Canadian Dairy Commission Accessibility Plan

Inclusive by design and accessible by default

First Edition

Prepared by the CDC Human Resources

February 2023

(Revised in November 2024)

Table of contents

The Canadian Dairy Commission's Accessibility Plan

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

1- Employment
2- The built environment (buildings and public spaces)
3- Information and communication technologies
4- Communication, other than information and communication technologies
5- The procurement of goods, services, and facilities
6- The design and delivery of programs and services
7- Transportation (does not apply currently to the CDC's mandate)

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, one in five Canadians (6.2 million) aged 15 years and over had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities. Based on the data collected with respect to Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for the Fiscal year 2020 to 2021, 5.6% of employees of the core public service identify as persons with disabilities. These figures let us know that the public service has difficulty attracting and retaining persons with disabilities, despite the large number of potential candidates for work. This report also shows that not only has the rate of promotions for employees with disabilities decreased over the last ten years, but the percentage of employees with disabilities hired has continued to fall below their workforce availability. Additionally, the 2020 Public Service Employment Survey (PSES) suggests that out of 16,645 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 19% of them experienced discrimination. Considering this, it is clearer than ever that the public service has some work to do to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate fully and meaningfully in the workplace.

The vision of the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada is for our public service to be the most accessible and inclusive in the world.

The Strategy's guiding principles

➢ "*Nothing 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

The following 5 goals are key to achieving the vision:

1. Improve recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities.
2. Enhance the accessibility of the built environment.
3. Make information and communications technology usable by all.
4. Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services.
5. Build an accessibility-confident public service.

The Accessible Canada Act's requirements

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

➢ Prepare and publish accessibility plans:
  o Draft accessibility plans to identify, remove, and prevent barriers in the priority areas in their
    • policies
    • programs
    • practices
    • services

  o Update their plans every 3 years or as specified in regulations.

  o Consult people with disabilities when creating and updating their plans.

➢ Set up a feedback process:
  o Have a way to receive and deal with feedback about their accessibility.

> ➢ <u>Prepare and publish progress reports</u>:
>   - o Make regular progress reports that describe the actions the organization has taken to put their accessibility plans into action.
>
>   - o Include information in their reports on feedback received and how the organization took the feedback into consideration.
>
>   - o Consult people with disabilities when preparing their reports.

These requirements help to make sure that accessibility is an ongoing priority and that all GC organizations are continuously improving, implementing inclusive design and working towards an accessible workplace. The responsibility/accountability for accessibility will no longer be placed on persons with disabilities but rather with all groups within GC organizations. The GC will establish proactive measures to deal with accessibility fully, from the beginning.

A. General

The Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC) is a Crown corporation which was established in 1966 to coordinate federal and provincial dairy policies and create a control mechanism for milk production which would help stabilize farm revenues and avoid costly surpluses.

The CDC is a micro-organization comprised of 85 employees and is governed by a board of three (3) directors appointed by the Governor in Council. For more than 50 years, the CDC has supported Canada's dairy industry by overseeing two (2) key elements of supply management in this sector, namely the price of milk at the farm gate, and national milk quotas.

Executive Summary

The CDC's first accessibility plan has been developed and managed by the HR section. It includes participation from employees at all levels who provided their feedback and comments through an in-house survey and individual online meetings. Based on the results, this plan is a direct reflection of the input, views and suggestions provided by more than half of the employees across the organization. The following is a list of the general key concerns that came from the survey results. Each concern was then broken down into more specific barriers within each priority area later in the plan.

1- Disabilities are still largely misunderstood, and more awareness is needed.
2- Lack of openness from managers to hire persons with disabilities.
3- Lack of training and guidance for employees at all levels on accessibility, accommodation, inclusion, and barriers faced by persons with disabilities.
4- Reluctance to self-identify with a disability in PeopleSoft 9.1 (Peoplesoft is a Human Ressources Management Online System that provides HR information to employees).

5- Accessibility is not apparently considered when new policies and practices are put in place.
6- Culture change within the organization is key.

Based on the priority areas identified in the *Accessible Canada Act*, the CDC has identified several actions, listed below, to work towards eliminating and preventing the barriers that were identified within the organization. These actions will have a direct impact on creating a culture of inclusiveness and putting the focus on accessibility within the CDC. Additionally, the CDC will measure and report on the progress of the implementation of these actions.

