Investigator remains committed to involving persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of its Accessibility Plan as well as subsequent Progress Reports. However, as indicated earlier, only 1 or 2.2% of the complement self-identified as having disabilities limiting the collection of unique and valuable perspectives and experiences.

Due to the reality highlighted above, the Office developed this first and second Progress Reports by primarily consulting with the Accessibility Champion who is particularly sensitive and knowledgeable of the organization's successes and areas for improvement. The Office did however expand its consultations for the development of the second Progress Report to include newly hired employees as well as the experiences of other micro agencies with similar mandates for comparative purposes.

E. Feedback

The *Accessible Canada Act* requires organizations to establish a departmental process for receiving and dealing with feedback regarding the implementation of the accessibility plan. The Office has established channels for employee feedback through its exit and stay interview processes.

The Office of the Correctional Investigator's Accessibility Champion is responsible for monitoring and evaluating all feedback and report regularly to the organization's senior management table to ensure its future consideration when possible.

For questions, feedback or suggestions regarding this Progress Report, please contact the Office by:

- calling OCI 1-877-885-8848
- sending your feedback by mail to the attention of the Correctional Investigator Office of the Correctional Investigator Canada, PO Box+ 3421, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L4Canada
- sending your feedback by fax to 613-990-0563
- sending an email to: org@oci-bec.gc.ca
- scheduling a stay interview with the Small Department and Agencies Ombuds (for employees only)

The Office's Accessibility Champion will assess and respond to all feedback and questions in a timely manner. Feedback aimed at improving the organization's approach to Accessibility will be tabled for discussion at the senior management table. The Accessibility Champion is a permanent member of the Senior Management Committee.

F. Lessons Learned

As stated earlier, the primary challenge for the Office in the reporting period as well as going forward will continue to be the lack of representation within its complement, of self-identified persons with a disability. This will affect the organization's ability to develop plans and progress reports and will require external consultations to obtain perspectives not available in-house. Notwithstanding, the organization will continue its recruitment and staffing efforts in targeting individuals with a disability with a view to including them into the planning and reporting of Accessibility measures.

G. Training

As stated in the 2023-25 Accessibility Plan, the Office of the Correctional Investigator, under the leadership of Corporate Services, scheduled and provided Government of Canada-focused training as part of its mandatory training plan for all employees for 2024-25. This will also be the case in Year 3 of the implementation.

Through formal and informal mechanisms, including info-lunches and sidebar conversations, the organization's Accessibility Champion and other members of the senior management cadre

engaged the small number of employees with disabilities and all staff to solidify a culture of continuous improvement that supports diversity and inclusion. These opportunities for dialogue also included quarterly discussions at the senior management table on progress achieved in relation to diversity, inclusion and accessibility commitments.

The Office also promoted self-identification opportunities through available tools with a view to ensuring accurate representation within the Office..

H. Glossary

Access to Justice

means a people-centered approach to justice that puts consideration of the individual at the heart of Canada’s rule of law, by providing access to information, programs and policies.

Accessibility, Accommodations and Adaptive Computer Technology -

The Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology Program of Shared Services Canada provides a wide range of services, on a cost-recovery basis, to help integrate employees with disabilities, injuries and ergonomic requirements and who require access to systems, programs, information, computers and computer resources.

Barrier

“means anything—including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice—that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.”

Disability

“means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.”

Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport

The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport helps address the obstacles federal public service employees and applicants with disabilities face in obtaining the tools, supports and measures to perform at their best and succeed in the workplace. It facilitates recruitment, retention, and career advancement for persons with disabilities. The Accessibility Passport facilitates employee mobility between GC organizations. It is meant to follow each employee and it is an evergreen document that can be updated throughout a career.

“Nothing about us without us”

“Nothing about us without us” is a guiding principle used across the Government of Canada to communicate the message that no policy should be decided by a representative without the full and direct participation of the members of the group affected by that policy.

Self-Identification Modernization Project

In September 2020, the Treasury Board Secretariat launched the Self-Identification (self-ID) Modernization Project to increase the accuracy, depth and breadth of the data across government. The project explored ways to reduce stigma associated with self-identification for all employment equity groups. Following extensive research and consultations, a new questionnaire was co-designed with employees from various diversity networks.

Endnotes

ⁱ Accessible Canada Act, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/>

ⁱⁱ Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada, [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service/accessibility-strategy)