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# 2024 SENATE ACCESSIBILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

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December 3, 2024  
Senate of Canada

# Table of Contents

<b>Message from the Clerk of the Senate</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>General</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Statement of commitment</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Contact information and feedback process</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Definitions and terminology</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Areas in Section 5 of the <i>Accessible Canada Act</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>A. Employment</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024 .....	7
Progress made outside of the accessibility plan .....	8
<b>B. Built Environment</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024 .....	8
Progress made outside of the accessibility plan .....	9
<b>C. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024 .....	10
Progress made outside of the accessibility plan .....	11
<b>D. Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024 .....	11
Progress made outside of the accessibility plan .....	12
<b>E. Procurement of goods, services and facilities</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>F. Design and delivery of programs and services</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024 .....	13
<b>G. Transportation</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>H. Organization-wide initiatives</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024 .....	13
Progress made outside of the accessibility plan .....	14
<b>Awareness and learning</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Consultations</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Internal consultations at the Senate</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Consultations with people who participated in Senate events</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Consultations with disability stakeholder groups</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Summary of consultation results</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Feedback</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Feedback statistics</b> .....	<b>20</b>

<b>Feedback related to barriers .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Feedback related to inaccessible documentation .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Feedback related to inclusion.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Annex A: 2025 goals.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Annex B: 2023 goals .....</b>	<b>25</b>

## Message from the Clerk of the Senate

I am pleased to present the Senate of Canada's 2024 annual progress report on its 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan. This report shows real progress in making the Senate truly accessible to all people, from those who follow its deliberations from afar, to those who support or serve in the Chamber itself.

This year's achievements include an organization-wide accessibility awareness course, the launch of an improved Communication Access RealTime Translation (CART) system, training on document accessibility, an updated emergency evacuation plan to better support people with disabilities, and the development of a sign language interpretation toolkit to facilitate access to American Sign Language and Langue des signes québécoise resources. This work was accomplished in consultation with disability organizations and people with lived experience, in keeping with the principle of "Nothing without us."

It is gratifying to see how senators, their staff and Senate employees have been working together to break down barriers and make meaningful changes. While improving accessibility is an ongoing journey, the Senate reaffirms its commitment to this important work.

As we move forward, the Administration will continue to prioritize consultations and collaboration to ensure that the institution's efforts are meaningful and have a lasting impact.

Shaila Anwar

Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of Parliaments

## General

### Statement of commitment

The Senate is committed to representing Canada's diversity and to giving voice to many underrepresented groups, including people with disabilities. To ensure that all Canadians can participate fully in their democratic institutions, we are dedicated to making all aspects of the Senate's activities accessible. Accessibility is an ongoing process, and we strive to continuously improve accessibility by listening to the voices of people with disabilities.

## Contact information and feedback process

The Senate welcomes feedback—including feedback submitted anonymously—from senators, their staff, employees from the Administration and members of the public about accessibility at the Senate, as well as the [2023-2025 Senate accessibility plan](#) and its implementation. The Senate is committed to reviewing the feedback it receives in good faith and to taking steps to address any barriers to accessibility that are identified.

You can submit your feedback by contacting the Senate Accessibility Officer at [accessible@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:accessible@sen.parl.gc.ca) or 1-888-810-9470.

You can also write to the following address:

Senate Accessibility Officer  
Senate of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A4

An [electronic feedback form](#) and further information on [submitting feedback to the Senate](#) are available on the Senate website.

You can request the plan, progress reports on the plan or a description of the Senate's feedback process in alternative formats by contacting the Senate Accessibility Officer at [accessible@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:accessible@sen.parl.gc.ca) or 1-888-810-9470.

An [electronic version of the accessibility plan](#) and an [electronic version of this progress report](#) that are compatible with assistive technology can be accessed on the Senate website. An [audio version of the accessibility plan](#) and an [audio version of this progress report](#) are also available on the Senate website.

The Senate will provide the following alternative formats within 15 days of the initial request:

- Print
- Large print (increased font size)

The Senate will provide a braille format within 45 days of the initial request. This deadline is set out in the *Accessible Canada Regulations* and allows for the time necessary to produce and distribute the braille version. Should there be an urgent need for this version, the Senate will make every effort to send it sooner.

