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On June 14, 2024, the process surrounding the creation of this guide was presented at a meeting with the members and partners of the COPHAN. Thirty people from 19 different organizations took part in the discussion. We thank them most sincerely for their involvement.

Moreover, 40 people from 31 different organizations (listed in Appendix ____) participated, directly or indirectly, in developing this guide. The COPHAN is deeply grateful for their contribution.

2. Limitations of the Guide

This guide was prepared based on what is currently known in the field of universal accessibility. It contains three types of knowledge:

- Academic knowledge, from experts in the field of universal accessibility;
- Technical knowledge, brought by professionals who work daily with persons with disabilities;
- Experiential knowledge, shared by persons with disabilities and their circle.

Because the field of universal accessibility is constantly evolving, this guide is primarily a compendium of currently recognized rules and practices. Therefore, updating this guide on a regular basis is essential if it is to reflect the advances and new knowledge in this field.

3. Introduction

The mission of the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN) is to make the Province of Québec inclusive, so as to ensure the full social participation of persons with functional limitations and of their family. Accordingly, the Confédération is strongly in favour of universal accessibility.

Taking into account the needs of all is essential for a Québec society that cares about the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. Using this guide will enable you to better meet the needs of a large part of the population.

The members and partners of the COPHAN have pooled their expertise to bring you the content of this guide, which is a synthesis of the discussions on the needs of the population and on universal accessibility.

This guide is a reference document. While there is room for improvement, its contribution is unique and, most importantly, it stems from the milieu of persons with disabilities: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US. It will help improve the life of persons with disabilities and of their family members, while guiding and informing the ministries, organizations, large companies and all persons concerned by the creation of an accessibility plan. This guide also aims at enhancing the public policies of the different levels of government.

4. Context

4.1 – Objectives of the Guide

The guide has the following objectives:

- To promote the inclusion and social participation of persons with disabilities by actively involving them in creating a bilingual guide of good practices for the accessibility of persons with disabilities;
- To enable all entities concerned to quickly find information relating to all disability types, in order to help them put in place an accessibility plan.

4.2 – A few numbers

L'Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) estimates that 21% of the population over the age of 15, or 1,422,020 people¹, lives with a significant and persistent disability that makes it liable to encounter barriers in performing everyday activities.

For its part, the Institut de statistique du Québec estimates that 33% of that population lives with one or more functional limitations².

Taking into account the families of persons with functional limitations, more than 50% of the population is directly affected by universal accessibility issues.

With the aging of the population, these percentages are bound to rise, since the frequency of functional limitations increases with age.

Despite society's efforts towards universal accessibility, much work remains to be done in this area.

¹ [Statistiques sur les personnes handicapées | Gouvernement du Québec](#)

² [Enquête québécoise sur les limitations d'activités, les maladies chroniques et le vieillissement 2010-2011](#)

4.3 – A few definitions

Handicapped persons or persons with disabilities?

The Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights and other legislative provisions (Government du Québec, 2004) uses the term “handicapped person” to designate “a person with a deficiency causing a significant and persistent disability, who is liable to encounter barriers in performing everyday activities.”

The term “person with disabilities” emphasizes the environmental barriers encountered by these persons, rather than the individual’s intrinsic limitations. This designation is in keeping with the definition of disability in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) and the perception of disability expressed in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2001).

In this guide, we use the two terms interchangeably, with disability being the product of processes and functional limitations inherent to the individual, but also of interactions with the environment and of the barriers related to the unfounded or mistaken beliefs of others.

Our guide covers five types of functional limitations:

1. Motor
2. Visual
3. Auditory
4. Language and speech
5. Neurodevelopmental disorders

What is universal accessibility?

Universal accessibility is defined as [TRANSLATION]: “the nature of a product, process, service, information or environment that, with equity in mind and as part

of an inclusive approach, enables any person to perform activities on their own and to obtain equivalent results³.”

Concretely, universal accessibility enables any person, whatever their abilities, to enjoy the same opportunities and to have a quality experience independently⁴.

³ Definition formulated in 2011 by Groupe DÉFI Accessibilité (GDA) in the research report for community advocacy groups of Montreal entitled Accessibilité universelle et designs contributifs (version 5.3), prepared by LANGEVIN, ROCQUE, CHALGHOUIM and GHORAYEB, Université de Montréal.

⁴ [Qu'est-ce que l'accessibilité universelle? - AlterGo](#)

5. Structure of the Guide

This guide is primarily made up of 30 thematic fact sheets presented in alphabetical order:

1. Procurement
2. Art and culture
3. Verbal and written communication
4. Digital communications
5. Design of programs and delivery of services
6. Post-secondary education
7. Elementary and secondary education
8. Employment
9. Built environment
10. Event planning
11. Lodging (public, private and community continuum)
12. Immigration
13. Housing (Residential Adaptation Assistance Program (RAAP))
14. Recreation, sports, tourism and day camps
15. Rare diseases
16. Emergency measures and public safety
17. Parks and green spaces
18. Civic engagement

- 19. Income
- 20. Environmental health
- 21. Customer service
- 22. Childcare centres
- 23. Health services (medical and hospital services)
- 24. Social services (homecare (SAD) and technical aids)
- 25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit
- 27. Air and train travel
- 28. Neurodevelopmental disorders
- 29. Urban planning
- 30. Violence and safety

6. Sheet components

Each sheet contains the following elements:

- Subject
- Subtitle
- Definition of the objective for the organization
- Description of the situation
- Standards or obligations
- Good practices
- Particularities according to disability type
- Available resources
- Reference documents
- Related sheets
- Author(s) and collaborators
- Organizations consulted

7. Questionnaire

The member organizations of the COPHAN also received a questionnaire during the planning stages (or on the draft??) of this guide. It contained some fifteen questions on the experience, needs and expectations of persons with disabilities in the area of universal accessibility (see Appendix ____ at the end of the guide).

8. Available formats

The guide is available in both French and English, in a universally accessible Web format.

We are taking steps to make it available in alternate formats.

9. A bit of history

A great number of the major changes that have taken place in Canada over the last fifty years concerning persons with disabilities are due to citizen mobilizations and to pressure applied by community organizations, research scientists and other actors of civil society. In a more or less concerted manner, this social movement – the movement of persons with disabilities – has progressively taken shape, throwing light on its issues and urging governments to adopt public policies in line with the new values and the ideas defended by the movement, a reflection of rapid social change.

Certain groups have become major players in the public sphere and their input is deemed invaluable when it comes to shaping public policies. They use institutional channels to make their voice heard and make regular appearances in the media. Others, on the contrary, have adopted a much more oppositional stance, developing very different tools to defend the cause of persons with disabilities and denouncing government (in)action.⁵

On December 9, 1975, the United Nations issued the The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, a document presenting the fundamental rights of handicapped persons and urging member states to enact laws and initiatives to protect those rights.

In 1978, after the adoption of a provincial law promoting workplace and social integration of persons with disabilities, the Government of Québec created the Office des personnes handicapées (OPHQ). The United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP), celebrated in 1981, marks a major turning point in the struggle for the rights of handicapped persons in Canada. The IYDP and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) generated unprecedented interest among the public and Canadian government policymakers for the rights offered to persons with disabilities.

In 1982, COPHAN is born.

⁵ Taken from [Mouvement des droits des personnes handicapées au Canada | l'Encyclopédie Canadienne](#)

In 1986, persons with disabilities are included, along with women, visible minorities, and indigenous peoples, in the new Employment Equity Act, which stems from the Report of the Royal Commission on the subject.

New organizations, such as the ARCH Disability Law Centre, are created to provide legal services to persons with disabilities, using, in particular, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to establish favourable jurisprudence and to advance cases before the Supreme Court of Canada.

In Ontario, groups defending the rights of persons with disabilities hail the adoption of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in 2005. The AODA aims to make Ontario accessible by 2025 by establishing accessibility standards, by requiring governments and organizations to submit compliance reports and by investigating public complaints.

The 21st century marks a revival in public and political interest for the handicapped persons movement. On March 11, 2010, Canada ratifies the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, thus committing itself to adopting measures and principles to improve the socioeconomic conditions of handicapped persons. In 2014, Canada submits its first report to the Convention committee, describing the initiatives taken by the federal and provincial governments after ratification.

What about Québec?

The Province of Québec lags behind and lacks ambition. Its *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration* lacks the strength of the Ontario law. It is currently under revision. It is our hope that the *À part... entière* policy also will undergo extensive revision. Québec should adopt an Accessibility Act comparable to that of Ontario, including standards, inspections and sanctions, where applicable, and transform the OPHQ into an institution charged with ensuring compliance.

Thus, the Québec movement of persons with disabilities must continue to develop various strategies and to work in concert to improve the living conditions of handicapped persons.