Accessibility Statement

Accessibility is the lens through which the CDC's overall vision, values and priorities will be developed. The CDC's goal is to be a workplace that is accessible by default.

The CDC will develop a progress report outlining how the CDC will ensure that each barrier is addressed, and solutions are proposed for implementation. This plan will include approximate timelines, resources, and leads who will be accountable for implementing each task over the next 3 years. We will also develop a performance measurement framework to monitor the results and to report on progress.

The CDC recognizes that becoming a more accessible organization is a journey, not a destination. The preferences and needs of persons with disabilities will continue to evolve. Improving accessibility at the CDC needs to be an ongoing effort at both the organizational and individual levels.

Feedback Mechanism

The *Accessible Canada Act* requires organizations to establish a departmental process for receiving and dealing with feedback about the implementation of the accessibility plan. The CDC is dedicated to continuous improvement and aims to deliver accessible services to our employees. As a first step, the CDC will ensure that accessibility is dealt with within the organization and will address external clients such as collaborators and stakeholders in its next accessibility plan (2026-2027). The CDC will establish and promote clear channels for feedback, regularly monitor and evaluate the responses while ensuring they are incorporated into all future plans, when possible.

If you have any questions, feedback, or suggestions, contact the CDC by:

a. Sending an email to the Human Resources Manager, at ressources.human@cdc-ccl.gc.ca

b. Calling the CDC's general enquiries line at 343-550-8020 or 1-866-366-0676 (toll free)

c. Sending your feedback by mail to:

The Canadian Dairy Commission
C/O Human Resources
Central Experimental Farm
960 Carling Avenue, Building 55
Ottawa, ON K1A 0Z2

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

1. Employment

The CDC is dedicated to implementing government-wide initiatives and increasing representation of persons with disabilities across all occupational groups and levels at the CDC. That is why removing and preventing barriers to recruitment, retention, and promoting persons with disabilities are priorities.

Internal consultations were conducted at the CDC through an in-house survey, follow-up group discussions, and individual meetings with persons with disabilities. This allowed us to identify four (4) barriers to "Employment":

1- Staffing process (e.g., formal interview format) can be discriminatory to persons with disabilities, especially those who experience significant anxiety.
2- Feeling misunderstood/misjudged by managers/directors which can negatively affect career/promotion opportunities.
3- Unconscious biases.
4- Reluctance to self-identify with a disability in PeopleSoft 9.1 (PeopleSoft is Human Resources Management System that provides employees with online access to HR information)

The CDC has identified the following actions that should be taken to address each barrier:

Barrier 1:
➢ Implement the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport to raise awareness among the assessment board members during selection processes.
➢ Ensure that staffing and assessment tools are accessible and inclusive to persons living with a disability. Our approach will be guided using the following link from the PSC:
Hiring persons with disabilities: Managers Toolkit (psc-cfp.gc.ca)

Barrier 2:
➢ Promote a culture change to ensure that managers/directors keep an open mind in career progression/promotion opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Barrier 3:
- Make sure all CDC employees have completed the mandatory courses (Moving from Bias to Inclusion and Adopting an Inclusive Mindset at Work (for managers only)
- Encourage managers to hire employees with disabilities in support of the government-wide target of 7% (5,000 hires) by 2025.

Barrier 4:
- Develop a short document outlining the steps/reasons to self-identify in PeopleSoft 9.1 and to provide to new employees during the onboarding process.
- Promote self-identification in the new Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Self-Identification Tool once it is online.

Section responsible: Human Resources

2. Built environment

The CDC recognizes the importance of an accessible built environment. The CDC will continue to proactively encourage the mindset of "inclusive by design" and "accessible by default".

The following three (3) barriers were identified under "Built environment":

1- The wheelchair ramp that gives access to the CDC building on the west side is not in good condition. Therefore, it is not meeting safety standards.
2- Certain doors to enter the building and the ones within the CDC do not have an automatic opening system that functions properly.
3- Sensory impairment (e.g.: reactions to odours, lighting, heating) is a physical barrier among some employees at the CDC. People coming to or working at the CDC may not be aware of this barrier.

The CDC has identified the following actions that should be undertaken to address each barrier:

Barrier 1:
- Contact our landlord, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), to request an evaluation to ensure the wheelchair ramp is repaired and meets the safety standards.