## Definitions and terminology

The following definitions apply throughout this report:

- **Ableism:** A view or attitude that treats people with disabilities as “abnormal,” “inferior,” or “other.” Ableism can be both intentional (e.g., bullying, ridicule, treating a person with a disability as if they were incapable) and unintentional (e.g., documents that look nice but are inaccessible, planning events that do not allow persons with disabilities to participate comfortably). (Definition from [Employment and Social Development Canada](#))
- **Accessibility:** The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies, and rules in a way that allows all people — including people with disabilities — to access them.
- **Barrier:** Anything that might hinder the full and equal participation in society of people with disabilities. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological, attitudinal, based on information or communications, or the result of a policy or procedure.
- **Disability:** Any impairment in physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, sensory, or communication abilities that, when interacting with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, episodic, fluctuating, or change over time, and they may or may not be evident.
- **Remediate:** To fix something or make it right. In this case, remediation refers to changing things to make them more accessible.

**A note on disability terminology:** The Senate recognizes that there are individual preferences when it comes to how people identify themselves. This report generally uses person-first language (e.g., a person with a spinal cord injury), but it acknowledges that many people may use identity-first language (e.g., an autistic person) or other descriptions. In individual interactions, the Senate makes efforts to ask people how they identify themselves.

## Executive summary

The [Senate’s 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan](#) outlines specific goals for each year related to the priority areas of the [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#). This progress report focuses on

the goals for 2024 and goals that are ongoing in each year of the plan. Important progress on accessibility that has been made outside the goals is also included in the report.

Goals to be finished in 2025 will be included in next year's report. A list of those goals can be found in [Annex A: 2025 goals](#). A list and status of goals achieved in 2023 is in [Annex B: 2023 goals](#).

In 2024, the Senate accomplished 10 of its 11 goals and continued to work on all three of its ongoing goals. The report summarizes how each goal was accomplished. It updates the status and timeline for the goal that has been delayed to 2025. It also includes important information from the Senate's annual consultations. Finally, it presents the accessibility feedback received this year.

## *Areas in Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act*

### **A. Employment**

#### **Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024**

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will replace its online application system. Accessibility will be an essential requirement in the next online application system, and the chosen system will be compliant with World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) WCAG 2.1 AA (a set of international standards for online accessibility). While waiting for this system upgrade, the Senate will be proactive in offering to assist applicants who require accommodation.

**Status: Complete.** In March 2024, the Senate replaced its previous online application system with VidCruiter, a WCAG 2.1 AA compliant software. Vidcruiter improves accessibility in the recruitment process, which is a benefit to the Senate and job seekers. Vidcruiter also includes a message at each step of the application process about how candidates can request an accommodation.

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will conduct a review of its accommodation policy and processes for employees with disabilities. Examples of available accommodations and how to request them will be included as part of new employee onboarding

activities, and roles, responsibilities, and procedures associated with accommodations will be transparently communicated in a space accessible to all employees.<sup>1</sup>

**Status: In progress, delayed.** In April 2024, the Senate’s Human Resources Directorate hired a Workplace Accommodation and Equity Specialist. This employee is leading the policy review, which is anticipated to be complete in winter 2025. The Workplace Accommodation and Equity Specialist has started to draft resources to guide managers and employees through the accommodation process. Information on the duty to accommodate will be prominently posted on the Senate’s internal website so employees can access information, resources, and examples of available accommodation options in the workplace.

**Goal:** The Senate will continue to support the employee network groups, including a group for Senate Administration staff members with disabilities.

**Status: Ongoing.** Human Resources continues to work with other parliamentary employers to promote the networking groups to employees across Parliament Hill. Membership numbers have increased since last year.

### **Progress made outside of the accessibility plan**

The Human Resources Directorate is part of the Employment Accessibility Resource Network’s (EARN) leadership team and participates in meetings to help promote and recruit for job positions, with the goal of matching people with work opportunities. Human Resources also works with community organizations that support people with disabilities who are looking for work.

## **B. Built Environment**

### **Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024**

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will incorporate information about emergency egress for people with disabilities into the accessibility awareness training that will be launched. In the meantime, all staff with roles and responsibilities in emergency procedures have received the necessary information.

**Status: Complete.** The Corporate Security Directorate updated its emergency evacuation plan, which includes steps to support people with disabilities should

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<sup>1</sup> The Senate’s goal on its accommodation policy has evolved since the adoption of the Senate’s 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan. Going forward, the Senate will report against the goal as written in this progress report.



they need assistance in the event of an emergency. The plan was posted on the Senate's website, was promoted during Fire Prevention Week 2023, and has been incorporated into the Senate's Accessibility Awareness Course. The Corporate Security Directorate will continue to train new employees on these emergency procedures to ensure continuity.

