



Canadian  
Intergovernmental  
Conference  
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Canadian Intergovernmental  
Conference Secretariat

# **2023 PROGRESS REPORT**

**2023-2025 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**



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This document is available on the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat's [website](#), and in alternative formats upon request.

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## 1. General

The full version of the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat's (CICS) Accessibility Plan is available here: [www.scics.ca/en/accessibility](http://www.scics.ca/en/accessibility). An easy read version, that is shorter and simpler than the plan, can also be found at the same location. The Accessibility Plan documents and this Progress Report have been written in accessible plain language, to be as clear, concise, and appropriate as possible for the intended audience.

### 1.1 Contact Information & Feedback Process

CICS welcomes feedback from our employees, clients, conference attendees, and members of the public. We welcome feedback about accessibility at CICS and about our accessibility plan. Feedback can be submitted anonymously. We are committed to reviewing the feedback we receive and taking steps to address barriers that are identified through this feedback.

You can submit feedback about accessibility at CICS, CICS' implementation of its accessibility plan, or barriers you have encountered when dealing with CICS, by contacting:

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Electronic versions of CICS' accessibility plan, progress report, and a description of our feedback process that are compatible with assistive technology can be downloaded from our website at: [www.scics.ca/en/accessibility](http://www.scics.ca/en/accessibility). These can also be provided in alternative formats, within the following timelines:

- Print – 15 days
- Large print (Increased font size) – 15 days
- Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers) – 45 days
- Audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud) – 45 days



## 2. Areas in Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA)

Accessibility needs to be a part of everything we do. We need to prioritize accessibility early and often to be truly accessible. Some people and teams at CICS will have a greater role to play. However, we all have responsibilities in making CICS more accessible. This needs to be an organization-wide mission.

### 2.1 Employment

CICS is a small agency, with only 40 employees. This means that our employees have many duties, and we count on our staff to do their jobs well. Our workplace needs to be accessible for them to do this. We want our staff to know they can be accommodated if they face barriers at work.

- In 2023, CICS conducted research to begin updating the accommodation policy. A short-term solution was implemented in the interim, consisting of an organization-wide communication detailing the process to request accommodations.
- In 2023, CICS fully implemented the [Public Service Commission's requirement](#) to review all steps of a staffing action to identify potential barriers.

### 2.2 The Built Environment

Since the pandemic, some people at CICS work from home, and some people work at our main office in Ottawa. More people may return to work in the office full-time in the future. We want our offices to be safe and accessible. We asked employees how they felt about accessibility in our offices. We also worked with an accessibility specialist who helped us uncover barriers in the built environment.

- In early 2023, CICS conducted a thorough review of the barriers and recommendations identified in our built environment assessment. We determined priority barriers to address within the next three years.
- In mid 2023, CICS began to work with the building landlord to address identified priority barriers. CICS' building landlord implemented the following:
  - Replaced the drinking fountain with an accessible wall-mounted water bottle refilling station.



- Replaced main entrance door opening push plates with a more accessible touchless design.
  - Improved entry and exit into the accessible washroom, including a new lock button and an occupied/vacant indicator.
- In late 2023, CICS worked with the building landlord to:
  - Investigate options and begin implementation of accessible emergency notification methods for people with disabilities.
  - Begin the process of renovating an office space currently accessible through staircase-only, with the goal of transforming it into a fully accessible collaborative workspace.
  - Sign a Specific Service Agreement (SSA) with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) for installation of handrails along long paths of travel.
- The Secretariat created a feedback mechanism for employees to share their comments about the functionality and accessibility of workspaces. This mechanism consists of a semi-annual survey that inquires about functionality and accessibility of workspaces, and encourages use of the GC Accessibility Passport.
- In 2023, CICS' Occupational Health and Safety committee began researching and creating a process for employees with disabilities to request adjustments or accommodations to their workspaces.

## **2.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

Web technology plays a large role in how we do our work at CICS. Our office is in Ottawa, but we work with people all over Canada. Web tools help us to connect with our clients across the country.

Since the pandemic, many of the conferences we support are now virtual. Web technology allows us to run these conferences in a safe way. It is important that the technology we use is accessible to people who work at CICS, people who use our services, and people who attend our conferences.

- Using the findings of our 2022 web accessibility assessment, CICS began working toward fixing known barriers in our intranet site and web tools.



- Progress is well underway to move our Conference Management System web tool to a new platform that will allow updates to accessibility for both front- and back-end users.
- A supplier has been hired to move CICS' intranet site to a platform that will improve accessibility.

## **2.4 Communication, other than ICT**

A big part of the work CICS does involves communication. We communicate with clients to plan conferences. And we help governments communicate with each other by setting up these conferences. We also help governments communicate information to the Canadian public and the media.

- In 2023, CICS began the process of hiring a senior communications analyst. Once onboard, this expert will update our communications policy to include accessibility standards.

## **2.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

When accessibility is considered at the start of any process, barriers are reduced. Accessibility standards in procurement processes ensure that goods, services, and facilities are ready to use by anyone who needs them.

Goals have been created to ensure accessibility is a priority in procurement.

- In 2023, the Secretariat added accessibility considerations to our statements of work for vendors, when applicable.

## **2.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

A lot of the work CICS does depends on our client. The people who use our services make the final decisions about conference planning. However, it is our responsibility to help our clients make decisions. We want their conference experience to run smoothly. A well-run conference includes accessibility. If we want to be more accessible as an organization, we need to encourage accessible practices with our clients too. We need to ask them about their accessibility needs when they come to us for help. And we need to encourage them to think about how to make their conferences more accessible.



- In 2023, the Secretariat updated our conference feedback survey to include a question asking attendees about their experiences with accessibility, as well as requesting feedback on the accessibility of conference sites. This survey will be implemented in 2024, and results will be available in early 2025.
- In 2023, CICS established a list of conference sites for which accessibility barriers have been identified. This list will help us guide clients when selecting a site to host their conferences.

## 2.7 Transportation

CICS does not provide transportation services to employees or customers. No actions were implemented under the scope of transportation.

## 3. Consultations

The Secretariat consulted with its internal stakeholders through survey format. This survey covered topics related to implementation of accessibility improvements and removal of accessibility barriers at CICS. These internal consultations were not conducted solely with persons with disabilities, but rather with all stakeholders. This approach ensured that the Secretariat received unbiased and honest feedback from those who identify as persons with a disability and those that prioritize accessibility for all. This allowed for a more fulsome understanding of the accessibility and barriers in our organizational context. Additionally, CICS created a new survey for external stakeholders that will be implemented in 2024.

## 4. Feedback

Feedback from people who answered the survey mostly focused on the fact that identified accessibility barriers were being adequately addressed by CICS' Accessibility Plan. One survey respondent indicated being aware of barriers inherent in processes and procedures related to CICS' hiring process. CICS has taken this feedback into consideration and, in 2024, will review and revise the language of our job postings and the description of roles to make sure they are inclusive and accessible.



## 5. Glossary

The following definitions apply throughout this plan:

**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 people with disabilities full and equal participation. Barriers can be architectural, technological, attitudinal, based on information or communications, or can be the result of a policy or procedure.

**Built Environment:** The physical spaces where work is done, and services are provided.

**Conference:** An event where different groups of people meet to discuss shared business virtually or in person.

**Disability:** Any impairment, or difference in physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, or communication ability. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or can change over time.

**Intergovernmental:** Between different levels and types of government.

**Secretariat:** A government office.