10. Jurisdictions and areas of application of the action plans

Organizations subject to the action plans at the federal level

The Act provides for the preparation and publication of accessibility plans and applies to organizations falling under federal jurisdiction, in particular :

- The Government of Canada, including all federal departments and agencies, as well as all crown corporations ([see list](#)) ([voir la liste](#));
- Those parts of the private sector regulated by the Government of Canada, such as :
 - The banks ;
 - The federal transportation network, including :
 - The airlines ;
 - The suppliers of rail, road and maritime transportation services operating between the provinces or abroad.
- The radio broadcasting and telecommunications sectors;
- The Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The Act also applies to parliamentary entities, with an approach designed to preserve parliamentary privilege. These parliamentary entities include :

- The House of Commons ;
- The Senate ;
- The Library of Parliament ;

- The Parliamentary Protective Service.

Organizations subject to the action plans at the provincial level

Only the organizations covered by section 61.1 of the Act are required under law to annually submit an action plan concerning persons with disabilities. These organizations are :

- The government departments and agencies with at least 50 employees ;
- The integrated health and social services centres (CISSS), [integrated university health and social services centres \(CIUSSS\)](#) and the unamalgamated institutions (ENF).
- Local municipalities with a population of at least 10,000.

Principal areas of application for municipalities:

- Accessibility to municipal buildings
- Municipal administration
- Libraries
- Urban planning
- Communication and information
- Employment
- Housing
- Recreation, culture, sports and community life
- Parks and green spaces
- Safety (at home and in the living environment)
- Transit

Contents of the action plans at the federal level

Organizations must include a section corresponding to each of the areas covered by the Accessible Canada Act, as needed:

- Employment
- Built environment
- Information and information and communications technology (ICT)
- Communications, other than ICT
- Acquisition of goods, services and facilities
- Design and delivery of programs and services
- Transit

Contents of the action plans at the provincial level

Each action plan must include at least one measure in each of the following categories :

- Promotion
- Accessibility of services offered
- Accessibility in the workplace with respect to hiring, working conditions and job retention
- Accessibility of buildings, places and facilities
- Accessibility of information and documents

- Adaptation for special situations : emergency, public health and public safety situations
- Procurement of accessible goods and services
- Adaptation in the context of any other activity that is likely to impact persons with disabilities



11. Thematic fact sheets

1. Procurement

Ensuring accessible and inclusive procurement

What is accessible and inclusive procurement ?

Accessible procurement consists in including the diversity of abilities and needs of the population in the procedures for acquisition of products and services. This means guaranteeing that the final products and services can be used by all, without the need for adaptation or special design. By taking accessibility into account at each step, organizations help to create an inclusive and equitable environment, while meeting their legal obligations.

Overview of the situation

Not properly taking into account accessibility in procurement has significant consequences for persons with disabilities. This takes many forms in everyday life. Here are some concrete examples :

- A shuttle that isn't wheelchair-accessible is keeping Gertrude from getting around efficiently in a nature park.
- A conference room without a hearing assistance system is compromising the ability of Inès, the journalist covering the event, to understand what is being said.
- The paths of a new urban park are keeping Sallia from walking comfortably with her crutches.
- A software program not compatible with a screen reader is preventing Damien from working as a technician in public service.
- A redesigned bus platform makes Katarina nervous at the idea of crossing an unsafe bike path.
- Non-adjustable office furniture is forcing Omar to wait several weeks for an adapted desk, leading to a significant loss of productivity.

- A touch-screen payment terminal restricts Roger's ability to function independently whenever he rents skis at a municipal sports centre.

These examples show that adjustments for accessibility involve substantial costs that could have been avoided. This is why organizations should take accessibility into account at each step of the procurement process. However, this complex and highly regulated process presents a number of challenges, among them :

- **Market maturity** : Accessible products and services must be available for purchase.
- **Healthy competition** : Accessibility criteria should not excessively limit the number of eligible suppliers.
- **Diversity of needs and of criteria** : The issues vary greatly according to the product, service or sector.
- **Striking a balance with other criteria** : Accessibility should be considered alongside safety standards, sustainable development standards, and other regulatory requirements.
- **Rigorous assessment of suppliers** : The qualifications of suppliers regarding accessibility should be verified to guarantee compliance of the goods and services delivered.
- **Plurality of stakeholders** : The supply chain involves numerous actors.

To improve the situation, governments, standards bureaus, and research institutions are gradually designing tools to support relevant officials. A true change in culture, adequate training, as well as regulatory and structural improvements are needed.

Standards and obligations

There are standard-setting frameworks to guide organizations toward more inclusive practices. Some of these frameworks are mandatory, while others inspire to go beyond.

Canada's Directive on the Management of Procurement

Under the Accessible Canada Act, the Government of Canada imposes accessibility requirements in the Directive on the Management of Procurement [Directive sur la gestion de l'approvisionnement](#) (section 4.2.7). The [Supply Manual](#) ensures its implementation.

CAN-ASC-4.1: Accessible Procurement

Accessibility Standards Canada is currently working on an accessible procurement standard [norme sur l'approvisionnement accessible, prévue](#) (expected publication in Fall 2027). It will complement the standards relating to employment, to the design of programs and the delivery of services, and to information and communications technology.

Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration (E-20.1)

[Section 61.3 requires](#) government departments and agencies to take into account the accessibility of handicapped persons in their purchases or rentals of goods and services.

Good practices to improve accessible procurement

Here are a few concrete measures we suggest you adjust according to your organization.

1. Developing policies that promote accessibility

- Establishing procurement guidelines to include accessibility at each step of the procurement process.
 - The Government of Canada's [Supply Manual](#) provides general guidance on accessible procurement, including a list of aspects to be considered [liste d'aspects à considérer](#). It also contains a Guideline on Making Information Technology Usable by All [ligne directrice sur l'utilisabilité de la technologie de l'information](#).
- Revising your sustainable or responsible procurement policy to include accessibility criteria.

- Examples : The [Sépaq](#), the [CIUSSS Montérégie-Centre](#) and the [Ville de Drummondville](#) have incorporated notions of accessibility into their sustainable procurement policies.
- Thanks to its ADS+ approach [démarche ADS+](#), the Ville de Montréal provides potential solutions enabling project managers to take into account the diversity of the population right from the diagnostic and needs identification stage.

2. Developing operational tools

- Designing a methodology covering all procurement steps : from planning to validation of the products and services received.
 - eCampus Ontario has prepared a detailed guide for the procurement of accessible digital content and development services. [guide détaillé sur le processus d'acquisition de contenus numériques accessibles et de services de développement](#), which includes guidelines and concrete tools.
 - *Disability:IN* breaks down the procurement process into eight principal steps to guarantee accessibility.
- Formulate questions on accessibility to guide purchases or calls for tenders.
 - The procurement page of the Government of Ontario [page d'approvisionnement du gouvernement de l'Ontario](#) contains a list of clear questions to guide the process.
 - The US government has established the [Accessibility Requirements Tool \(ART\)](#), which generates a list of criteria based on the information submitted about the project.
- Design calls for tenders incorporating accessibility performance criteria specific to each project, while taking into account the following elements :
 - Requiring compliance with recognized accessibility standards, such as the WCAG, CSA or CAN/ASC standards.

- Requiring certifications such as “ADA compliant”, the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification, or the Kéroul accessibility rating.
- Requesting user testing, exploratory walks or plan studies with representative groups of persons with disabilities.
- Involving, as a last resort, an external accessibility expert (less transformational solution).
- Designating a person in charge of accessibility in the design team for large projects.
- Requiring the filling out of technical compliance sheets for accessibility, such as :
 - The Voluntary Product Accessibility Template [modèle volontaire d'accessibilité des produits \(VPAT\)](#), a free tool that translates accessibility standards and requirements into usable criteria for the testing of information and communication technology (ICT) products and services in the United States. Users test their products and services according to each section of the VPAT. The Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) then identifies the accessibility features of the product or service tested.
 - The ICT accessibility requirements wizard [Générateur d'exigences en technologies de l'information et de la communication \(TIC\), put in place by the Government of Canada](#), used to assess compliance with the EN 301 549 (2021) standard.
- Revising all standard specifications and internal product catalogs to remove all sources of barriers and include accessibility requirements.
- Putting in place a customized weighting grid that includes essential accessibility criteria for assessing complex calls for tenders.

- Developing a decision-making support tool to prioritize certain accessibility features : for instance, a decision tree to decide how important it is that a playing surface on a given territory be accessible.
- Designing a mechanism for purchasing several similar products to meet various needs, for instance, several park bench models.
- Preparing an annual plan for the acquisition of adapted equipment to satisfy the specific needs of persons with disabilities (e.g., installing an accessible beach mat).
- Establishing a procedure to address accessibility deficiencies by identifying alternative strategies and communicating these solutions to the public.
 - California State University has created an Alternative Access Plan [Plan d'accès alternatif](#) template to be filled out systematically to address any IT accessibility gaps.

3. Developing accessible procurement data

- Creating a list of accessibility standards applicable to your sector or unit.
- Developing a directory of accessible products and services, or incorporating notions of accessibility into an existing directory.
 - The Government of Canada has developed the Accessible Procurement Resource Centre (APRC) [Centre de ressources pour l'approvisionnement accessible \(CRAA\)](#). Its two main functions are to create and maintain a list of accessible products purchased and to provide guidance and advice on the purchase of accessible products.
 - The *Centre d'acquisitions gouvernementales (CAG)* identifies hotel establishments accessible to handicapped persons in its [Répertoire des tarifs préférentiels hôteliers](#).
- Putting in place a supplier portal to facilitate business opportunities with suppliers with disabilities.