**Goal:** Over the coming years, Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Senate will continue auditing the built environment. As barriers are identified, the Senate will collaborate to prioritize those barriers and take the necessary steps to correct or eliminate them.

**Status: Ongoing.** Two projects are currently being completed in the East Block to improve accessibility: creating accessible washrooms on the third floor and modifications to the governor general's entrance.

**Goal:** Over the coming years, the Senate will continue to work with Public Services and Procurement Canada on continuous improvements to best practices and accessibility guidelines to ensure that feedback and lessons learned are systematically integrated into future plans and particularly into the renovation of the Centre Block, East Block and Senate Office Complex (Eastern portion of the Block 2 Rehabilitation project).

**Status: Ongoing.** The Property Services Directorate continues to participate in accessibility working groups and advisory committees to review any updates to best practice documents. The directorate continues to monitor and ensure that consultants working on Senate projects are using the latest best practices for their Long-Term Vision and Plan projects. The Long-Term Vision and Plan is the master plan for restoring and modernizing the buildings and grounds on and around Parliament Hill. It aims to create a universally accessible workplace and is being led by Public Services and Procurement Canada, with support from parliamentary partners like the Senate.

### **Progress made outside of the accessibility plan**

Public Services and Procurement Canada owns or provides the Senate's buildings and offices. The Senate works closely with them to ensure that its built environment is accessible to everyone. As part of its universal accessibility plan, Public Services and Procurement Canada is reviewing the existing conditions in Senate-occupied buildings against its Universal Accessibility Best Practices guidelines.

## C. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

### Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will create a process for conducting regular reviews of documents to check for accessibility.

**Status: Complete.** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate created a process to help people who create or approve documents ensure they are accessible. This process is supported by resources like templates and checklists. A plan is in place to progressively move from individual action on document reviews to Senate Administration-wide monitoring and compliance.

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, all existing Senate employees and new hires who prepare documents will receive training on how to make documents accessible. This training will include when PDF format should be used, when it should be avoided, and how to make PDFs accessible.<sup>2</sup>

**Status: Complete.** Self-serve resources (guides, checklists, templates and a training video from the Canada School of Public Service) were posted to the Senate's internal website in August. These resources – which were reviewed by employees with disabilities – are actively promoted by the Senate Accessibility Officer.

The self-serve resources are complemented by live training. All members of the Senate Administration management team attended a document accessibility training workshop in September and were encouraged to send relevant employees in their respective directorate to a subsequent workshop in October. Sixty-seven employees attended these workshops, which will continue to be offered periodically. The workshops and online resources include information about PDF accessibility.

In addition to the general workshops, technical experts in the Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate received specialized training on accessibility in Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign and PDF.

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<sup>2</sup> The Senate uses PDFs frequently, hence the importance of learning how to make them accessible.

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, all Senate Administration employees and new hires responsible for developing, updating, and maintaining the internal or public-facing website or for creating social media content will receive training on web accessibility.

**Status: Complete.** All employees responsible for the Senate’s public and internal websites were trained on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). Eleven employees also received training in designing an accessible user experience. All four members of the social media team received training on accessibility and digital marketing.

### **Progress made outside of the accessibility plan**

Ahead of the 2023 holiday season, the Senate Accessibility Officer sent a memo to all senators, their staff and Senate employees explaining how to keep digital cards accessible.

The Senate Accessibility Officer visited senators’ offices in June to promote annual accessibility consultations and distribute a brochure about best practices for accessible social media content.

A workshop on how to use the Senate’s PowerPoint template, which covered accessibility, attracted nearly 140 learners. A captioned recording of the workshop and a PowerPoint accessibility checklist are available on the Senate’s internal website.

## **D. Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

### **Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024**

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will develop a toolkit on how to request live closed captioning and/or sign-language interpretation.

**Status: Complete.** A sign language interpretation toolkit is now available on the Senate’s internal website. The toolkit includes information on how to access American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) at the Senate and how to communicate effectively through a sign language interpreter. A separate toolkit on how to request live closed captioning, known as Communication Access RealTime Translation (CART), is also available on the Senate’s internal website. The toolkit explains what closed captioning and CART services are, when they are available and how to request them. Both toolkits were reviewed by stakeholders who are hard of hearing or deaf.

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will create and publish plain-language explanations and guidance on how to read and better understand certain Chamber and committee documents. These guidance documents will inform readers on how to navigate these documents and will highlight where they can find important pieces of information.

