



# Accessibility Progress Report: December 2023 to December 2024



The Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) supports Parliament by providing economic and financial analysis for the purposes of raising the quality of parliamentary debate and promoting greater budget transparency and accountability.

The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer is committed to becoming a leader in accessibility. Our goal is to remove barriers to accessibility for our employees, our clients and the Canadian population. This progress report outlines the actions we have taken between December 1, 2023, and December 1, 2024, to strengthen accessibility within our organization.

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**Yves Giroux**

**Parliamentary Budget Officer**

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# Message from the Parliamentary Budget Officer

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Our organization has a diverse and committed team of employees who play an important role in supporting Canada's parliamentary democracy through the provision of economic and financial analysis to Parliament.

The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (OPBO) supports a culture that recognizes the importance of accessibility and promotes diversity and inclusion in order to provide quality services to parliamentarians and Canadians. As a result, it is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for its employees, clients and the general public.

The OPBO is an active participant in the Parliamentary Precinct Working Group on Accessibility to break down all barriers to accessibility on the Hill.

This progress report focuses on the actions the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) has taken over the last 12 months toward its three-year accessibility plan published in December 2022. The plan covers a three-year period and is based on eight priority action areas.

This progress report details the achievements that have been made over the last year to chart a path toward a barrier-free OPBO. It outlines the accomplishments our organization has achieved in our key priority areas.

Training employees on barriers to accessibility and how to reduce and eliminate them will ensure that the OPBO is more inclusive for everyone.

We remain open to feedback about accessibility at the OPBO.

Yves Giroux

Parliamentary Budget Officer

# General

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The Chief Human Resources Officer and Manager, Human Resources Services, is responsible for accessibility initiatives at the OPBO. Questions or inquiries about the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's accessibility plan and/or other related initiatives can be sent to:

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Phone: 613-992-8026

You can also share your feedback about accessibility at the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer by filling out the [online form](#).

# Summary

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The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (OPBO) is committed to becoming a leader in accessibility and reporting on the implementation of its Accessibility Plan. Our goal is to remove barriers to accessibility for our employees, our clients and the Canadian population.

This progress report describes what steps we have taken between December 1, 2023, and December 1, 2024, to strengthen accessibility within our organization in the seven priority areas listed in the *Accessible Canada Act*, as well as in the eighth priority—culture—that we decided to add to our three-year plan. Our organization believes that a stronger culture of awareness of disability and the importance of accessibility among our employees will help us reach our goals.

# Accessibility Statement

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The OPBO is committed to providing services that are accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of ability. We are actively working to remove accessibility barriers for our employees, our clients and the Canadian population in all our activities.

The OPBO follows the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA, among other accessibility best practices, to make the Web accessible. Compliance with these requirements is an integral part of the development, continuous integration and deployment of the [website](#) content.

The OPBO's accessibility progress report is available on our website, but is also available, upon request, in other formats including:

- print;
- large print;
- braille;
- audio; and,
- electronic.



# Priority Areas

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In consultation with employees, parliamentary clients and members of the public, the OPBO identified goals and actions to improve accessibility in eight priority areas: employment; built environment; information and communication technologies; communications; procurement of goods, services and facilities; design and delivery of services; transportation; and culture.

## Employment

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### General objective

Promote accessible and inclusive human resource practices, so that all employees are supported and can contribute to the organization to their full potential.

## Outcome

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Job seekers and employees with disabilities see the Office as an employer of choice and can contribute to their full potential by having access to employment opportunities and promotions.

## Objective 1

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Ensure that staffing and assessment tools, approaches and resources are accessible and inclusive, with special attention to increasing awareness of the availability for accommodation during assessments and applying plain-language principles to communications, at all stages of the staffing process to hire and retain employees with disabilities.

## Activities

- We reviewed current staffing processes by participating in several meetings with federal government working groups on human resources to identify possible barriers and gaps. We offer adaptive measures for persons with disabilities.
- We regularly research best practices in human resources and implement them in our Office.
- We regularly engage in awareness activities for OPBO directors and human resources professionals about best practices to create an accessible and safe staffing process. Awareness is raised during meetings with directors, before a new position is posted and when we participate in various groups sharing best practices in human resources.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing. We will continue to refine our staffing and assessment approaches and resources.

## Responsibility

Human Resources Services.