4. Ensuring compliance with accessibility criteria

- Putting in place an accessibility qualifications evaluation process for service suppliers.
 - Le Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Québec recommends making a summary assessment of the supplier's website or of a previous project to validate its digital accessibility qualifications.
 - eCampus lists a series of versatile questions to analyze a supplier's accessibility compliance and qualifications. [analyser la conformité et les compétences](#)
- Including accessibility clauses in standard form contracts and validate compliance therewith prior to any payment.
 - Le Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Québec also has created clauses to include digital accessibility in calls for tenders and contracts. [inclure l'accessibilité numérique dans les appels d'offres et les contrats](#).
 - The US website *Section508.gov* has examples of contractual clauses for a range of ICT services, which can be adjusted according to specific accessibility standards.

5. Mobilizing the organization and personnel

- Appointing a person in charge of accessible procurement to provide advice to his colleagues.
- Organizing annually a discussion on accessible procurement in your sector or unit.
- Sharing on a regular basis examples of accessible goods and services with other team members, while mentioning benefits, potential suppliers, and concrete examples of accomplishments.
 - L'Office des personnes handicapées du Québec has published a newsletter on accessible procurement [infolettre sur l'approvisionnement](#) up to 2018.

- Creating a community of practice among procurement professionals to promote joint learning.
- Measuring progress with key accessibility indicators, such as the number of calls for tenders including specific accessibility criteria or the number of products and services that comply with accessibility standards.
 - The [Guide des indicateurs d'acquisition responsable](#) of the Government of Québec contains certain accessibility indicators, such as contracts signed with adapted companies.

6. Mobilizing suppliers

- Implementing a research and development grants program to foster accessibility innovation in less developed sectors.
- Organizing annually “reverse pitch” sessions to inform suppliers about accessibility issues.
 - The MT Lab organizes “reverse pitch” sessions [pitches inversés](#) where organizations present their technology issues to stimulate development of innovative solutions and to promote partnerships.
- Proposing standard products or standardized specifications meeting accessibility needs to encourage the market to produce them.
 - The Ville de Montréal noticed that cast iron podotactile plates were the only ones that could survive snow removal. However, because they were costly and came from a single supplier, the City created a standardized specification. Thanks to this initiative, two Quebec producers have begun to produce these plates, which are now available across the country.
- Forming a multidisciplinary work group that includes suppliers and persons with disabilities, to have constructive discussions on procurement of a product or service whose accessibility presents challenges.

Available resources

Training:

- Training offered by the Centre of expertise for accessible procurement of Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC).

Documents:

- Procuring Accessible Content, Guidelines and checklists for the procurement of accessible digital content and development services. [Acquisition de contenu accessible, lignes directrices et listes de contrôle pour l'acquisition de contenus numériques accessibles et de services de développement](#), eCampus Ontario.
- Improving accessibility in procurement [Améliorer l'accessibilité en matière d'approvisionnement](#), Government of Canada.
- [Building Accessibility into Your Procurement Process](#), US government.
- [Building Blocks of an Accessible Procurement Program](#), Disability:IN.
- [Guides d'approvisionnement en biens et services accessibles aux personnes handicapées](#), Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.
- [Inclure l'accessibilité numérique dans les appels d'offres et contrats](#), Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Québec (RAAQ).

Related fact sheets in this guide

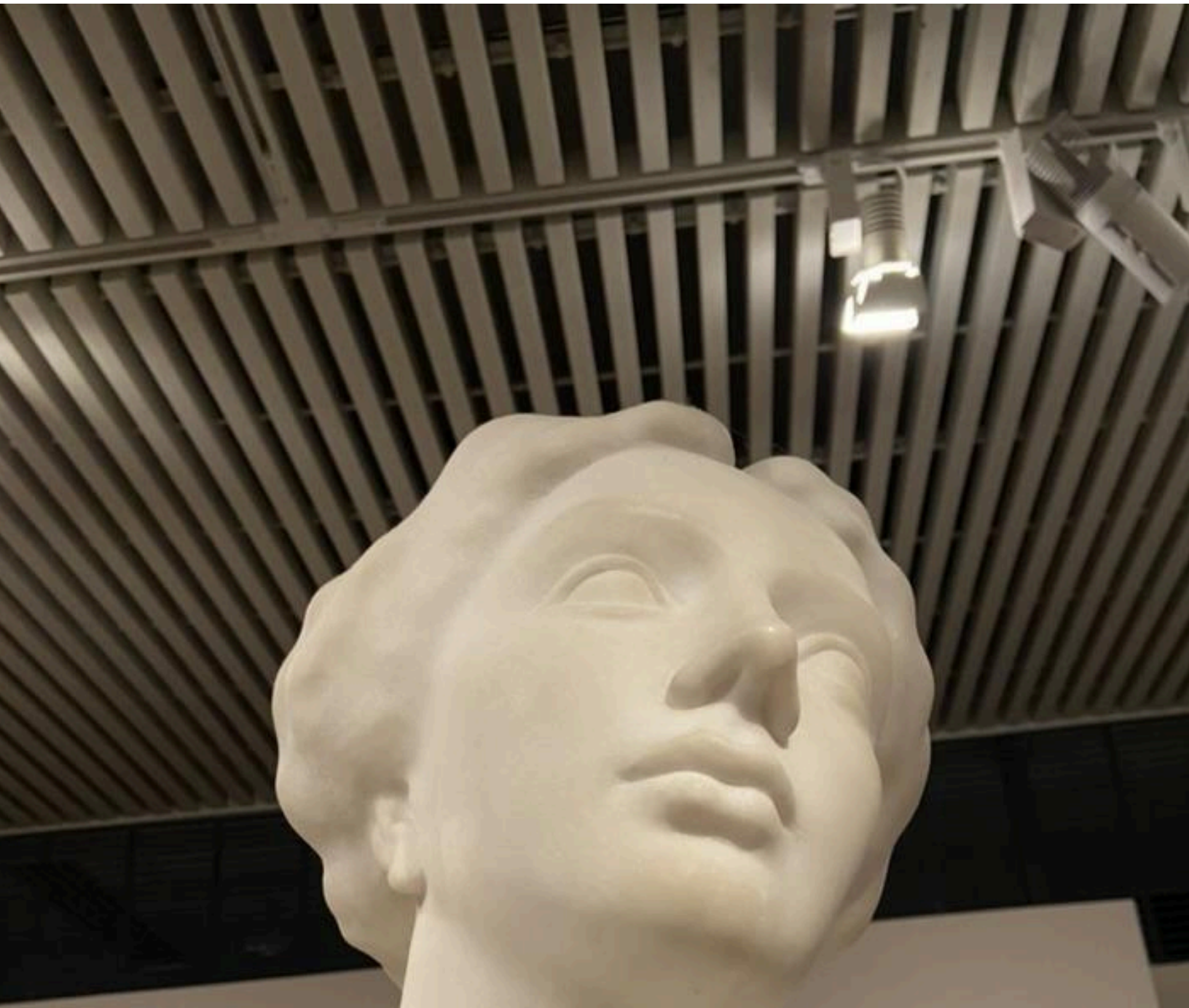
3. Verbal and written communication [3. Communication orale et écrite](#)

4. Digital communications [4. Communications numériques](#)

9. Built environment [9. Environnement bâti](#)

21. Customer service [21. Service à la clientèle](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Société Logique.



2. Art and culture

Ensure accessible and inclusive cultural participation

What is accessible and inclusive cultural participation?

Accessible and inclusive cultural participation means that everyone, regardless of ability, can have rewarding experiences as a member of the public or as a cultural professional. Those experiences should be moving and thought-provoking and fill participants with a sense of wonder, while also facilitating the expression of group or personal identity. This goes for all forms of art and culture : music, dance, theatre, visual arts, television, literature, and film.

Cultural accessibility involves removing physical, financial and social barriers that keep certain persons from participating fully. This being said, having access to culture is not enough : one also should have a sense of belonging to culture. By fostering positive representations, art plays a role in dismantling harmful stereotypes and calls into question the marginalization of persons with disabilities. Thus, art becomes a source of assertion and resistance.

Overview of the situation

The level of cultural participation among persons with disabilities is concerning, whether as members of the public or as artists or cultural professionals.

As members of the public, in Québec, participation in at least one cultural outing in the past year is 10% lower for persons with disabilities as compared to persons without disabilities ([ECI, 2016](#)). This difference is significantly higher among persons with a motor disability (25% lower than for persons without a disability). In France, in 2022, 52% of persons with disabilities deem that access to culture is difficult, although this figure is far lower than in previous years ([Fondation Handicap Malakoff Humanis](#)). Persons in wheelchairs feel especially penalized as compared to those with other types of disability. They believe that physical accessibility should be the main focus of improvement efforts, far ahead of fees or assistance services.