**Status: Complete.** The Chamber Operations and Procedure Directorate, the Committees Directorate and the Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate prepared plain language explanations early in 2024. Shortly after, Canada’s draft standard on plain language was released for consultation. It recommends consulting members of the intended audience when possible. To that end, the Senate partnered with L’Arche Canada to identify people with disabilities interested in the Senate’s work. These individuals were invited to review and give feedback on the draft explanations, which were refined and posted on the Senate website.

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will incorporate training on how to give accessible presentations into its wider accessibility awareness training to be rolled out across the organization.

**Status: Complete.** Training on accessible presentations was included in the Senate’s Accessibility Awareness Course, which was launched in February. The Senate Accessibility Officer also continued to promote internal guidelines on accessible meetings and events, which cover virtual and in-person presentations.

### **Progress made outside of the accessibility plan**

Building on the work done in 2023, the Senate’s Information Services Directorate built a new Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) system at the Senate. The system was tested by people with disabilities and then launched in November 2024. Users can now access CART during Senate committee meetings via their own devices from anywhere. Since personal devices are not allowed in the Senate galleries, designated seating with CART devices in these spaces will be provided. If a CART user is following Chamber proceedings from another location, they will still be able to access it using their own device.

## **E. Procurement of goods, services and facilities**

While there were no goals specifically related to procurement in 2024, relevant Senate staff attended a session on how to integrate accessibility in procurement. The session

was organized by Public Service and Procurement Canada. This training will help the Senate identify new ways to improve the accessibility of its procurement process.

In addition to the training, staff involved in procurement continued to promote the Senate's accessible procurement checklists. These will be updated as accessibility best practices in this sector evolve.

## F. Design and delivery of programs and services

### Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will ensure that all existing event staff have been trained on how to offer and provide assistance to attendees with disabilities. We will also ensure that this training becomes part of the standard onboarding process for any new Senate Administration employee who will plan or run events.

**Status: Complete.** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate created and promoted a training handbook for Senate staff on how to best support attendees with disabilities. It is available on the Accessibility Resource Centre page on the Senate's internal website. In addition, the Senate Accessibility Officer will offer information sessions on an annual basis for staff who plan events. The sessions will include real-life scenario questions to help staff be prepared to respond in different situations.

## G. Transportation

There were no objectives in this category due this year. However, the Property Services Directorate is in the process of purchasing a new, accessible shuttle bus. As part of this process, the Senate is also looking at retrofitting current shuttle buses with accessibility components such as grab bars, non-slip flooring and luminescent markers.

## H. Organization-wide initiatives

### Accessibility plan goals achieved or in progress in 2024

**Goal:** By the end of 2024, the Senate will implement organization-wide disability and accessibility awareness training. This training will be mandatory for all Senate staff members and will become part of the standard onboarding process for new staff members. This training will also be available for senators and will cover topics such as:

- a) an introduction to different types of disabilities and the types of barriers that people with those disabilities often face;
- b) how to interact with people with different types of disabilities, including best practices for communication and offering assistance;
- c) introductory ideas on ensuring that information, communication, and physical spaces are accessible to all people; and
- d) information on assisting people with disabilities in the event of an emergency.

**Status: Complete.** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate launched an organization-wide accessibility awareness course in February. The course was developed by the House of Commons' Learning and Development Team and was adapted for the Senate. The course is mandatory for the Senate Administration and is available to senators and their staff. Topics covered those listed above, as well as ableism – a topic identified as an important part of any awareness training during the Senate's consultations. Feedback received on the course has led to immediate improvements or planned upgrades to the course (including a read-aloud option).

The participation rate for Administration employees is 100%, and the course has been incorporated into the onboarding process for new hires at the Senate. Participation rates for senators and their staff are lower as the course was not mandatory for them. The Senate Accessibility Officer will continue to promote it to senators and their staff to increase participation rates.

### **Progress made outside of the accessibility plan**

The Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate created templates to collect feedback from Senate directorates regarding draft or newly adopted standards by Accessibility Standards Canada. This information will inform decisions on how to implement these standards at the Senate.

The directorate also established an accessibility working group made up of Senate Administration employees who work on the accessibility file.

## **Awareness and learning**

The Parliamentary Precinct Accessibility Working Group is made up of parliamentary employers, including the Senate, who work on accessibility. Increasing accessibility awareness was the key priority for the working group in 2024. To that end, the group

supported the following events open to all parliamentarians and parliamentary employees:

1. A keynote address by Yazmine Laroche, the first person with a visible disability to be appointed as a federal deputy minister and Canada's first Deputy Minister of Accessibility. Date: December 3, 2023 (International Day for Persons with Disabilities).
2. A workshop on multiple chemical sensitivity, which was the first instalment in a "lived experience" series. Date: May 7, 2024.
3. A keynote address by Stephanie Cadieux, Canada's Chief Accessibility Officer during National AccessAbility Week. Date: May 30, 2024.
4. A presentation by a guest speaker with ADHD, part of the "lived experience" series. Date: October 24, 2024.
5. A "You can't ask that" panel during which people living with various disabilities will share their experiences and answer anonymous audience-submitted questions about their disabilities. Date: December 3, 2024 (International Day for Persons with Disabilities).