## Objective 2

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Provide mandatory training sessions for human resources professionals, directors, managers and employees at all levels on accessibility, barriers, unconscious bias and accommodation requests and processes so they can build expertise.

## Activities

- In 2024, we will complete an evaluation of the OPBO's needs in this area and will promote current training offerings. In collaboration with parliamentary partners, we have reviewed the various training available. We hosted a discussion with a guest speaker, Stéphanie Cadieux, who is Canada's Chief Accessibility Officer (May 2024). The Office and its parliamentary partners hosted an online session with the Environmental Health Association of Quebec to discuss the experiences of people with environmental sensitivities/multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS).

- The Parliamentary Precinct Working Group on Accessibility offered a training session with employees of the Parliamentary Precinct and the public service who work with attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD) in October 2024, "Lived Experience Session: Living with ADHD".
- In December 2024, the Parliamentary Precinct Working Group on Accessibility offered a panel "You Can't Ask That" panel.
- We have researched existing training from external providers (government, private and academic).
- A training session tailored to the OPBO's needs for designing accessible tables and graphics in our reports was provided to all staff: Mandatory training was put in place for all OPBO employees, Making Documents Accessible (INC1-V46). A quiz was also created for employees at the end of the training to ensure that the content was understood.
- We have developed a bank of tools, checklists and guidance for employees. A new Accessibility section has been created on our Intranet page to share this information with employees.
- We have built awareness among different groups of employees about the training and tools available to them by sending them emails and sharing information about how to register for conferences and training sessions; and,
- At bimonthly staff meetings, we take the opportunity to promote the training and tools available to employees.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Human Resources Services, in collaboration with Parliamentary Relations and Planning (training).

## Objective 3

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Consult persons with disabilities on the review of the OPBO's programs and policies aimed at onboarding new employees, as well as the employment life cycle. Identify accessibility barriers, gaps and areas in need of improvement, and develop an action plan to remove these barriers.

## Activities

- Together with our parliamentary partners, we have consulted employees with disabilities to understand areas for improvement with the current onboarding process.
- We have developed a form for new employees so that we can identify their needs before their first day of work. This revised onboarding process includes tools and resources for all employees.
- We have given all OPBO employees and their managers access to tools, checklists and guidance that are meaningful and useful for employees who may need the information without having disclosed their disability. The information is available on the Intranet and through the new "Onboarding Guide" sent to employees before their start date.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Human Resources Services.

## Objective 4

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Implement a Workplace Accessibility Passport as the means of communication between employees and managers for accommodations-related information, solutions and approvals.

## Activities

- We researched different tools, including the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport, and determined that this tool can be used at the OPBO. The passport, version 3.1, was implemented at the Office in September 2024.
- We provide training to managers and employees on the new tools and processes using the Canada School of Public Service's three-part series:
  - Part 1: GC Workplace Accessibility Passport: The Need for the Passport (INC1-V20);

- Part 2: GC Workplace Accessibility Passport: Facilitating Conversations Between Employees and Managers (INC1-V50); and
- Part 3: GC Workplace Accessibility Passport: Protecting Your Personal Information (INC1-V51).

## Expected completion

Completion in 2024 and 2025.

## Responsibility

Human Resources Services.

## Built Environment

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### General objective

Provide a barrier-free environment with secure access to employees, parliamentary clients and the Canadian public within OPBO spaces.

## Outcome

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Employees and visitors to the Office, including persons with disabilities, can make optimal use of the workplaces occupied by the Office through barrier-free access.

## Objective 1

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Engage persons with disabilities on the accessibility of the built environment through surveys, consultations and site visits. Identify and review areas in need of improvement and develop an action plan to remove the barriers.

## Activities

- We have begun reviewing the accessibility assessments conducted by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) for the 50 O'Connor Street building

(similar building to ours). Our objective is to contact PSPC to arrange for an assessment of the space occupied by the OPBO at 99 Bank Street.

- We asked employees with different types of disabilities who are working on the Hill to help with accessibility assessments at 99 Bank Street. As a result of this meeting, we improved the signage for the location of the cardiac defibrillator and the exits from the Office. We also added signs to identify people who are qualified as first aiders and floor emergency monitors.
- We have submitted a request to Bentall to make the 9<sup>th</sup>-floor bathrooms at 99 Bank Street accessible to people with disabilities with an automatic door opener. The installation of the door system was done by Bentall in the winter of 2024.
- We will prepare a response plan to eliminate any barriers identified during the accessibility assessments and in partnership with PSPC and the building manager (Bentall).

## Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services.

## Objective 2

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Engage with persons with disabilities to review the OPBO's emergency procedures and business continuity plans, with particular attention to the unique barriers they face. Identify and review areas in need of improvement and develop an action plan to remove the barriers.

## Activities

- We reviewed the current policies and procedures to assess known gaps at our office.
- We regularly research best practices in place at our parliamentary partners and federal government institutions, in part by participating in committees and working groups.
- We will determine how policies and procedures will be improved through consultation with employees with different types of disabilities, as well as associations representing persons with disabilities (consultations).

- We will work in collaboration with the building manager (Bentall) to update the training for emergency fire wardens to include the improved procedures.
- We will develop an awareness and communication plan to inform employees about the procedures.

## Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services in collaboration with Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 3

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Contribute to a scent-free environment at the OPBO, in collaboration with partners and service providers.

## Activities

- We installed signs to remind employees that the OPBO is a scent-free environment.
- We have built awareness at staff meetings of how this directive applies within OPBO workspaces and why.
- We will develop a procedure to encourage visitors and contractors to participate in the scent-free environment by informing them when they are invited.
- We will procure, whenever possible, unscented products (office supplies, cleaning products, etc.) for our workplace.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services.

# Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

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## General objective

Promote information and communication technologies that can be used by all employees, clients and the Canadian public, regardless of their abilities.

### Background

The OPBO receives IT services from the Library of Parliament and the House of Commons (our partners). For example, our networking, computer equipment procurement, office support and software licence acquisition and management services are provided by them.

However, some software programs used by OPBO employees, clients and the general public are developed and maintained internally. For example, applications associated with producing and publishing reports and managing registration for communications events, as well as the system for requesting documents in alternative formats, the employee Intranet and the public-facing website, are all maintained internally. These software programs and the digital infrastructure supporting them are referred to as digital communications infrastructure (DCI).

## Outcome

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Provide all internal and external users, including persons with disabilities, with barrier-free access to tools that strengthen capacity and improve efficiency to consult the full range of analyses published by the Office.

## Objective 1

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Develop an assessment process for new IT systems, hardware and software, whether they are procured or developed internally or externally, to identify whether they meet



the leading accessibility standards and any changes that may be required to meet those standards.

## Activities

- We plan to develop a process where users, with or without disabilities, can test IT systems, hardware and software to ensure that they meet accessibility requirements whenever this is possible.
- We would like to develop a process to ensure that new IT systems, hardware and software that are acquired or provided by OPBO or its partners, meet the leading accessibility standards and are assessed to determine how well they interact with adaptive technologies.

## Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services (partners) and Parliamentary Relations and Planning (DCI).

## Objective 2

Consult with persons with disabilities on the accessibility of information and communication tools and technology through surveys and/or consultations and assess and test the accessibility of information technology systems with persons with different types of disabilities.

## Activities

- We informally consulted and gathered feedback from users with disabilities regarding our Web applications, both those intended for parliamentarians and the general public and Web applications that are used internally. This process led to several urgent adjustments to existing user interfaces (UIs). However, several elements identified during this summary consultation require additional software development. Similarly, a formal feedback loop within the agile development methodology used for the development of these components needs to be implemented. The activities carried out under Objective 3 are the result of this observation.

- We plan to engage with and gather feedback from persons with disabilities specifically to refine the personas with disabilities we use in the development of our applications to make our user stories more effective and inclusive.

## Expected completion

Completion expected in 2026.

## Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 3

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Review the major corporate systems, hardware and software currently in use at the OPBO to identify and address accessibility barriers.

## Activities

- We have implemented an automated testing step (Pa11y) within our integration and delivery practices (CI/CD) to make accessibility testing essential in the DevOps practices of the DCI.
- We began to manually test the DCI applications using JAWS and VoiceOver software, especially when developing new features during the design and development stages. However, we want to go a step further and test all major corporate systems, hardware and software with the help of persons with disabilities to ensure that they are fully accessible, beyond what we were able to identify using automated tests, and address barriers as needed. This approach is in line with Objective 2.

## Expected completion

Completion expected in 2027.

## Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 4

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Train employees at all levels in the organization on how to create accessible documents and how to offer fully accessible meetings and events, either virtually or in person.

### Activities

- We would like to develop training tailored to the OPBO's needs for designing, structuring and presenting documents to provide guidance to employees in accomplishing the organization's mandate.

### Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

### Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 5

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Provide training on accessibility, barriers and needs of persons with disabilities to educate publishing and communications specialists and employees responsible for creating Web content on the importance of accessibility and how to systematically consider it in the assessment, implementation or development of systems, hardware and software.

### Activities

- Staff responsible for editing and creating Web content now have access to an internal website documenting Web accessibility requirements and best practices for document integration.
- We will develop training tailored to the OPBO's needs, as well as a suite of tools and checklists that will provide guidance to employees.

### Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

## Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Communication

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### General objective

Promote equal access to information for the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's employees, clients and the Canadian public, regardless of their abilities.

## Outcome

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The PBO's clients, partners and employees, as well as the public, can communicate with the Office in ways that are convenient for them, in a language and in formats that they can easily use and understand.

## Objective 1

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Develop tools, checklists and guidance on the use of sign language and closed captioning for meetings and events.

### Activities

- We began reviewing best practices within the Parliamentary Precinct, as well as within government organizations.
- Discuss best practices with persons with disabilities.
- Develop an awareness and communication plan to inform the above-mentioned audiences of the tools, checklists and guidance.

### Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services in collaboration with Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 2

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Engage with persons with disabilities to develop tools, checklists and guidance for digital media to ensure they are fully accessible to persons with various types of disabilities.

## Activities

- Since October 2023, the PBO has been publishing all of its notes in an HTML format designed specifically to comply with the Web component of the CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 standard. Since January 2024, this practice has been extended to all PBO reports published under its mandate applicable when Parliament is not dissolved (*Parliament of Canada Act*, RSC 1985, c P-1, s. 79.2).
- We have begun updating the publication process specific to the operations carried out during the performance of the "general election" component of the *enabling Act* (RSC 1985, c P-1, s. 79.21). This project will ultimately bring the PBO's costing notes regarding the financial costs of election proposals into line with best practices in terms of Web accessibility, while meeting the strict cybersecurity requirements required in the circumstances.
- The Web content management system (WCMS) used for the employee Intranet has been replaced with an alternative that adopts accessibility best practices and fully complies with the Web component of the CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 standard for all content consultation activities.
- We have a contract in place for Braille and audio document creation services for reports, upon request.

## Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

## Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 3

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Provide workshops or training to equip employees to develop communications that are more accessible to the OPBO's diverse audiences.

### Activities

- We consulted experts on best practices in accessibility through workshops offered to government organizations, and we will continue to do so.
- We continue to assess the training available on accessible communications.
- In staff meetings and on a new page accessible via the Intranet, we are building awareness among employees of the resources available to them on best practices for accessibility, including specific tools, checklists and other guidance.

### Expected completion

These activities will be ongoing.

### Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

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### General objective

Implement procurement practices for goods, services and facilities that are accessible to the OPBO's employees, clients and the Canadian population, regardless of their abilities.

### Outcome

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Consider accessibility requirements for the acquisition of goods, services and facilities, so that deliverables can provide the necessary accessibility features.

## Objective 1

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Give training on accessibility, barriers and the needs of persons with disabilities to procurement employees and cost centre managers to educate them on the importance of accessibility and how to include it as a consideration at all steps of the procurement process.

### Activities

- Complete an evaluation of the OPBO's needs and current training offers.
- Research best practices from parliamentary partners and government organizations.
- If needed, develop or enhance current training opportunities.
- If needed, develop a bank of tools, checklists and guidance for employees and build awareness of these resources among relevant employees.

### Expected completion

Completion expected in 2025.

### Responsibility

Administrative Services and the OPBO's Legal Counsel.

## Objective 2

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As part of the OPBO's procurement process, determine if a requirement (or information) about accessibility can be added to the scope of work documentation.

### Activities

- Research best practices from parliamentary partners and government organizations.
- Consult the OPBO's Legal Counsel about the feasibility of this requirement.

### Expected completion

Deferred to 2025.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services and the OPBO's Legal Counsel.

## Objective 3

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Research the feasibility of adding a clause in contracts to ensure accessibility in the delivery and/or implementation of goods, services or technical solutions, and to ensure that accessibility requirements are considered during future updates or changes to services or technical solutions.

