



2023 Senate Accessibility Plan Progress Report

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1 General

1.1 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, the Senate is dedicated to making all aspects of its activities accessible. Accessibility is an ongoing process, and the Senate strives to continuously improve accessibility by listening to the voices of people with disabilities.

1.2 Contact information and feedback process

The Senate welcomes feedback—including feedback submitted anonymously—from senators, staff, and members of the public about accessibility at the Senate, 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 or 1-888-810-9470.

You can also write to the following address:

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 public website.

You can request the plan, this progress report, as well as a description of the Senate’s feedback process, in alternative formats by contacting the Senate Accessibility Officer at 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 our website.

You can also access an [audio version of the accessibility plan](#) and an [audio version of this progress report](#) (a recording of someone reading the text aloud).

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.

1.3 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 a variety of 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.
- **Committee witness:** An individual who provides testimony at a hearing.
- **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.
- **Universal design:** Design that ensures spaces do not present barriers and that benefit all people regardless of their abilities, needs and cultural preferences.

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.

1.4 Executive summary

The Senate’s 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan includes time-bound goals for each year in every key section of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA). This progress report covers those due for completion in 2023 as well as ongoing goals that span the duration of the plan’s timeframe. While the report includes some context for the goals, a detailed state of accessibility for each category is available in the accessibility plan. Goals due in 2024 and 2025 will be covered in future reports: a list of these goals can be found in Annex A.

In 2023, the Senate accomplished 11 of its 12 goals and started all three of its ongoing goals. The report summarizes how each goal was accomplished and next steps (if applicable). It also updates the status and timeline for the goal that is delayed.

In the preparation of this report, the Senate surveyed and/or interviewed senators and Senate employees, as well as participants in Senate activities who identified as having a disability. The Senate also met with groups who represent persons with disabilities. The consultations included discussions of the Senate’s ongoing efforts to improve accessibility, covered areas where the Senate needs to sustain its efforts, and identified themes for future development.

The Senate also received feedback on 10 occasions from senators, Senate staff and members of the public. The feedback included commendations on some of the Senate’s accessibility efforts, the identification of barriers and comments on the plan’s implementation.

2 Areas described under Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

2.1 The built environment

Overview

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) owns or provides the Senate’s buildings and offices. The Senate works closely with PSPC to ensure that its built environment is accessible to everyone. As part of its universal accessibility plan, PSPC is reviewing the existing conditions in Senate-occupied buildings against its Universal Accessibility Best Practices. The Senate is committed to reviewing and providing input to keep these practices relevant.

While PSPC is responsible for ensuring base elements of Senate buildings (e.g., entrances, elevators, washrooms) meet the latest codes, standards, and best practices, the Senate is responsible for determining the requirements of its own interior spaces (e.g., offices, meeting rooms, kitchenettes).

Currently, hosts or sponsors of visitors must submit a “Senate Precinct Access Form” prior to their guests’ arrival at any Senate-occupied building.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

1. Over the coming years, PSPC and the Senate will continue auditing the built environment. As barriers are identified, the Senate will work with PSPC to prioritize those barriers and take the necessary steps to correct or eliminate them.
 - a. **Status: Ongoing.** Accessibility audits were completed for East Block (October 2020), the Senate of Canada Building (SCB) (July 2021), 40 Elgin (September 2022), 1 Wellington (January 2023), and 56 Sparks (October 2023).
 - b. **Next steps:** The Senate is working with PSPC to prioritize quick fix projects and to plan for larger projects to improve accessibility based on the audit results. Of the quick fix projects identified, 28 have been completed, 8 are in progress and 44 are in planning.

2. Over the coming years, the Senate will continue to work with PSPC 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).
 - a. **Status: Ongoing.** The Senate continues to contribute to PSPC-led initiatives by participating in accessibility working groups and advisory committees. Participation in these working groups allows the Senate to provide input into the continuous improvement process for PSPC's Universal Accessibility Best Practices.
 - b. **Next steps:** The Senate will continue to ensure that all new projects follow best practices and accessibility guidelines.
3. By the end of 2023, the Senate will work with PSPC and its parliamentary partners to update the existing signage standards to include applicable accessibility requirements and best practices. The Senate will also work with PSPC on planning updates to existing signage that uses the approved signage standards.
 - a. **Status: On hold.** PSPC decided to delay the initiative until Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) releases its national standards on wayfinding and signage. PSPC's updated standards cannot be completed until ASC releases its standard (expected in late 2026).
 - b. **Next steps:** The Senate will continue to work with PSPC and other partners on this initiative. Once ASC releases signage standards, PSPC will then update its standards to include applicable accessibility requirements and best practices. The PSPC standard will be used to update signage in Senate buildings.
4. 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.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** The Senate installed reserved seating signage in each of its committee rooms and consulted with the person who identified the barrier to ensure the actions were effective. Mobile audio packs that amplify sound are also available in committee rooms. Information about the availability of reserved seating and audio packs was shared with senators and Senate employees.
 - b. **Next steps:** Not applicable.
5. 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.