Issues encountered by persons with disabilities also vary by cultural sector, overarching issues notwithstanding. The inclusive experiences offered are still largely ephemeral and do not appear to be part of standard professional practice

([Société inclusive, 2024](#)). Initiatives taken are largely in relation to technology (44%) or revisions to programming (27%), rather than being focussed on access to buildings (9%), governance (9%), communication (6%) and education (5%). A great many accessibility projects are not subsidized, and of the ones that are, those related to architecture or programming make up a greater share. Advances in programming are bright spots in the media, with theatre and audio-described dance being especially popular.

In the case of artists, persons with disabilities face specific barriers, such as limited training opportunities, poor circulation of their works and lower revenues. For example, in 2012-2013, artists with disabilities received only 0.7% of the funding awarded to all artists from the Canada Council for the Arts ([Conseil des arts du Canada, 2020](#)). While this percentage may have grown since the advent of scholarships and support programs for artists with disabilities, very little data exists on their presence or success in the cultural trades.

Overall, it can be said that changes in subsidies have had a significant impact on accessibility and inclusion. However, they are still too sporadic to have lasting effects. Making cultural performance truly inclusive requires going from a makeshift strategy to a structured strategy for organizational change ([Société inclusive, 2024](#)).

Standards and obligations

Few standards apply specifically to the field of art and culture. Some large cultural institutions are required to meet obligations pertaining to action plans.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) imposes accessibility requirements [exigences d'accessibilité](#) relating to described video [vidéodescription](#) and closed captioning [sous-titrage codé](#).

Good practices to enhance the art and culture component of your action plan

Top-level commitment is essential at all project stages and in all facets of an organization. Here are a few concrete measures to be adjusted according to your situation:

1. Moving toward inclusive governance

- Creating an advisory committee made up of persons with disabilities or of their associations, whether on the public or creation side.
- Naming a person in charge of universal accessibility, whether as a dedicated post, a new set of duties for an existing post or a resource shared among different establishments.
 - For example, the [Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal](#) (MAC) has a full-time disability diversity and accessibility advisor, whereas [Théâtre du Rideau-Vert](#) has added these duties to the post of coordinator of artistic development.
 - [Le Trident](#), for its part, has put in place a universal accessibility program that benefits not only persons with disabilities but also all audience members. It was awarded a COPHAN Papillon prize in June 2024.
- Getting involved in a cultural accessibility network of professionals or community of practice.
 - In Montréal, some sixty organizations [soixantaine d'organismes](#) hold gatherings to discuss shared issues and to find solutions.
- Adding accessibility requirements to all subsidies and calls for tenders, whatever the type of application, while following the principle of “access-conditionality.” Provide for a verification mechanism and include a clause requiring reimbursement in case of breach relating to accessibility.

2. Promoting representation of persons with disabilities

- Setting an evolving target, revised annually, for representation of persons with disabilities in the programming.
 - Dealing with the theme of disability in exhibits, such as the [De la vie au lit](#) exhibit, at the gallery of the UQAM, which explored this theme while displaying only the works of artists with disabilities. For its part, the travelling exhibit [Braille : au-delà du visuel](#), conceived with blind artists, offers a rewarding tactile experience.

- Inviting organizations or artists with disabilities to contribute to the programming, such as the performances of [Corpuscule Danse](#) and of [Théâtre Aphasique](#) incorporated into the programming of *maisons de la culture* in Montreal.
- Putting in place an annual call for participation or a directory of activities to receive suggestions. The Montreal Public Library has a directory of activities for Universal Accessibility Month [Mois de l'accessibilité universelle](#).
- Setting a goal for representation of persons with disabilities in communications (videos, promotional images, advertisements, etc.). Consult the Customer Service [Service à la clientèle](#) fact sheet in this guide.
- Organizing events, such as festivals or theme days, showcasing accessibility and persons with disabilities.
 - For example, MusicMotion's [HACKLAB21](#) solicited the co-creation of a work featuring a motor or sensory disability.
 - Universal Accessibility Month [Mois de l'accessibilité universelle](#) at Montreal Public Libraries highlights books dealing with disability and offers activities relating to accessibility and inclusion.
 - The [ReelAbilities](#) Film Festival in Toronto screens fiction movies and documentaries on the subject of disability, while highlighting the work of filmmakers and actors with disabilities.

3. Supporting persons with disabilities in the practice of cultural and artistic trades

- Setting goals for the hiring of persons with disabilities in the culture trades, in any of the following areas : performance, production, welcoming, communications, or management.
- Creating or participating in internship or vocational training programs for these persons.

- At the CBC, the [Abilicrew Placements for Excellence](#) (CAPE) program enables persons with disabilities starting their career to do a paid internship.
- In [Switzerland](#), the Training of guides with hearing impairments program [programme forme des guides sourds](#) was created to offer guided tours using sign language.
- Developing a funding program promoting the artistic practice of persons with disabilities, with support tailored to the artist's context.
 - The Conseil des arts de Montréal funds two components through a program to support artistic practice [programme pour soutenir la pratique artistique](#) and another for accessibility costs [frais d'accès](#). Consult examples of supported projects [projets soutenus](#).
- Revising the fund allocation systems of funding programs to prioritize persons with disabilities in the scorecard.
- Ensuring the accessibility of production and broadcasting locations, in particular the backstage areas and the recording studios. Consult the **Built environment** fact sheet of this guide.

4. Encouraging persons with disabilities to visit cultural sites

- Joining a program that offers free admission to an accompanying person, such as the Companion Leisure Card [Carte accompagnement loisir](#) (CAL) or other like initiative.
- Offering training on welcoming. Consult the Customer service [Service à la clientèle](#) fact sheet of this guide.
- Creating a rate program for low income persons.
 - For example, le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Noranda has a solidarity ticket office [billetterie solidaire](#) for different tiers for its broadcasts and productions.

- Théâtre Prospero has put in place a « pay what you want » system [tarification flexible et simplifiée](#) where higher rates offset lower ones.
- Communicating information on accessibility and adapted services on a dedicated web page, or in a visitor's guide or cultural calendar. This information makes visits more predictable.
 - The Ville de Québec keeps a list of the accessibility measures of all cultural sites [mesures d'accessibilité de l'ensemble des lieux culturels](#) on its territory.
 - The [Regroupement des aveugles et des amblyopes du Montréal métropolitain](#) (RAAMM) and [AlterGo](#) circulate adapted programming calendars for their members.
 - The Young People Theater of Toronto offers a visual guide of the steps to be followed at the theater [guide visuel des étapes à parcourir au théâtre](#) (PDF, 50 MB). The Conseil des arts de Montréal has created a similar visual chronology [chronologie visuelle](#) (PDF, 714 kB).

5. Designing accessible environments

- Taking an exploratory walk or performing an accessibility audit to identify needed improvements. Consult the Built environment [Environnement bâti](#) and Digital communications [Communications numériques](#) fact sheets of this guide.
- Establishing a methodology incorporating notions of accessibility in the design of each exhibit or performance, taking into account the furniture, signs, information media, lighting, and interactive devices.
 - The French guide [Expositions et parcours de visite accessibles](#) (PDF, 16,2 MB) and Ingenium's [Normes d'accessibilité des expositions](#) (PDF, 1500 kB) outline key principles. The organization kulturinklusiv has created a relevant checklist [liste de contrôle](#).

6. Moving toward accessible and inclusive programming

- Putting in place cultural mediation programs or activities to bring persons with disabilities closer to culture and to raise public awareness of accessibility issues.
 - The Écomusée du fier monde offers various cultural mediation activities [activités de médiation culturelle](#), ranging from simplified tours of its permanent exhibition to outdoor activities.
 - Le Centre des mémoires montréalaises has developed inclusive programming. It offers a workshop for teachers and students, Accessible Montréal [Montréal accessible](#), that explores urban accessibility issues, as well as a series of workshops called [Montréal in Five Senses](#), which includes a tactile workshop for the general public.
 - The Ville de Montréal has a subsidy program [programme de subvention](#) specifically dedicated to cultural mediation.
- Putting in place programs that make the performing arts accessible in real time, whether by described video, sign language interpretation, relaxed performances, sound amplification or surtitling.
 - The [Théâtre du Rideau-Vert](#) offers many adapted performances, in particular with theatre audio description and tactile tours before the play.
 - MAI offers relaxed performances [représentations décontractées](#), with soft lighting and controlled noise levels.
- Designing tools in alternate format (braille, large print, audio, clear language) or purchasing adapted equipment (tactile, olfactory or vibrating devices).
 - The [Musée des métiers d'art du Québec](#) has created a tactile space to make its collection accessible in a sensory manner.
 - Cineplex theatres [cinémas Cineplex](#) offer specialized described video and subtitling systems.

- Evenko [groupe Evenko](#) has recently introduced vibrating vests so that deaf audience members may fully enjoy its outdoor festivals.
- Organizing events that meet accessibility standards. Consult the Event planning [Événementiel](#) fact sheet.
- Developing a funding program to improve access to or engagement with art through digital means, by making funding contingent on conformance with digital accessibility standards.
 - The Canada Council for the Arts oversees a Digital Strategy Fund [Fonds Stratégie numérique](#) as part of its « Public Access to the Arts and Citizen Engagement » strategy.