## Consultations

The Senate is committed to representing the voices of people with disabilities both in its legislative activities and in day-to-day operations. As part of that commitment, the Senate continued consulting with individuals and groups whose lived experience can inform the implementation of its plan and other major projects related to accessibility. These consultations are led by the Senate Accessibility Officer, who is part of the Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate.

In the preparation of this report, the Senate Accessibility Officer consulted internal stakeholders (senators, Senate staff and employees), external stakeholders (visitors or participants in Senate activities), and organizations representing people with disabilities (e.g., Inclusion Canada, Specialisterne). The consultations included discussions of the Senate's ongoing efforts to improve accessibility, areas where the institution needs to sustain its efforts and themes for future development.

Consultations took place in spring/summer 2024 via surveys (Microsoft Forms) or meetings. Alternative formats of the surveys were available upon request. The Senate Accessibility Officer encouraged participants to request additional measures to remove any barriers to their participation.

## Internal consultations at the Senate

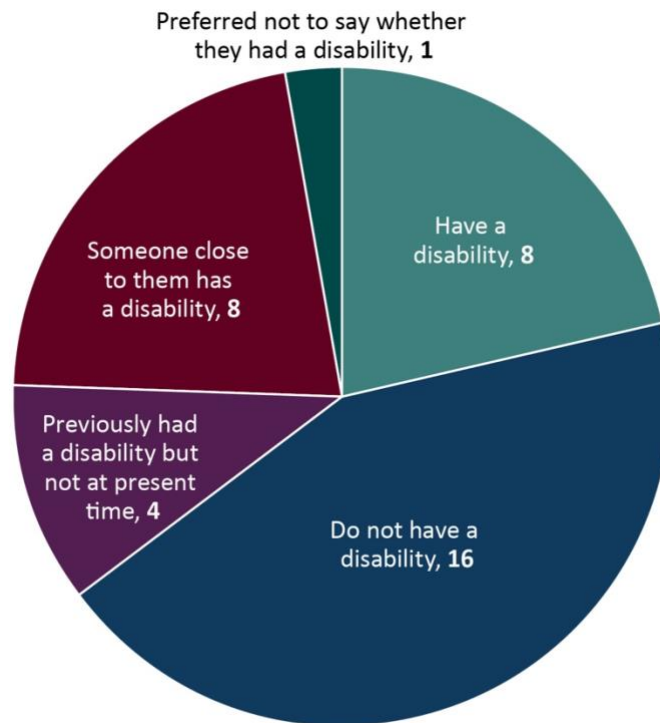
In May, a survey was sent to senators, their staff and the Administration. A summary of the progress made on the accessibility plan accompanied the survey, as well as an offer to book one-on-one meetings with the Senate Accessibility Officer.

Survey questions asked about lived experience, observed barriers, opportunities to improve accessibility, and areas of success and progress on the Senate’s accessibility plan in 2024.

In total this year, 37 individuals filled out the survey. Of these,

- 2 were senators,
- 8 were senators’ staff,
- 5 were Administration management and
- 22 were Administration staff.

Most respondents who filled out the survey stated they have a disability, have had a disability or were close to someone with a disability.