- a. **Status: Complete.** The Senate drafted Accessibility Guidelines on Senate Accommodation. These guidelines apply to interior spaces in all Senate occupied buildings.
 - b. **Next steps:** These guidelines will be implemented by PSPC — which does the construction or work — in all projects to ensure compliance with the latest universal accessibility and universal design best practices. The Senate will continue to consult internally to ensure the guidelines continue to meet user needs.
- 6. 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.
 - a. **Status: Completed.** Existing daily and monthly recurring inspection checklists now include the review of specific accessible features (e.g., pathways, clearances around sinks and water fountains), as well as testing of mechanical components (e.g., automatic flush, automatic soap dispensers, door operators). Any issues will be logged in the call management system to ensure follow-up actions are tracked.
 - b. **Next steps:** Continue implementing the new process.
- 7. 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).
 - a. **Status: Complete.** After consulting teams responsible for corporate security and the Parliamentary Protective Services, the Senate updated the form to include key contacts for hosts to call to prearrange some accommodations for accessibility needs. The consultations included discussions on roles and responsibilities to ensure all teams involved in facilitating building access know what is expected of them.
 - b. **Next steps:** The Senate will monitor how the form is used and collect feedback as it is received.

2.2 Employment

Overview

Senate Administration employees have access to an employee-led parliamentary networking group for persons with disabilities. The group provides peer support to staff members with disabilities.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

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

- a. **Status: Ongoing.** The Senate is working with other parliamentary employers to promote the networking group to employees across Parliament Hill.
- b. **Next steps:** Not applicable.

2.3 Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Overview

The Senate produces a large volume of information, and it is important that all Canadians can access it. Documents and information are a key element of the work employees do to support senators.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

- 9. 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.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** The Senate examined documents and forms posted on its website, its intranet and templates used internally. The plan identifies which documents need to be reviewed to ensure accessibility and suggests potential remediation methods and timelines to consider as regulations are defined. Under the plan, the Senate's graphic design team took advanced document accessibility training in 2023.
 - b. **Next steps:** The plan will evolve as Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) publishes and adopts standards. In the short term, updated corporate templates and general document accessibility training for Senate Administration staff who prepare documents will be rolled out in 2024.

2.4 Communication other than ICT

Overview

Many Senate activities (e.g., committee meetings) are broadcast live. Live broadcasts of Senate activities have live closed captioning. The words spoken during the broadcast appear in written form at the bottom of the screen. These live broadcasts then become on-demand videos that members of the public can access at any time on the Senate streaming site SenVu. Unrevised closed captions remain when live-broadcast videos are turned into on-demand videos.

Sign-language interpretation may be provided on request for certain events, subject to resource availability.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

10. By the end of 2023, the Senate will complete an assessment of potential new Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) solutions that could allow closed captions of live proceedings to be viewed from anywhere, on any device.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** After undertaking a pilot project with an external vendor, the Senate assessed and selected an in-house solution for a new CART system. The in-house system takes existing captioning software used on SenVU and tailors it to a CART system. Once implemented, the system will allow users to access closed captions of live proceedings anywhere, on any device. The new CART system has been developed and is undergoing user testing (including by users who are deaf or hard of hearing).
 - b. **Next steps:** The planned rollout of the CART system will be done in two phases. During the first phase, it will be available internally (starting December 2023). CART would be available for all users with any device during the second phase (anticipated second half of 2024). In the meantime, the Senate continues to offer CART to on-site users via its existing system and devices.

11. 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.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** The Senate's assessment was based on sign language interpretation provided during the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology's study of Bill C-22 (*Canada Disability Benefit Act*). American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and Quebec Sign Language (LSQ) interpretation was provided during these meetings to participants in the room and was also added to video recordings of the proceedings in post-production. The addition of sign language interpretation to video recordings is rare due to its resource intensity but aimed to ensure the proceedings would be accessible to as many people who would be impacted by the proposed law as possible. The experience provided a real-time assessment of the resources needed to provide sign language interpretation on site and on broadcasts/video recordings. While sign language interpretation in the room is largely dependent on the availability of interpreters, adding ASL/LSQ to all video recordings and/or to live broadcasts requires technological infrastructure and a level of staffing that the Senate does not have at the present time. The resource assessment does, however, provide an established and tested roadmap for resources needed to offer sign language interpretation in post-production for broadcasts of some proceedings in certain circumstances.
 - b. **Next steps:** The resource assessment will help guide planning for any sign language requests received.