Available resources

Training:

Few training opportunities are offered exclusively for the cultural sector. Training on welcoming is the first avenue to look into. Consult the Customer service [Service à la clientèle](#) fact sheet.

- [Accueillir des publics en situation de handicap au musée](#), Société des musées du Québec et Kéroul.
- [Audiodescription en danse](#), Danse-Cité.

Grants:

- The provincial program [Culture et inclusion](#) seeks to increase the number of cultural activities, services and goods available to persons risking exclusion.
- The Broadcasting Accessibility Fund [Fonds pour l'accessibilité de la radiodiffusion](#) supports innovative solutions for accessibility to broadcasting content in Canada.
- Subsidy programs for accessible recreation may sometimes apply to cultural projects. Consult the Recreation, sports and tourism fact sheet [Loisirs, sports et tourisme](#).

- Les programmes relatifs à l'environnement bâti peuvent rendre les espaces culturels plus accessibles. Consultez la fiche [Environnement bâti](#).

Documents:

- [Accessible Art & Placemaking Toolkit](#), Steps Public Art.
- [Accessibilité universelle : des outils pour le milieu artistique](#), Conseil des arts de Montréal.
- Accessibility in Creative Spaces A Toolkit for Ontario Arts Organizations
[L'accessibilité des espaces créatifs : une boîte à outils pour les organisations artistiques de l'Ontario](#) (PDF, 600 kB).
- [Médiation culturelle, musées, publics diversifiés : guide pour une expérience inclusive](#), Écomusée du fier monde (PDF, 30 MB).
- [Pour une expérience culturelle accessible et inclusive : ressources et pratiques inspirantes](#), Kéroul.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure optimal inclusion in the workplace, also consult the following fact sheets :

Procurement [1. Approvisionnement](#)

Verbal and written communication [3. Communication orale et écrite](#)

Digital communications [4. Communications numériques](#)

Employment [8. Emploi](#)

Built environment [9. Environnement bâti](#)

Event planning [10. Événementiel](#)

Recreation, sports and tourism [14. Loisirs, sports et tourisme](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Aurélia Fleury and Alexandra Gilbert (AQLPH).



3. Oral and written communication

Designing accessible and inclusive communication

What is accessible and inclusive communication?

Communication is deemed accessible and inclusive when each individual can perceive, understand and interact with the information. In two-way communication, a person must not only understand, but also be understood. Thus, it is important that any communication – be it written, verbal or visual – adapt to the different needs, abilities and preferences of individuals. In this approach, content is as important as form.

Overview of the situation

In Québec, half of the population between the ages of 16 and 65 has difficulty reading and writing, affecting its everyday life ([EIACA-2003](#)).

The situation is even more concerning for persons with disabilities, as 60% of them have low or very low levels of literacy ([Pavillon du Parc, 2011](#)).

The issues concerning accessibility to communications are not confined to literacy. A 2021 Statistics Canada study [étude de 2021 de Statistique Canada](#) found that 61.5% of persons with disabilities have encountered barriers to communication during access to federal services. The use of text formats not compatible with screen readers, the absence of sign language interpretation, low contrast, the difficulty in reaching a service by phone and the presence of complex jargon are so many examples of challenges encountered daily.

Since access to information is a right, organizations are responsible for ensuring their methods of communication take into account the needs and preferences of persons with disabilities.

Standards and obligations

There are frameworks to guide organizations in creating more inclusive practices. Some are mandatory, while others inspire to go beyond.

- **Order in Council 655-2021, May 5, 2021, of the Government of Québec**

To complement the Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration, action plans for handicapped persons must systematically include measures for accessibility to information and documents [mesures d'accessibilité à l'information et aux documents](#) (PDF, 230 kB).

- **ISO 24495-1:2023 Standard - Plain Language**

This voluntary international standard sets out guiding principles and guidelines for creating documents in plain language. Accessibility Standards Canada also intends to publish a Plain Language standard in 2026.

- **CAN/ASC EN 301 549:2024 Standard - Accessibility requirements for information and communication technology products and services**

The EN 301 549 standard [norme EN 301 549](#), used at the state level in Europe, was adopted by Canada in 2024. It concerns Web technology, non-Web technology and hybrid technology. It covers two-way voice communication, technology with video capabilities, hardware, software, support services, as well as technology providing relay or emergency service access. The standard includes procedures to test and assess each requirement.

- **CRTC quality standards for described video and closed captioning**

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has established accessibility requirements [exigences d'accessibilité](#) for described video [vidéodescription](#) and closed captioning [sous-titrage codé](#).

Good practices to improve the communication component of an action plan

Here are a few concrete measures we suggest you adjust according to your organization.

1. Creating accessible communication media

- Adopting accessible document design principles, for both structure and layout. There are a number of resources on good practices in this area, including:
 - The guide [Communiquer pour tous](#) or the [Guide de rédaction pour une information accessible](#), which cover visual, language, information and structural aspects.
 - The [electronic documents](#) section of the *Laboratoire de promotion de l'accessibilité du Web* of the RAAMM, contains technical explanations for Word, Excel, PowerPoint and PDF.
 - [AccessAbility](#) is a practical handbook on accessible graphic design of the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.
- Creating a quick reference guide or a template for the creation of accessible documents.
 - [eCampus Ontario](#) has designed an editable template with instructions.
 - The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has created a simple quick reference guide [aide-mémoire simple](#) for documents.
- Adopting a mechanism to verify the accessibility of all communication media for the public.
 - The Accessibility Checker [Vérification de l'accessibilité](#) feature in Microsoft Office is a good place to start for most staff members.

- The [Info Accessible](#) platform provides checklists on its different tabs.
- Adopting standards for subtitling and described video
 - Drawing inspiration from those in force in Canada, from the exemplary described video practices [pratiques exemplaires de vidéodescription](#) of AMI-télé or from the subtitling guide [guide sur le sous-titrage](#) of TV5.
 - AMI-télé favours integrated described video [l'audiodescription intégrée](#) in its original productions, such as *Ça me regarde*.
- Adopting digital accessibility practices for all information technologies. Consult the Digital communications [Communications numériques](#) fact sheet in this guide.
- Training all personnel in good practices regarding the accessibility of electronic documents, principally for Microsoft Office.
- Training the personnel responsible for graphic design in good practices regarding layout accessibility, both for digital and print.
- Committing to systematically publish universally accessible formats or to provide simultaneously a graphic version or alternate version.
 - The Ville de Saint-Bruno has published its universal accessibility policy [politique d'accessibilité universelle](#) in three formats from the time of its adoption.
 - The Government of Canada systematically prepares HTML versions of all its publications for the public. The one for the Canadian Dental Care Plan [Régime canadien de soins dentaires](#) is a good example of this.
- Implementing a clear policy and process for the adaptation of materials in alternate formats.
 - The [OPHQ lists these formats](#): large print, audio, video clip in sign language, braille, digital file, subtitling, LSQ insert, and described video.

- The Policy on Accommodating Clients with Disabilities [Politique sur la prise de mesures d'adaptation pour les clients ayant une déficience](#) of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada is a good example.

2. Facilitating comprehension of the content of your messages

- Conducting an audit to assess the integration of plain language in your organization.
 - The Canadian Union of Public Employees provides a Clarity Index in its [Promoting Clear Communications in Your Municipality](#) guide (PDF, 600 KB).
- Adopting guidelines on using plain language in communications with the public. These could be based on the ISO standard in force or on exemplary practices.
 - The Government of Canada has created a Content Style Guide for the content of its website [guide de rédaction pour le contenu de son site Web](#), while the Government of Québec has a guide titled [Principes et recommandations pour une langue administrative de qualité](#) (680 KB).
 - Trucking Human Resources Sector Council Atlantic has created a practical guide for graphic design and plain language [conception graphique et le langage clair](#) (PDF, 945 KB). The before-and-after examples are especially instructive.
- Revising inclusive writing practices to take into account the accessibility of certain processes.
 - The Government of Canada also provides guidelines for inclusive writing [lignes directrices en matière d'écriture inclusive](#).
 - Radio-Canada describes its nuanced approach in an editorial [éditorial](#).
- Training the personnel in plain language writing.

- Preparing or promoting a quick reference guide on plain language for teams.
 - The quick reference guide of Éducaloi, [La communication claire : aide-mémoire, may be used as follows:](#)
- Collaborating with a firm specializing in plain language to prepare or revise complex documents, in particular those that include a legal component.
 - The firm [En clair](#) presents a number of its offerings on its website, such as a simplified debit card contract or an acknowledgment of receipt letter for a complaint.
- Putting in place a mechanism to validate the legibility of written documents with the persons concerned.
 - The literacy organization La Jarnigoine offers document revision with the help of a committee and a facilitation guide [guide d'animation](#) to support independent efforts (PDF, 1001 KB).
- Preparing a document or web page featuring videos or pictograms to clarify certain services or complex steps.
 - Communauto explains how to use its platform [fonctionnement de sa plateforme](#) with pictures, videos and simple text.
 - The Joe, Jack and John theatre has prepared an accessibility guide in plain language that explains how a play unfolds [déroulement d'une pièce de théâtre](#) (PDF, 620 KB).
 - The Ville de Saguenay presents its accessible and adapted services in the guide [Guide des services offerts aux personnes handicapées](#).
 - The Réseau de transport de la Capitale (RTC) has created a graphic version of its universal accessibility action plan [plan d'action en accessibilité universelle](#) (PDF, 1466 KB), which includes a flow chart (p.22) and a summary of the customer experience (p.14).