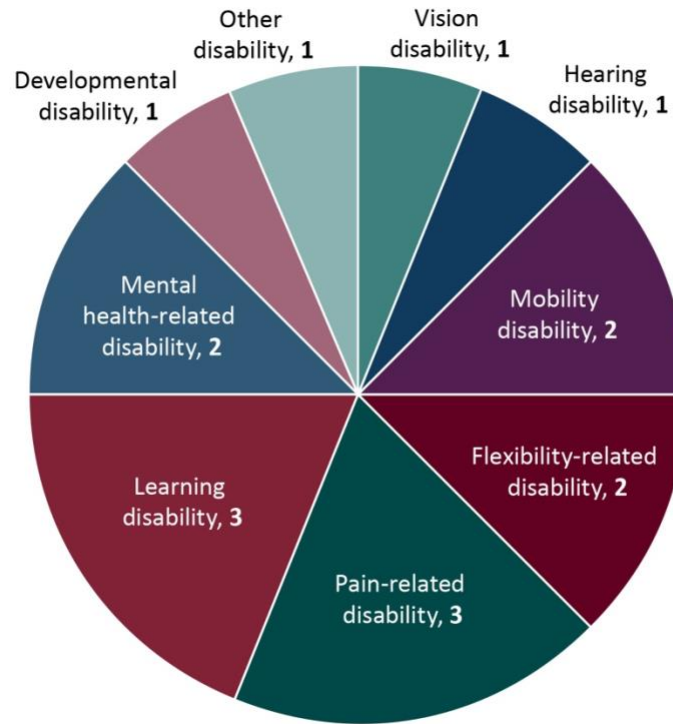


As indicated in the pie chart above, eight individuals identified as having a disability, four previously had a disability but not at this time, eight shared that someone close to



them has a disability, one stated they preferred not to say whether they had a disability and 16 identified as not having a disability.

Disability categories identified in the survey:



As indicated in the pie chart above, one individual stated they have a vision disability, one has a hearing disability, two have a mobility disability, two have a flexibility-related disability, three have a pain-related disability, three have a learning disability, two have a mental health-related disability, one has a developmental disability, and one has a disability indicated as 'other.'

## Consultations with people who participated in Senate events

The Senate Accessibility Officer worked with the Committees Directorate and the Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate to add a question about accessibility to the feedback forms for committee witnesses and youth outreach program participants. The forms also provide an option to be contacted by the Senate Accessibility Officer. Respondents who indicated they would be open to being contacted received an invitation to participate in the annual consultations. One person filled the survey, and another contacted the Senate Accessibility Officer via email.

## Consultations with disability stakeholder groups

The consultations built on the conversations the Senate started with disability stakeholder groups. Two new organizations were consulted on the Senate's 2024 accessibility progress: Consortium Centre Jules-Léger and Race and Disability Canada. These consultations were held as virtual meetings, during which the Senate Accessibility Officer asked a standard set of questions. She allowed the conversation to flow in whichever direction was the most natural for the people she was consulting.

The following organizations were consulted.

- **Consortium Centre Jules-Léger (CCJL)** – CCJL is a French-language provincial institution that offers special education services for students from preschool to secondary school levels, who have severe learning disabilities, are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or low vision, or deaf-blind.
- **Race and Disability Canada** – Race and Disability Canada is an organization that focuses on the intersectionality of race and disability. It conducts research, educates, and provides training to help Canadians understand the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous and racialized individuals with disabilities.
- **Inclusion Canada** – Inclusion Canada leads the way in building an inclusive Canada for people with an intellectual disability and for their families.
- **Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility** – Wavefront Centre is a registered charity that exists to reduce communication barriers by providing access and inclusion for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.
- **Specialisterne Canada** – Specialisterne Canada is a not-for-profit organization that specializes in connecting employers with the talents of people on the autism spectrum or with similar neurodiversities.
- **Indigenous Disability Canada/British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (IDC/BCANDS)** – IDC/BCANDS is an internationally recognized and award winning, national Indigenous not-for-profit society that serves the unique and diverse disability needs of Indigenous peoples across Canada.

The following organization was consulted via email and reviewed the Senate 2023 annual progress report.

- **Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD)** – CAD is Canada's oldest national organization representing Deaf individuals. This organization offers consultations

on Deaf needs to various sectors, conducts research, and develops pilot programs.

## Summary of consultation results

The consultations highlighted areas where the Senate is doing well or showing improvement in accessibility. These included:

- A proactive approach to accessibility.
- Accessibility assessments of Senate buildings and solutions to address identified issues.
- A new and improved CART system.
- Workshops on documents including PowerPoint presentations.
- An increased number of accessible documents.
- The more frequent addition of accessibility in project planning.

The consultations also provided insight into areas where the Senate could further improve accessibility, including:

- Producing information in American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), and Indigenous Sign Language (ISL).
- Practising emergency evacuation procedures more regularly.
- Allowing visitors to register to receive emergency notifications on their mobile devices while in the Senate of Canada Building.
- Adding knowledge of sign language as a preference in job postings.
- Distributing job postings on channels where they would be easily seen by Indigenous candidates with disabilities.
- Enhancing the hiring process by offering examples of accommodations in the application process, providing interview questions in advance, assessing alternative ways of asking interview questions, and re-evaluating how exam results are factored into hiring scores.
- Asking people with disabilities to test the new job application (VidCruiter) system.
- Evaluating barriers in the current language testing method.
- Posting jobs in non-digital formats for individuals who do not have internet access.
- Offering Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) sign language interpretation for Senate events.
- Establishing an accessibility advisory committee of persons with disabilities.
- Offering more professional development courses in person instead of online.