2.5 Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Overview

When the Senate is procuring goods and services related to websites and online tools, it includes language about WCAG 2.1 AA requirements in its requests. For other goods and services that the Senate procures competitively, bidders are asked to describe their accessibility practises in their bids.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

12. 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.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** The Senate prepared a set of checklists for senators and Senate employees to use when requesting the procurement of goods and services. These checklists will help ensure that accessibility is considered when senators or employees start creating their requirements.
 - b. **Next steps:** The checklists will be updated as accessibility best practices in this sector evolve.

2.6 Design and delivery of programs and services

Overview

The Senate conducts various types of public-facing and internal events. Guidelines on how to ensure accessibility services are offered and provided at events will help ensure that participants are consistently invited to share their accessibility needs, that best practices are consistently followed and that participants who have special requirements are accommodated.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

13. 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.
 - a. **Status update: Complete.** Guidelines for accessible events were developed into checklists to be used when planning and organizing events. Information gathered from consultations, including those from persons with disabilities informed the content of the guidelines. These guidelines were reviewed by internal stakeholders at the Senate who organize or host events.
 - b. **Next steps:** The guidelines will be shared on the Senate's intranet and will be used when planning and organizing events.

2.7 Transportation

Overview

The Senate operates a shuttle bus service that transports people between various buildings on and around Parliament Hill. The service includes four buses.

The number of parking spaces available to senators and staff in proximity to Senate buildings is limited. Parking passes are assigned and managed by the Senate and the Senate makes all reasonable efforts to meet the parking needs of Senate staff who need an approved accommodation.

Accessibility goals achieved or in progress

14. 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.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** The Senate analyzed its shuttle fleet, and the following barriers were identified: no grab bars, missing automated visual and audio stop announcements, and the absence of a lift in one shuttle. As an interim solution, shuttle drivers have been announcing the stops.
 - b. **Next steps:** The shuttle without a lift is due to be replaced. Senate staff are in the planning stage to find a replacement that includes all required accessibility features (e.g., lift, visual and audio announcements, grab bars). The plans include provisions to retrofit the other three shuttles to improve accessibility components, until such a time of their eventual replacement.
15. 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.
 - a. **Status: Complete.** The *Senate Parking Policy* has been updated to state that parking requests are considered and provided in a manner that takes medical accommodations and/or accessibility needs into account. The changes reflect the practices already in place when assigning parking.
 - b. **Next steps:** Not applicable.

3 Consultations

3.1 Consultation overview

The Senate is committed to representing the voices of people with disabilities both in our 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 our plan and other major projects related to accessibility.

Consultations occurred in fall 2023 and included three key groups: internal stakeholders (senators and Senate employees), external stakeholders (visitors to the Senate or participants in Senate events) and groups representing persons with disabilities. Methods used included surveys (Microsoft Forms) and meetings. Forty-three individuals filled out the survey and the Senate Accessibility Officer met with four individuals for one-on-one meetings. Alternative formats of the surveys were also offered (e.g., Word documents). The Senate Accessibility Officer invited participants to request additional measures to remove barriers to their participation by contacting the Senate Accessibility Officer.

The consultations included individuals who identified as deaf, blind, deaf-blind and autistic as well as those who have disabilities related to mobility, mental health and vision.

3.2 Consultations with senators, Senate employees and management

Consultations began with a survey of senators, Senate employees and management. The invitation to fill out the survey was distributed along with a summary of the progress made on the accessibility plan objectives to date and an invitation to book a one-on-one meeting with the Senate Accessibility Officer, if desired.

Survey topics included optional personal information regarding identified disabilities, observed barriers, opportunities to improve accessibility, areas of success and progress on the Senate's accessibility plan in 2023.

3.3 Consultations with people who participated in Senate events

The consultations also included some individuals who participated in Senate events including committee meetings. These consultations included witnesses who appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for its study of Bill C-22, *Canada Disability Benefit Act*. Special accommodation measures put in place aimed to remove barriers to witnesses who identified as having a disability. Feedback allowed the Senate Accessibility Officer to assess the adequacy of the accommodation measures and to identify areas of improvement.