3. Facilitating interactions with persons with disabilities

- Adopting standardized terminology regarding persons with disabilities.
 - The Government of Canada offers the guide A way with words and images [Le pouvoir des mots et des images](#).
- Putting in place a preferred communication policy, so that individuals may choose the method of communication that suits them (telephone, video relay service, email, chat, or in person). Consult the Customer service [Service à la clientèle](#) fact sheet of this guide.
 - For example, TD Bank [Banque TD](#) has a dedicated phone line for clients who use the video relay service.
 - [Vidéotron](#) also offers a free unlimited call assistance service for clients with disabilities.
- Training the customer service staff in inclusive verbal communication.
 - The guide [Communiquer pour tous](#) contains clear instructions and a helpful checklist.
- Offering basic sign language courses for welcome staff, with the possibility of in-depth training for volunteers. Consult the Customer service [Service à la clientèle](#) fact sheet of this guide.
- Establishing minimal accessibility requirements for verbal exchanges at gatherings, meetings and events. Consult the Event planning [Événementiel](#) fact sheet.

Available resources

Training:

- [Créer des documents électroniques accessibles avec Microsoft Word 365](#)
– Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Montréal métropolitain
- [Création de documents accessibles \(online, free\)](#), Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille

- [Formations sur la communication claire](#) – En clair
- [Langage clair et simple](#) – Autrement dit
- [Introduction à la communication accessible](#) – AlterGo
- Accessible PDF documents – [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#), Cégep de Sainte-Foy

Grants:

- The Equitable Access to Reading Program [Programme d'accès équitable à la lecture, offered by the Government of Canada](#), makes preparing documents in alternate formats easier.

Documents:

- Communication Access within the Accessible Canada Act [Accès aux communications dans le cadre de la Loi canadienne sur l'accessibilité](#), Inclusive Design Research Center.
- [Communiquer pour tous – Guide pour une information accessible](#) (PDF, 6.7 MB), Santé publique France.
- [Info Accessible](#), Université du Québec en Outaouais.
- [Guide de communication inclusive](#) (PDF : 1600 KB), Université du Québec
- [Guide de rédaction pour une information accessible](#) (PDF, 3.9 MB). Pavillon du Parc.
- [La communication claire : aide-mémoire](#), Éducaloi.
- [Simplification de la langue administrative : les formulaires imprimés et électroniques](#) (PDF, 3.3 MB), ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration (MRCI).

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure optimal inclusion in the workplace, also consult the following fact sheets :

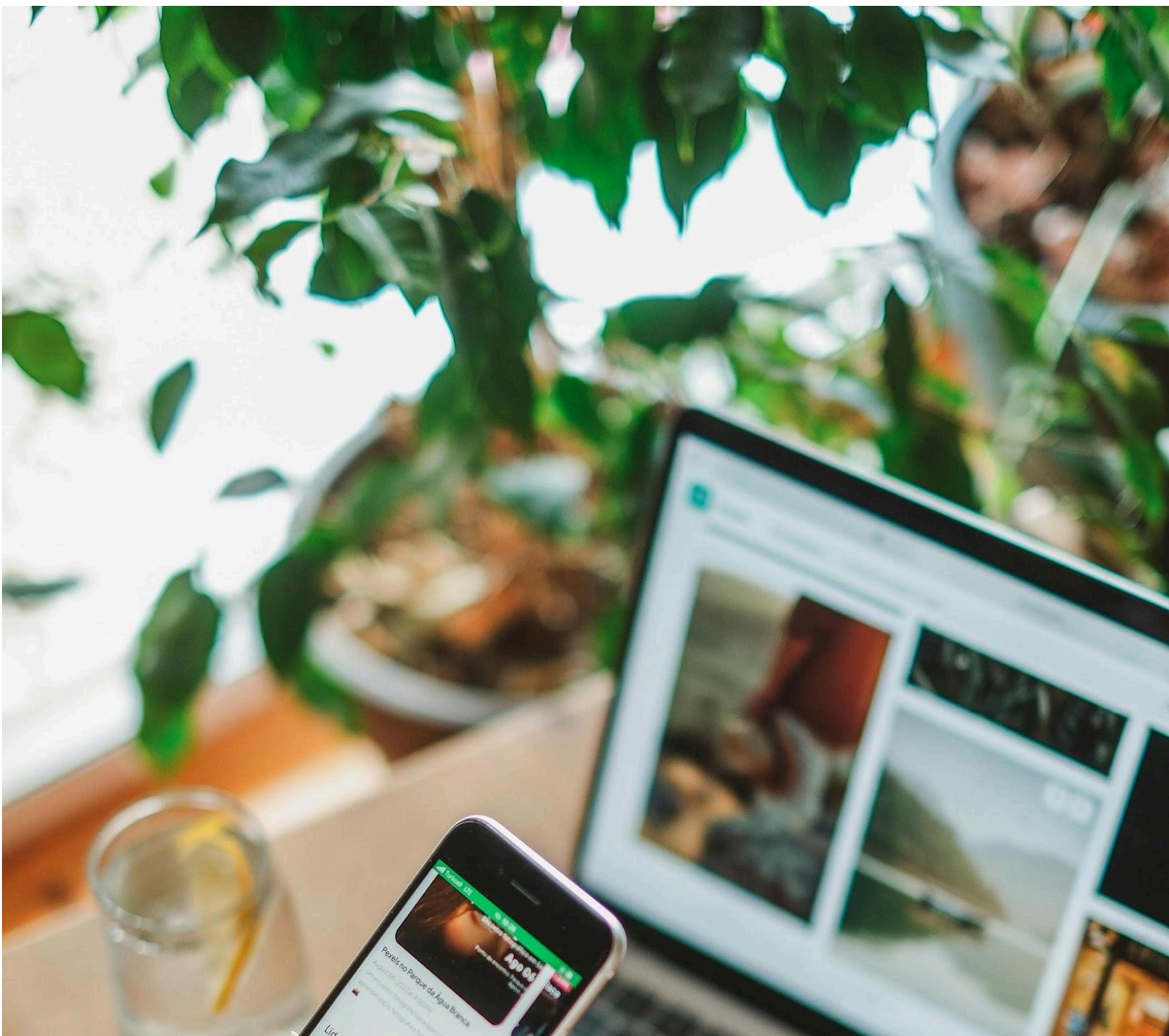
F01 [1. Approvisionnement](#)

F04 [4. Communications numériques](#)

F10 [10. Événementiel](#)

F21 [21. Service à la clientèle](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Marie-Claude Lépine (Promo-Accès) and Sébastien Moisan (FMPDAQ).



4. Digital communications

This fact sheet contains guidelines aimed at improving the accessibility of digital communications. In an increasingly interconnected world, ensuring access to information and making information technology usable by all is crucial. Digital accessibility not only makes everyday communication easier; it is also essential, to enable persons with disabilities to make the most of digital resources, online government services, educational platforms, and more. The purpose of this fact sheet, then, is to ensure that everyone, without exception, can efficiently use, on their own, the digital tools made available to them, thus helping remove barriers to communication, access to information, and education.

Objectives

The principal objective of this fact sheet is to create and perpetuate fully accessible digital environments, including for persons with disabilities, in order to ensure that technology fosters inclusion rather than creates new barriers. To reach this goal, a number of strategies must be implemented :

- **Conformance to standards** : Adopting and applying the accessibility standards in force, such as the WCAG and the instructions of the ISO, to make all digital content accessible.
- **Training and awareness** : Organizing ongoing training for technical (development, programming) and creative (writing, graphic design) teams, to raise their awareness of the importance of accessibility from the very first steps of any digital project.
- **Across-the-board integration** : Ensuring that accessibility is integrated at all stages of digital product development, from design to deployment to customer support.

Importance of digital accessibility

Digital accessibility is more than a matter of compliance with legal obligations. It is a pillar of social inclusion. By removing barriers to digital technology access and use, segments of the population, often marginalized, can actively participate in society. This participation is crucial, since it provides handicapped persons with

equal opportunities in terms of employment, education, and social life. Thus, digital accessibility is essential not only to respect the fundamental rights of individuals, but also to enrich the social fabric through diversity of perspectives and skills.

Legal framework and standards

International accessibility standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), provide a detailed framework for inclusive digital practices. The latest version, WCAG 2.1, includes extensive recommendations for the accessibility of web content, notably for mobile technologies and non-text media. Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the United States and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in Canada also impose strict standards for digital accessibility. These laws evolve regularly to integrate advances in technology and to better serve populations with diverse needs. Hence the importance of proactive regulatory monitoring within organizations.