Barrier 2:
- Speak with the CDC Finance & Administrative Officer to request an evaluation from a third party to determine if and how we can proceed with the installation of an automatic opening door system and ensure that it is tied in with an access card authentication.

Barrier 3:
- Adding signage such as scent sensitivity to raise awareness of certain physical barriers existing among employees.

> Communicate that the CDC has a scent-free policy. This policy is not known of employees hired during the period when they were working remotely due to COVID-19 and may have been forgotten by other employees.

Sections responsible: Human Resources & Procurement Services

3. Information and communication technologies

Between March 16, 2020, and June 5, 2022, all CDC employees were working from home on a full-time basis. With the official return to work (on a 2–3-day basis) for all employees across the Government of Canada (GC), it is important for the CDC to make sure that all employees have the Information and Technology (IT) equipment and internal services they need. Employees' patience and collaboration will be important during this transition as the section will be working hard to resolve IT challenges and issues as they come up.

Following internal consultations through an in-house survey, and follow-up group discussions, the committee members working on the accessibility plan did not identify any barriers under "Information and communications technologies" (ICT). The reason for this could be that no CDC employees have declared a disability that could be impacted by ICT, such as a visual impairment.

As we become more digital, the CDC will make sure that accessibility is addressed when information and communications technology products, services and digital content are developed in the future regardless of the ability or disability for all.

The CDC will implement the following actions to ensure better accessibility:

> Develop or adopt systems which meet modern accessibility standards (e.g., new document library).
> Add closed captioning capability (CC) to TEAMS meetings.
> Provide all employees with the necessary training, resources, and tools to create accessible content and generate accessible documents.
> Create a "Network Request Form" for new CDC employees outlining the applications/programs that need to be installed by the IT Section prior to start date. The form could also include a field regarding assistive and/or adaptive technology or service needs.
> Having the boardroom microphones and headsets enabled and accessible to accommodate those with hearing impairments.

Section responsible: Information and Technology

4. Communication, other than information and communication technologies

The CDC is dedicated to making sure that all its communications, whether internal or external, are accessible. This includes ensuring that its communications are written in plain language, as per the Canada.ca Content Style Guide.

The CDC has already implemented the following action to ensure better accessibility:

> ➢ The CDC's new website is compliant with the GC's adoption of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. These guidelines offer accessible content to persons with physical or cognitive disabilities to ensure information is easy to find, easy to understand, and easy to use.

The CDC will also implement additional actions to ensure accessibility:

> ➢ Ensure that the new CDC Intranet site will also be in line with the GC's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.
> ➢ Include a section with tips/tools for employees on how to use plain language when communicating on the new CDC Intranet site.

Sections responsible: Communications and Strategic Planning & Information Technology

5. The procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Procurement is a key element in achieving accessibility at the CDC. For that reason, the CDC will implement procurement principles, rules, and practices with the goal of advancing accessibility objectives.

The CDC has made the following two (2) observations under "The procurement of goods, services, and facilities":

1- The in-house survey revealed that not all employees who self-identified as living with a disability have asked for any type of accommodation/adjustment since working at the CDC.
2- Most employees do not know who their first point of contact is when asking for an accommodation/adjustment request. They also seem unsure who to contact if experiencing delays and/or when a request is denied.

The CDC has identified the following actions to address the above-mentioned observations:

Observation 1:
> ➢ The HR section will develop information on various types of disabilities and possible accommodation options related to the most common ones for the CDC Intranet.

Observation 2:

➢ The HR section to develop and post information regarding whom to contact to start an accommodation process/ergonomic assessment and whom to follow up with in the case of delays or denied requests. This information will be posted on the CDC Intranet site under the HR "Workplace Wellness".

The CDC would also like to implement additional actions to ensure better accessibility:

➢ Propose training for the CDC finance & administrative officer and HR staff to make sure that accommodation requests are understood and dealt with in a timely manner to provide an accessible workplace for the employees.
➢ Following the Direction on the prescribed presence in the workplace issued by the TBS in December 2022 (a mandatory 40-60% or work hours at the office), the CDC will make sure that employees who have requested an accommodation while working from home will also be accommodated at the office.
➢ Implement the GC's Accessibility Passport as a communications tool for employees and managers to exchange accommodations-related information and adopt a "yes by default" approach to accommodations.