These individuals had the option to fill out a survey or meet one-on-one with the Senate Accessibility Officer.

Survey topics included optional information about the nature of their disabilities, how the Senate addressed or accommodated accessibility concerns, observed barriers, and ideas for how accessibility could be improved.

Several individuals met with the Senate Accessibility Officer for a one-on-one discussion. These conversations were mildly structured to keep the fluidity of natural conversation and to ensure participants were comfortable. All meetings were held virtually via Microsoft Teams or Zoom depending on the preference and accessibility requirements of participants.

3.4 Consultations with disability stakeholder groups

The consultations also built on the conversations it started with disability stakeholder groups. The Senate Accessibility Officer expanded the discussion to include those that represent individuals with non-apparent disabilities and Indigenous persons with disabilities.

Virtual meetings were held with representatives from the following groups:

- **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 the deaf and hard of hearing.
- **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.

During each of these consultation meetings, the Senate Accessibility Officer asked a standard set of questions. However, she allowed the conversation to flow in whichever direction was the most natural for the people she was consulting.

3.5 Summary of consultation results

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

- Increased internal awareness of accessibility requirements.
- Improved document templates and tools available to employees to support their efforts in removing barriers.
- Better efforts to monitor building accessibility and create accessible routes in Senate spaces.
- Responsive measures to remove barriers for participants in Senate activities.
- The forthcoming Communication Access Realtime Translation system.
- Increased availability of telework.

While progress is being made, the consultations also provided insight into areas where the Senate will need to sustain its efforts to become barrier-free, including:

- Eliminating persistent barriers in the built environment such as broken or missing accessibility buttons, heavy doors, and temporary obstacles (e.g., construction fencing).

- Increasing disability awareness while including the voices of persons with disabilities and information about ableism, non-apparent disabilities (e.g., mental health), and customer service best practices.
- Enhancing communication of the types of accommodations, accessibility services and technologies available to employees, senators, committee witnesses, and visitors to the Senate.
- Providing more detailed information about Senate procedure, room layouts and agendas to committee witnesses and visitors in advance so they can predict barriers and/or issues such as the position of interpreters.
- Closing gaps in the employment and interview processes as well as the workplace accommodations process.
- Ensuring that the Senate consistently asks for feedback regarding accessibility from visitors, committee witnesses, guests, etc.
- Providing hands-free alternatives to the listening devices in the Senate Chamber so that sign language interpreters can use both hands when interpreting proceedings to visitors in the galleries.

Some of these contributions helped shape the delivery of goals this year including event planning guidelines and updated inspection checklists. Others will help inform the Senate’s work on goals to be delivered in 2024 and 2025 including awareness training, training for staff who plan events or chair meetings, an assessment of barriers in parliamentary procedures, plain language explanations of Chamber and committee documents, and a review of the accommodation policy and process.

The consultations also brought out themes for future consideration including using procurement to drive change, the addition of a dedicated phone number for video relay services, the creation of an advisory council, and extending the reach of information on the Senate’s accessibility efforts into First Nations communities.

The Senate recognizes that conversations need to be ongoing and is dedicated to building relationships of trust with people with disabilities to engage in effective consultations going forward.

4 Feedback

4.1 Feedback statistics

The Senate Accessibility Officer received and responded to feedback on 10 occasions since our accessibility plan was published. Most of the feedback was received via accessible@sen.parl.gc.ca. Other methods used to submit feedback were the telephone and the feedback form. Of the feedback received:

- 60% was from senators or Senate staff
- 40% related to barriers experienced at the Senate
- 40% related to the plan’s implementation

- 20% provided ideas for new measures to improve accessibility
- Feedback related to the built environment, employment, information, and communications technology (ICT), and communications (other than ICT).

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

4.2 Feedback related to barriers

- Some formatting issues on our internal and external websites were flagged as possible problems for screen readers.
 - **Action taken:** The pages were immediately edited.
- An individual visiting the Senate of Canada Building (SCB) noted that it was difficult to get to the building using a wheelchair. Senate staff noted this same issue when trying to find an accessible route from Parliament Hill to the SCB to use in promotional materials. The most direct route included barriers such as the absence of pedestrian signals and tactile paving, damaged curbs and cracked pavement, a small, steep traffic island, and a lack of directional signage.
 - **Action taken:** The Senate raised the issue with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), who created an interjurisdictional team including the City of Ottawa and the National Capital Commission to address the barriers where possible and identify an accessible route.
- An individual encouraged the Senate to provide opportunities for reduced or part-time hours in job postings, citing that full-time hours could pose a barrier for some people with disabilities.
 - **Action taken:** The feedback was shared with the Human Resources Directorate so it may be taken into consideration in future reviews of talent acquisition and talent management policies, procedures and practices.
- An individual expressed concern that the 45-day timeline outlined in the accessibility plan for the provision of braille versions seemed like an unfair delay.
 - **Action taken:** The Senate Accessibility Officer explained the timelines came from regulations and allow the time necessary to produce and mail the version. This explanation was added to the Senate website.