Strategies and good practices

To integrate the principles of digital accessibility in daily practices, a number of key strategies can be implemented :

- **Education and ongoing training** : Organizing regular training sessions for developers, designers and all of the staff involved in creating digital content.
- **Inclusive design from conception** : Applying the principles of universal design when creating websites, mobile apps and other digital interfaces to ensure their accessibility from the very beginning.
- **Usability testing**: Conducting functional assessments throughout development with users with disabilities to address accessibility issues prior to deployment.
- **Adoption of assistive technologies**: Ensuring digital products are compatible with standard assistive technologies and providing specialized technical support.

- **Updating standards and compliance:** Keeping up with new accessibility standards and integrating them quickly to stay at the forefront of digital inclusion.

Examples and case studies

The importance of digital accessibility is illustrated by various organizations that have implemented best practices. These case studies not only shed light on the challenges encountered but also highlight effective solutions for improving accessibility.

- **Microsoft and inclusive software:** Microsoft has been a pioneer in integrating accessibility into its products, with tools like the Windows Narrator, a built-in screen reader that gives visually impaired users more independence in using their computer.
 - The Office Suite has also been significantly improved, with options for simplifying the interface and tools for creating accessible content, such as the Accessibility Checker in Word and PowerPoint.
- **BBC and media accessibility:** The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has established high standards regarding the accessibility of its digital content. In addition to offering subtitles and audio descriptions for almost all of its television programs, the BBC has developed a fully accessible website, offering customization options for users such as text size and colour contrast control.
- **Airbnb improving user experience:** Airbnb has redesigned its interface to ensure accessibility for users, including persons with visual and motor disabilities. After consulting with users with disabilities and accessibility experts, Airbnb has modified its booking process to make it more intuitive, increased colour contrast, and made its site compatible with popular screen readers.

Available resources and training

There are numerous resources and training sessions that support digital accessibility:

Online training:

- WebAIM (Web Accessibility In Mind) offers a series of training sessions covering everything from the basics of HTML accessibility to advanced techniques for dynamic web applications.
- Deque University also offers courses on a variety of accessibility topics including mobile applications and the use of ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications).

“How-to” guides:

- The W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines provide detailed guidelines for creating accessible web content, including sample codes and explanations on how to comply with WCAG 2.1.
- The Government of Canada’s [Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#) provides resources and tools to learn more about the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility standards, including the EN 301 549 standard, which includes WCAG 2.1 level A and AA, when purchasing goods or services or designing a project. The ADA Toolkit for Website Accessibility is a useful resource for U.S. organizations that want to ensure their websites comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The *Référentiel général d’amélioration de l’accessibilité* [General accessibility improvement framework or RGAA] specifies the criteria to be met and tests to be carried out for French websites, based on WCAG 2.1.
- For a guide on how to create accessible content, [click here](#).

Other resources:

- A [detailed list of various resources](#), in French and English, on digital accessibility (website, downloadable documents, applications, writing, etc.) is available and regularly updated on the French website [ideance.net](#).

Grants and financial support:

- In many countries, government grants are available to help small and medium-sized businesses improve the accessibility of their digital products.

- In Canada, the Enabling Accessibility Fund provides financial support to organizations looking to make their technologies more accessible.

Conclusion

It is essential to take a proactive approach to digital accessibility so that everyone can actively participate in the digital society, regardless of their level of ability. This requires an ongoing commitment, proper training, and a drive for continuous improvement.

Sources and references

Examples and case studies:

1. **Microsoft Accessibility Features**
Source: [Microsoft Accessibility](#). Last accessed May 1, 2024.
2. **BBC Accessibility**
Source: [BBC Accessibility Help](#). Last accessed May 2, 2024.
3. **Airbnb Accessibility Initiatives**
Source: [Airbnb Accessibility](#). Last accessed May 2, 2024.

Available resources and training:

1. **WebAIM Training resources**
Source: [WebAIM Training](#). Last accessed May 1, 2024.
2. **Deque University courses**
Source: [Deque University](#). Last accessed May 6, 2024.
3. **W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**
Source: [W3C Accessibility Guidelines](#). Last accessed May 6, 2024.
4. **ADA Toolkit for Website Accessibility**
Source: [ADA National Network](#)
Last accessed May 6, 2024.

5. **Government Accessibility Grants** (Canada)

Source: [Accessibility Grants](#). Last accessed May 5, 2024.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure optimal inclusion in the workplace, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[7. Elementary and secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[10. Event planning](#)

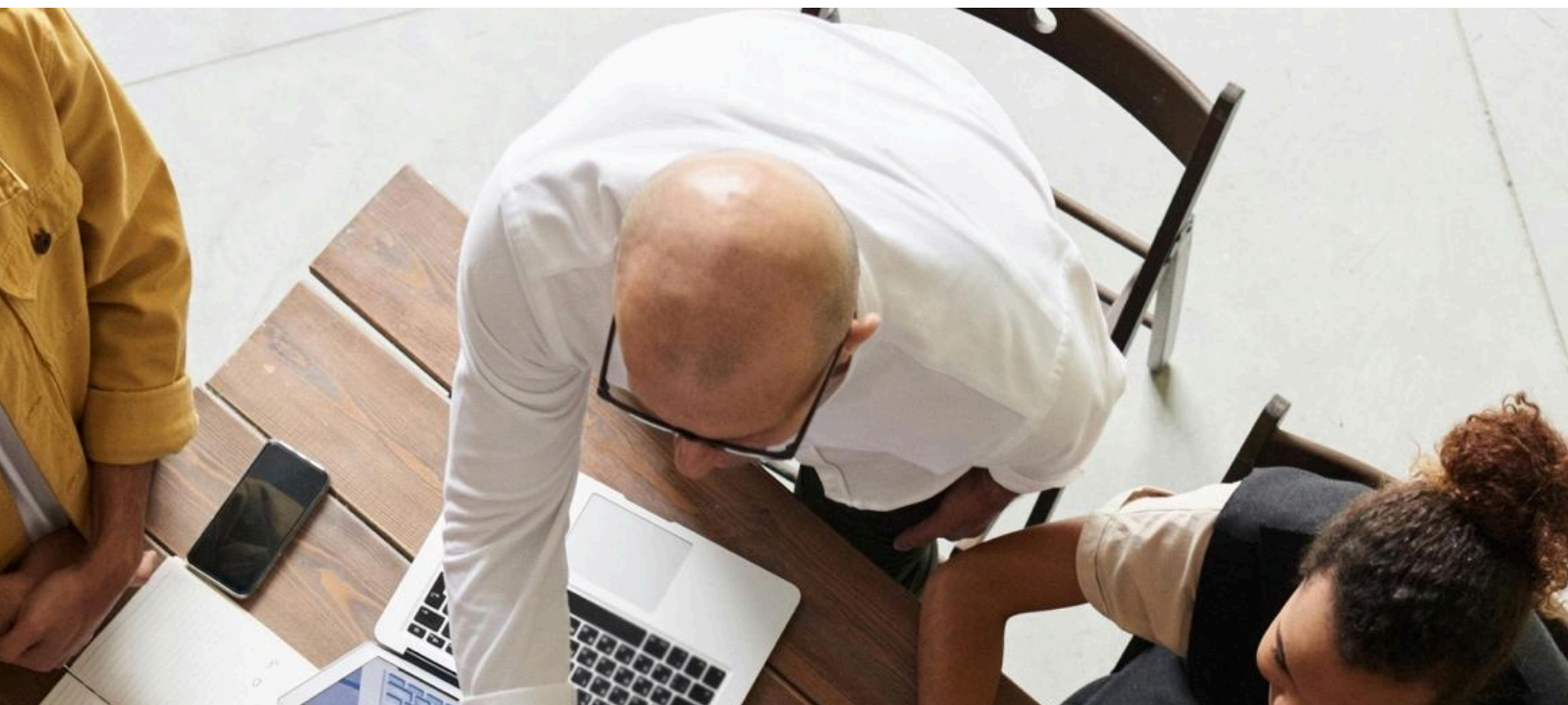
[21. Customer service](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with François Bernier, HorizonB2B, with feedback from Anne Pelletier, DéPhy Montréal.



5. Design and delivery of programs and services

This fact sheet provides guidelines to ensure that programs and services are designed and delivered in a way that is accessible to all people, including those with disabilities. The objective is to promote inclusion and ensure equal access to all public and private services.

This sheet aims to:

- **Ensure universal accessibility:** Design programs and services that are accessible from the outset to eliminate barriers.
- **Promote inclusion:** Incorporate accessibility principles into all aspects of service delivery.
- **Improve training and awareness:** Continuously train staff on inclusive practices and assistive technologies.

Importance of accessibility in the design and delivery of programs and services

Accessibility is essential to enable all citizens to participate fully in society. It ensures that persons with disabilities can access the same opportunities and services as everyone else, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive society.

Integrating accessibility into the design and delivery of programs and services is paramount to building an inclusive and equitable society. This requires an ongoing commitment, proper training, and a drive for continuous improvement. By following best practices and building on successful examples, organizations can create environments where everyone can fully participate and benefit from the services offered.

Standards and obligations

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#): This convention recognizes the right to equal opportunity and full social

participation for persons with disabilities. States Parties are responsible for ensuring accessibility to programs and services.