- Increasing the number of accessibility buttons in Senate buildings.
- Adding seating options at stand-up events.
- Assessing ways to mitigate the effect of bright broadcasting lighting in committee rooms for those who get migraines or have light sensitivities.
- Continuing to foster accessibility awareness.

## Feedback

### Feedback statistics

The Senate Accessibility Officer received and responded to feedback on 10 occasions this year. Half of the feedback this year came from senators and Senate staff and the other half from members of the public. Feedback methods were as follows:

- In person feedback: 5
- Email feedback: 4
- Form feedback: 1
- Phone: 0

Of the feedback received:

- 50% was related to barriers experienced at the Senate
- 10% was related to lack of accommodation
- 20% was related to inaccessible documentation
- 20% provided ideas for new measures to improve accessibility

Follow-up actions have been completed, are in progress, or were referred to other organizations or departments in cases that fell outside the Senate's area of responsibility. A summary of feedback and actions taken to date follow.

### Feedback related to barriers

1. A visitor was unable to access the accessibility button at the Rideau Street entrance to the Senate of Canada building because Parliamentary Protective Service personnel placed temporary stanchions in front of it.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Senate reported the stanchions issue to Parliamentary Protective Services, which is implementing a process to prevent this from happening again. Signage will be added to indicate where the stanchions should be positioned.

2. The women's change room in the Victoria Building, where the Senate's gym is located, has an accessible shower stall, but the showerhead is too high to be accessible to people who use wheelchairs.
  - a. **Action taken:** The showerhead in the women's change room was replaced with a height-adjustable one.
3. During a youth event hosted at the Senate of Canada Building, an elevator was out of service. No information or signage was provided regarding alternate elevators or routes.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Senate now sends an event calendar to Public Services and Procurement Canada which helps employees plan maintenance work to avoid affecting any scheduled events at the building. If work must occur, signage with alternative routes is put in place.
4. A sign language interpreter reported that it is difficult to translate for clients in the Senate Chamber because they must hold an interpretation device to their ear to hear the proceedings. This prevents them from interpreting because they cannot use both hands.
  - a. **Action taken:** The interpreter was notified that hands-free listening devices are available upon request. This information was also shared via email with senators and their staff, as well as relevant Administration staff. Posters are also now posted in the Chamber galleries to ensure that visitors are aware of these devices.
5. An employee reported that portable security barriers placed in front of the Senate of Canada Building are hard to see at night due to lack of lighting.
  - a. **Action taken:** The portable security barriers are put in place by Public Services and Procurement Canada. The Senate Accessibility Officer is working with them to add reflective tape to the barriers, so they are easier to see at night.
6. An employee reported that their route from the Senate of Canada Building to transit options lacked adequate lighting, which posed a barrier for those with low vision.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Senate's Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate worked with the City of Ottawa, National Capital Commission and Public Services and Procurement Canada to relight the

route between the Senate of Canada Building and transit options at the Rideau Centre.

## Feedback related to inaccessible documentation

1. A subscriber to the Senate's committee alerts reported issues with how their screen reader was reading the document.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate ran accessibility verifications to test out the committee alerts but could not replicate the issue. The Senate Accessibility Officer shared the test results with the individual. The individual informed the Senate Accessibility Officer that they have replaced their screen reader with a different software which no longer presents accessibility issues.
2. An employee flagged that an internal employee form was inaccessible.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publication Directorate, in collaboration with the Information Services Directorate and other directorates, is going through the process of updating its internal employee forms to rectify the issue of inaccessibility.
3. A senator's office received an email regarding a committee report that was not formatted in an accessible manner.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publication Directorate offered to provide a remediated version of the committee report. The Senate is also working on an updated, accessible template to be used to format future committee reports.

## Feedback related to inclusion

1. The National Executive Director of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN Canada) suggested the Senate change the language on its website to include "persons with disabilities" in its description of the underrepresented groups the Senate represents.
  - a. **Action taken:** The Communications, Broadcasting and Publication Directorate audited the references on its website and added "persons with disabilities" to its description of underrepresented groups when it was missing. Senate brochures were also updated where applicable.