- A committee witness informed us that during a committee hearing, captioning didn't keep up with another witness who was speaking rapidly. The witness suggested the meeting chair could consider asking a witness to slow down or offering more time on the spot if necessary. The witness also flagged other distractions that occurred during the meeting.
 - **Action taken:** Information sessions on broadcasting best practices for committee chairs are planned for early 2024. These sessions will include advice for mitigating the issues raised by the witness. This advice will also be included in the accessibility training on chairing committee meetings, which is one of the goals of the Senate's accessibility plan.

4.3 Feedback related to the plan's implementation

- One submission suggested the Senate could have widened consultations to include organizations focused on autism and neurodivergence in developing its accessibility plan. It also indicated the plan could better reflect the diversity of language people with disabilities use to describe themselves. Finally, it proposed the Senate should proactively reach out to committee witnesses to learn about their experiences.
 - **Action taken:** The Senate increased the diversity of individuals and groups consulted as part of its progress report.
 - **Action taken:** This progress report includes a note about the use of disability-first language in the "Definitions and terminology" section.
 - **Action taken:** The Senate sends witnesses a survey following their participation at a committee. An option was added to indicate if witnesses would like to join the Senate's next accessibility consultations.
- A Senate employee asked how to request sign language for an event.
 - **Action taken:** The information was provided and will be used to deliver on a 2024 goal to create a toolkit for requesting sign language at the Senate.
- Commendations were received regarding the new reserved seating signage for those who use assistive audio technology in committee rooms and a series of National AccessAbility Week awareness emails.
 - **Action taken:** Not applicable.

4.4 Feedback related to how to improve accessibility at the Senate

- The addition of "accessibility considerations" to the Senate's briefing note template to ensure that anything going to decision makers is assessed for its implications on accessibility.
 - **Action taken:** Templates were updated.
- The exploration of a read-aloud feature for the Senate's intranet.
 - **Action taken:** The Senate is exploring browser extensions that could provide the read-aloud function.

5 Conclusion

As the Senate completes the first year of implementation of its accessibility plan, momentum is increasing. The plan is propelling awareness and action across the organization. At the same time, this year reinforced the reality that accessibility is an ongoing process that does not end with the completion of goals. Our priority remains the inclusion of people with disabilities. The Senate is dedicated to continuing the work of examining what it does and how it does it to find and remove barriers to accessibility. Moreover, the Senate is committed to continually learning as it implements its plan, especially from its ongoing conversations with people with disabilities.

6 Annex A

Accessibility Goal	Deadline
<p>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 later (see section 3.8 – Organization-Wide Initiatives). In the meantime, all staff with roles and responsibilities in emergency procedures have received the necessary information.</p>	2024
<p>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.</p>	2024
<p>By the end of 2024, the Senate will conduct a review of its accommodation policy and processes for employees with disabilities. Information about available accommodations and how to request them will be included as part of new employee onboarding activities, and all accommodations will be available through a single point of contact.</p>	2024
<p>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. It 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.</p>	2024
<p>By the end of 2024, the Senate will develop a toolkit on how to request live closed captioning and/or sign-language interpretation.</p>	2024
<p>By the end of 2024, the Senate will create a process for conducting regular reviews of documents to check for accessibility.</p>	2024
<p>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 (see section 3.8 – Organization-Wide Initiatives).</p>	2024

Accessibility Goal	Deadline
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.	2024
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.	2024
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.	2024
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	2024
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.	2025
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.	2025
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.	2025

Accessibility Goal	Deadline
<p>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.</p>	2025
<p>By the end of 2025, the Senate will complete an assessment of parliamentary processes to seek out other potential barriers for people with disabilities.</p>	2025
<p>By the end of 2025, the Senate will implement automatic audio and visual (displayed-through-text) stop announcements on all shuttle vehicles.</p>	2025
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	2025
<p>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.</p>	2025