## Activities

- Research best practices from parliamentary partners and government organizations.
- Consult the OPBO's Legal Counsel about the requirement.

## Expected completion

Deferred to 2025.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services and the OPBO's Legal Counsel.

## Design and Delivery of Services

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### General objective

Deliver services that are accessible to OPBO's employees, parliamentary clients and the Canadian population, regardless of their abilities.



## Objective 1

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Consult persons with various types of disabilities to identify ways to make our services more inclusive and to remove barriers.

### Activities

- We are participating in several working groups on accessibility in order to identify the needs of persons with disabilities, and we will continue to improve our service offerings.

### Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

### Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 2

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Review policies to identify any accessibility barriers and develop an approach to address them.

### Activities

- We consulted persons with disabilities through meetings organized by various government groups to identify potential barriers and to understand what they need to access the OPBO's services.
- Develop a prioritization document to outline in which order the OPBO will review its various services and policies.
- Develop and implement, in consultation with persons with disabilities, tools and processes to help employees review the OPBO's services and policies from an accessibility perspective.
- Build awareness among employees of how the OPBO enhances its services from an accessibility perspective.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services, Parliamentary Relations and Planning and all Parliamentary Precinct partners.

## Objective 3

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Ensure that accessibility is a priority during the design of all our services.

## Activities

- Develop and implement, in consultation with persons with disabilities, tools, processes and guidelines to help in the creation of accessible services and policies.
- We are ensuring that accessibility is considered during all our projects or initiatives.
- During team meetings, we are building awareness among employees about the resources that can support them in developing or enhancing services.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Administrative Services and Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

# Transportation

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## General objective

Enable work-related transportation that is accessible for all OPBO employees.

## Objective 1

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We have limited responsibility and authority with respect to transportation. As stipulated in the *Accessible Canada Act* and the Accessible Canada Regulations, we can nonetheless confirm that the Office pays attention to the transportation of its employees.

## Activities

- In this way, we ensure that we provide safe and accessible options for all employees who must travel to perform their work duties. In addition, to make travel planning easier for new employees, we include options for transportation to the office in the welcome package, making it easier to get to our workplace.
- Over the course of the year, we took steps to increase employee awareness and provide them with information about transportation.
- Review current transportation options with persons with disabilities to identify barriers and gaps.
- Research government best practices.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing in partnership with all parliamentary institutions.

## Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning and Human Resources Services.

# Culture

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## General objective

Create a culture that embraces accessibility in all aspects of its work.

## Objective 1

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Develop and provide mandatory and optional training and awareness sessions for all employees on accessibility, barriers, inclusion and unconscious bias in order to build an accessible, confident organization.

## Activities

- We assess the level of awareness about accessibility issues among employees. This year, we gave employees the opportunity to participate in a Library of Parliament quiz on their accessibility knowledge and how to interact with persons with disabilities.
- We are researching training opportunities offered by parliamentary partners and government organizations on attitudinal barriers and stigmas around disability.
- We offered employees the opportunity to participate in the presentation given by Yazmine Laroche, a retired federal public servant. The objective of this presentation was to better understand the types of barriers in our environment and to gain a deeper understanding of accessibility and why it is important. Ms. Laroche is the first person with a visible disability to become a federal Deputy Minister and was the first Deputy Minister for Public Service Accessibility.
- Employees had the opportunity to attend a workshop presented by the Environmental Health Association of Quebec, entitled "Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS) - Education for Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility".
- We offered a training session with employees in the Parliamentary Precinct and the public service who work with attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity (ADHD). Participation in this session provided an understanding of what ADHD is and the challenges associated with this disorder.
- Lastly, employees had the opportunity to participate in a round table entitled "You Can't Ask That" with four speakers who live with different disabilities. The panellists agreed to answer any question: no subject was taboo.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

## Objective 2

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Equip employees with tools and training to design accessible and inclusive services.

## Activities

- Consult with parliamentary partners and government organizations on existing best practices and training resources.
- Develop or enhance current training opportunities to meet the OPBO's needs.
- Develop a bank of tools, checklists and other guidance for employees and build awareness among employees of the training and resources available to them.

## Expected completion

This activity will be ongoing.

## Responsibility

Human Resources Services and Parliamentary Relations and Planning.

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