## Annex A: 2025 goals

1. By the end of 2025, the Senate will conduct a review of talent acquisition and talent management policies, procedures, and practices to identify and remove any barriers in the process for people with disabilities.
2. By the end of 2025, the Senate will review its systems to improve the collection and monitoring of human resources data, including recruitment, advancement, and retention.
3. By the end of 2025, the Senate will conduct an in-depth review of all software applications developed in-house or acquired from third parties to identify any potential accessibility barriers. An action plan will be developed to eliminate any identified barriers.
4. By the end of 2025, the Senate will conduct user testing of the internal and public-facing websites to identify barriers. A procedure respecting periodic reviews of the websites' accessibility will also be established. In this context, user testing is accessibility testing completed by people with disabilities who regularly use assistive technology.
5. By the end of 2025, the Senate will complete an assessment of parliamentary processes to seek out other potential barriers for people with disabilities.
6. By the end of 2025, the Senate will implement automatic audio and visual (displayed-through-text) stop announcements on all shuttle vehicles.
7. By the end of 2025, the Senate will develop an Accessibility Tool Kit for senators and their staff. This toolkit will offer training and guidance on how they can incorporate accessibility best practices into the activities they undertake outside the Chamber and committees. This toolkit may include:
  - a. basic accessibility awareness training and advice on interacting with people with various disabilities;
  - b. advice on hosting and chairing meetings and events in an accessible way and how to give accessible presentations;
  - c. guidance on creating accessible documents and PowerPoint presentations;  
and

- d. Information on ensuring that social media posts, website updates, and other forms of electronic communication are accessible.
- 8. By the end of 2025, training on chairing or running accessible meetings will be developed and rolled out across the organization. This training will be offered to senators, staff members, and anyone else who regularly runs or chairs meetings at the Senate. It will focus on ensuring that meetings are accessible for everyone and determining appropriate accessibility services for participants with disabilities.



## Annex B: 2023 goals

For more detailed information on the 2023 objectives and what was done, please refer to the [2023 Senate Accessibility Plan Progress Report](#).

1. By the end of 2023, the Senate will work with Public Services and Procurement Canada and its parliamentary partners to update the existing signage standards to include applicable accessibility requirements and best practices. The Senate will also work with them on planning updates to existing signage that uses the approved signage standards.

**Status: In progress.** The latest date of completion for the final signage standards is June 2025 as the Senate is waiting for Accessibility Standards Canada signage standards to be released.

2. By the end of 2023, the Senate will ensure that signage is added in its committee rooms to reserve some seats with access to audio earpieces for people with a hearing disability. **Status: Complete.**
3. By the end of 2023, the Senate will establish criteria to help guide the planning of its interior spaces to ensure that planning reflects the latest inclusive design practices and that it complies with accessibility standards and best practices. **Status: Complete.**
4. By the end of 2023, the Senate will create a process to regularly review and revise accessibility at buildings occupied by the Senate to ensure that new barriers have not been introduced and that existing accessibility features have been maintained. **Status: Complete.**
5. By the end of 2023, the Senate will update the Senate Precinct Access form to include a section at the bottom of the form identifying appropriate Senate contact numbers should their visitors require any accessibility needs (e.g., wheelchairs). **Status: Complete.**
6. By the end of 2023, the Senate will develop an action plan to continue with the review and remediation of all internal and external documents and forms. This plan will outline the order in which documents will be reviewed and remediated, starting with the most important and frequently used documents and forms. **Status: Complete.**

7. By the end of 2023, the Senate will complete an assessment of potential new CART solutions that could allow closed captions of live proceedings to be viewed from anywhere, on any device. **Status: Complete.**
8. By the end of 2023, in collaboration with its parliamentary partners, the Senate will complete an assessment of the resources required for providing sign-language interpretation for some Senate proceedings and official ceremonies. **Status: Complete.**
9. By the end of 2023, the Senate will have a checklist available for clients to ensure that accessibility is considered when developing their requirements. Finance and Procurement Directorate employees will keep themselves informed of any future accessibility standards to ensure compliance with applicable accessibility requirements and best practices. **Status: Complete.**
10. By the end of 2023, the Senate will develop guidelines on how accessibility services can be offered and provided for members of the public with disabilities who participate in Senate activities. These guidelines will be used when planning and organizing events. **Status: Complete.**
11. By the end of 2023, the Senate will complete a review of its shuttle service for the purposes of identifying and removing any barriers to accessibility. **Status: Complete.**
12. By the end of 2023, the Senate will complete an update of the *Senate Parking Policy* to include the Senate's established accommodation practises and ensure that parking spaces are assigned in accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act* and with *Canadian Human Rights Act* obligations. **Status: Complete.**