Sections responsible: Human Resources & Procurement Services

6. The design and delivery of programs and services

As an organization that undertakes several activities and administers several programs on behalf of the dairy industry, the CDC works in close cooperation with provincial authorities and sector representatives to deliver programs that address its main responsibilities.

The CDC will dedicate efforts to increase representation in the dairy sector and equip the organization to co-design and deliver accessible and inclusive policies, programs, and services in a multi-channel fashion, both internally and externally. Continuous feedback and accessibility improvement will be central elements of our approach.

For the development of the CDC's first accessibility plan, efforts were mainly made to get feedback from the employees regarding the design and delivery of programs and services provided internally. The CDC's intention is to call on external stakeholders for feedback when developing the next accessibility plan (2026).

The following two (2) barriers were identified under "The design and delivery of programs and services":

1- Accessibility is apparently not considered when new internal policies and services are put in place.

2- Employees may not know how to request specific accesses to programs and services offered at the CDC under the Accessibility Act.

The CDC has identified the following actions to address each barrier:

Barrier 1:
➢ Make certain that all new or revised internal policies and services (in-person and online) are developed to address the feedback obtained from persons with disabilities.
➢ Make sure that proposals for new or improved internal policies and services have addressed accessibility in their design such as making information easier to find and understand and improving online forms and documents.

Barrier 2:
➢ Develop and regularly review internal policies and services with the goal of removing barriers and supporting disability inclusion, such as improving accommodation requests.
➢ Offer the possibility to view documents in an alternative or accessible format, especially for those who need to use adaptive technologies.

Sections responsible: All CDC sections are responsible to review/develop their internal policies and services.

7. Transportation
This priority area set out in the *Accessible Canada Act* does not currently apply to the CDC's mandate as the CDC does not primarily provide transportation services to the public nor to its employees. That being said, the CDC did not include questions in the 2022 survey to determine if barriers existed in this priority area. Therefore, no barriers were identified in this Accessibility Plan.

As per the Guidance on Transportation Requirements under the Accessible Canada Regulations (accessibilitychrc.ca), the area of transportation may also be outlined in organization's policies, programs, practices and services. The CDC will ensure that questions related to transportation are included in its 2025 survey to identify possible barriers in the next accessibility plan.

C. Culture change, education, and awareness

The culture change, education, and awareness will be at the heart of building an accessible and inclusive workplace at the CDC.

Accessible and inclusive communication based on continuous internal and external feedback and learning opportunities will be the central elements of our approach. We will strengthen the inclusion of persons living with a disability and build accessibility awareness and confidence throughout the organization to be sure that the CDC is an attractive workplace for persons with disabilities and that stigmas are overcome.

Internal consultations highlighted the following four (4) barriers:

1- Several employees are not aware that they can request an accommodation, nor do they know the accommodation process at the CDC.
2- Some employees do not know where to find the emergency and evacuation plan.
3- Disabilities are still largely misunderstood, and many employees do not know the different types of barriers that their colleagues face living with certain types of disabilities (e.g., hearing impairments).
4- Several employees are hesitant to discuss their disability with their manager and therefore do not self-identify in PeopleSoft.

The CDC is dedicated to following through on the following actions to overcome those barriers:

<u>Barrier 1:</u>
➢ Develop internal procedures for employees requesting an accommodation as well as tools/guidelines for managers on how to manage such requests.
➢ Post the procedures, tools/guidelines on the CDC Intranet site and inform all employees using internal communications tools that this new information is available to them. The new procedure will include whom to contact to initiate a request, and how to follow up during delays and denied requests.

<u>Barrier 2:</u>
➢ Review the emergency and evacuation plan to include information on the "*Share your Status Application*" to make sure that employees are aware of the procedure to follow in case of an emergency. The procedure should also include a section on whom to contact when having a problem with the accessibility to the CDC building.

<u>Barrier 3:</u>
➢ Build accessibility awareness within the organization by providing learning events and resources to all employees. Post on the CDC Intranet site a list of relevant courses and learning events that could be taken to build awareness on the various types of barriers faced by people living with disabilities.
➢ Consult with employees living with a disability, on an ongoing basis, to create a culture of trust and confidence. This approach will make sure that the CDC knows their employees' needs to ensure constant improvement within the organization.
➢ Implement the Accessibility Passport as a communication tool for employees and managers to exchange accommodation-related information and adopt a "yes by default" approach to accommodation.

<u>Barrier 4:</u>
➢ Promote self-identification in the TBS app during the onboarding process to make sure that representation within the organization is accurately portrayed.

Sections responsible: Human Resources, Procurement Services & Occupational Health, and Safety Committee (OHS)

D. Consultations

"*Nothing Without Us*" is one of the guiding principles of the GC's Strategy. It was brought forward by persons with disabilities and became the theme for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This principle affirms that persons with disabilities must be involved in the design and implementation of each accessibility plan at every stage. Persons with disabilities offer a unique and valuable perspective and the CDC's goal is to make sure that no barriers prevent their full participation in the workplace. To identify barriers, the CDC consulted internally with persons with disabilities to get their perspectives, views, and experiences on the current state of accessibility at the CDC.

The first step was to conduct an in-house survey. The survey was composed of 28 questions that covered seven (7) sections of the Act: *Employment, Built environment, Information, and communication Technologies (ICT), Communications other than ICT, Procurement of goods, services, and facilities, Design and delivery of programs and services, and Transportation (not applicable at the CDC).*

The survey was developed and managed by the HR section and conducted online using Microsoft Office 365 (Forms). Participation in the survey was optional. Prior to sending out the official survey, two (2) emails were sent to all employees introducing them to the *Accessible Canada Act* and giving them key definitions, and statistics about disability.

The survey resulted in 55 responses out of 85 employees (65% participation rate) and gathered enough information to build this first accessibility plan. We collected a lot of feedback on the current state of accessibility, which allowed us to provide suggestions on ways to prevent and eliminate current barriers.

Following the completion of the survey, the HR section wanted to make sure that its first accessibility plan was developed through the voices of persons with disabilities. Therefore, we spoke with employees who accepted to participate in the development of the accessibility plan. During the discussions, we presented, on an individual basis, the first draft of the accessibility plan. The purpose was to allow them each enough time to read over the plan, and to provide additional comments to make certain that concerns, barriers, and potential solutions are being properly identified in the plan.

Any additional feedback was then integrated into the plan to accurately reflect the reality of the current state of accessibility at the CDC. Out of 11 employees living with a disability, a total of

five (5) virtual consultation meetings were held to collect their feedback on the draft plan prior to the final review and approval by the senior management team (SMT).

E. Implementation, monitoring, and reporting

To make sure that accessibility remains a constant priority within the government, the *Accessible Canada Act* dictates that regulated entities prepare and publish annual progress reports on the implementation of their accessibility plans. These progress reports must be prepared in consultation with persons with disabilities and present the feedback received (if any) and how that feedback was taken into consideration.

The CDC's first accessibility plan will serve as a framework to guide the organization in addressing and promoting accessibility and inclusion among its employees. The next step will be to start working with persons with disabilities and the divisions responsible for the implementation of the proposed solutions to address each barrier under the six (6) priority areas.

A progress report will be developed based on the barriers indicated in the accessibility plan and will serve as an evergreen document that will be updated as barriers are being addressed. The CDC's first progress report will be published <u>one year</u> following the publication of the first accessibility plan. It will include updates on the actions that the CDC has taken to address each barrier. Follow up online meetings with employees living with a disability will allow the CDC to receive their feedback and comments on the progress of the implementation of the actions identified to eliminate each barrier.

As specified in the regulations of the *Accessible Canada Act*, GC organizations must publish a revised plan every three (3) years. As a result, the CDC's first revised accessibility plan will be published in December 2025. The CDC's goal is to also engage with dairy stakeholders/clients to get a wider range of feedback related to people with disabilities. These external consultations will determine if they have encountered any barriers while applying to the CDC's programs and services.

F. Glossary

Accessibility
Accessibility is the combination of aspects that influence a person's ability to function within an environment.

Accessible
Accessible refers to a place that is easily reached, an environment that is easily navigated or a program or service that can easily be obtained.

Accommodation

Accommodation is the personalized adaptation of a workplace to overcome the barriers faced by persons with disabilities. For example, an accommodation could be providing an employee with an assistive item, such as an ergonomic keyboard or mouse, or adjusting an employee's weekly targets to align with their abilities.

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 Without Us"
"Nothing 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.