- [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#): This law aims to eliminate barriers and ensure equal opportunity for all. It establishes accessibility standards and obligations in several areas, such as transportation, the built environment, services and information technology.
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) : The Act establishes standards for making Ontario accessible by 2025.

Good practices for improving the accessibility of programs and services

1. Universal design

- **Universal accessibility principles**: Applying the principles that allow services to be used by all, without requiring specific adaptations. For example, designing buildings with ramps, accessible elevators and adapted toilets.
- **User consultation**: Involving persons with disabilities in the design process to identify needs and anticipate potential barriers. Conducting focus groups and workshops to gather feedback.
- **Evaluation and continuous feedback**: Implementing feedback mechanisms to continuously improve the accessibility of services. Using online surveys, suggestion boxes and regular facility evaluations.

2. Providing assistive technologies

- **Communication technologies**: Providing tools such as screen readers, sound amplifiers and sign language translation devices. Ensuring that amplified phones are available for the hearing impaired and that Braille devices are available for the visually impaired.
- **Digital accessibility**: Ensuring online platforms and digital tools are WCAG compliant. Using tools such as the Web Accessibility Evaluation tool (WAVE) to test and improve web accessibility.

- **Technological training:** Training staff in the use and management of assistive technologies to better support users. Offering online training and practical workshops.

3. Staff training and awareness

- **Regular training programs:** Organizing ongoing training sessions to raise staff awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities using interactive modules and in-person sessions.
- **Simulations and awareness:** Using practical exercises to help staff understand the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, such as simulations with wheelchairs or using blindfolds to simulate blindness.
- **Fostering empathy and respect:** Promoting a culture of empathy and respect through workshops and awareness programs. Using case studies and testimonials to illustrate the importance of accessibility.

4. Inclusive policies and procedures

- **Policy development:** Developing policies that support inclusion and accessibility in all aspects of services by writing clear, detailed policies on accessibility.
- **Implementation and monitoring:** Implementing procedures to ensure compliance with accessibility policies, supported by internal and external audits to assess compliance.
- **Audits and compliance:** Conducting regular audits to assess compliance and identifying areas for improvement, using tools such as the AODA.

5. Community engagement

- **Partnerships with advocacy organizations:** Working with local organizations to obtain advice and support in implementing accessibility practices. Developing partnerships with organizations such as the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians.
- **Community events:** Organizing events to raise awareness of the importance of accessibility and inclusion, such as awareness days with assistive technology demonstrations.

- **Inclusive communication:** Using accessible communication channels to inform and engage all stakeholders. Ensuring print materials and online communications are available in accessible formats such as Braille and audio formats.

Available resources

- [Service Canada](#)
Service Canada has implemented various initiatives to make its services accessible, including customized online service options and service centres equipped with assistive technology.
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
Public Health Ontario has incorporated universal design principles into its health programs to ensure barrier-free access for all citizens.

- [Toronto Public Library](#)
The Toronto Public Library offers inclusive services such as audiobooks, Braille reading programs and computers for visually impaired users.
- [Vancouver Access Transit program](#)
The Access Transit program ensures that everyone can use public transit services, including people with physical or sensory disabilities.
- [University of Calgary](#)
The University of Calgary has implemented accessibility policies to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to inclusive and equitable education.
- [Office des personnes handicapées du Québec](#)
A government organization that promotes public programs for persons with disabilities in Québec, ensuring inclusion and accessibility for all citizens.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in the design and delivery of programs and services, also consult the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[6. Post-secondary education](#)

[7. Elementary and secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[18. Civic engagement](#)

[21. Customer service](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with François Bernier, HorizonB2B, with feedback from Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm).



6. Post-secondary education

Ensuring accessible practices in post-secondary education

In Québec, a number of laws and policies ensure that post-secondary institutions are accessible to students with disabilities so that they have equal access to education. Here are the main measures put in place:

- ***Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights* (1978):** This act was fundamental to establishing integration support services in CEGEPs and universities as early as 1980. In 2004, this law was updated with the adoption of Bill 56, and renamed the *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*. This modification strengthened the responsibility of public and parapublic institutions with regard to their practices towards persons with disabilities.
- ***À part entière: pour un véritable exercice du droit à l'égalité [Policy for increasing the social participation of persons with disabilities] (2009):*** Adopted by the National Assembly of Québec, this policy aims to put the 2004 act into practice by proposing concrete actions and evaluations for various educational sectors, including post-secondary education. It promotes the active inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.
- ***Act respecting equal access to employment in public bodies:*** This act requires educational institutions to take measures to ensure equitable access to their services for persons with disabilities.
- **Student services:** In 1982, integration services were established in the Sainte-Foy and Vieux Montréal colleges, with the support of the Centres collégiales des services d'intégration (CCSI). At the university level, the Association québécoise interuniversitaire des conseillers et conseillères pour étudiants en situation de handicap (AQICESH) supports services for students with disabilities.
- **Access plan:** Facilities should develop plans to improve the accessibility of their infrastructure and services.

- **Grants and financial assistance:** Since the 1990s, Student Financial Assistance (SFA) has been running the Allowance for Special Needs Program (PABP), which helps cover the high costs of services required by students with special needs. In many cases, student loans are often converted into grants for these students. Several public, private and parapublic organizations offer scholarships annually to students with disabilities.
- **Awareness and training:** Post-secondary institutions often provide staff with training on the specific needs of students with disabilities so they can better understand these needs and provide an adapted welcome.

For more information, it is recommended to consult the website of each institution or contact the student services office directly.

Overview of the situation

While there has been significant progress regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in post-secondary education in Québec, ongoing challenges remain. Here's an overview:

Progress

Legislative and policy framework:

- The Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and that of Canada require academic institutions to adopt integration policies for students with disabilities. These institutions are therefore required to provide reasonable accommodations to prevent discrimination against these students. Today, most CEGEPs and universities have policies protecting the rights of students with disabilities, along with action plans to ensure access to post-secondary education and institutions.
- The 2024 *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*, as well as the 2009 policy *À part entière: pour un véritable exercice du droit à l'égalité*, re-evaluated in 2019, propose practices that enable institutions to promote full accessibility across their establishments, programs and degrees.

Support services:

- All post-secondary institutions have an integration support service for students with disabilities, although these services have different names. Their main objective is to implement accommodations adapted to students' specific needs, based on a personalized intervention plan.
- Increasingly, academic institutions are setting up equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committees, offices and departments to develop inclusion policies for all marginalized and/or vulnerable groups within their student community. These entities also oversee the implementation of these policies.
- The number of students with disabilities enrolled in support services at their institutions has been steadily increasing for over a decade. This is partly due to the recognition of so-called emerging or invisible disabilities in the post-secondary sector. The COVID-19 pandemic and early diagnoses are also contributing to this increase.
- In 2023–24, the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur du Québec (MES) increased funding to institutions and the SFA to support students with disabilities.

Awareness programs:

- Increasing awareness within institutions has led to the introduction of staff training, aimed at improving support for students with disabilities.
- Initiatives are also being deployed to raise awareness among the entire student community about the diversity of disabilities and the importance of inclusion.

Challenges

Inequality of services:

- Support service offerings vary between institutions, creating disparities in the experience of students. This can lead to service disruptions when students transfer from one institution to another.

Physical accessibility:

- Despite improvements, some infrastructure remains inaccessible, limiting access to courses, essential services (washrooms and elevators) and activities.

Stigma:

- Negative attitudes and lack of awareness of the challenges faced by students with disabilities can lead to stigma, complicating their academic integration. Many students are reluctant to use their institution's integration services or tell teaching staff about their condition for these reasons. This can lead to failed courses, withdrawals, and a statistical under-representation that reflects only part of their reality.

Lack of resources:

- Facilities may face budgetary constraints that limit the availability and quality of services provided. Often, teams of less than 10 must serve thousands of students. The number of students with disabilities in post-secondary institutions is growing and their needs are becoming increasingly diverse.

Inadequate accommodations:

- Lack of specialization among stakeholders, lack of awareness of the realities of various disability situations and limited resources sometimes prevent the development of effective stakeholder plans. These same factors also make it difficult for students to collaborate on their Individual Intervention Plan (IIP), leading to insufficient or inadequate accommodations.

While Québec has made significant progress in the inclusion of students with disabilities in post-secondary education, continued efforts are needed to ensure true equality of access. The commitment of institutions, students and the

community is essential to overcoming barriers and creating an inclusive learning environment for all.

Standards and obligations

In Québec, there are several standards and obligations governing the inclusion of students with disabilities in post-secondary education. The main ones are:

Legislation:

- **Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms:** This Charter guarantees the right to equality and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.
- ***Act respecting equal access to employment in public bodies:*** This act requires educational institutions to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to their services.
- ***Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration:*** This act aims to promote accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life, including education.

Educational policies:

- **Policy on integrating persons with disabilities:** Institutions are required to adopt policies to promote the integration and accessibility of educational services.
- **Action plans:** Establishments should develop action plans to improve the accessibility of their infrastructure and services.

Support services:

- **Reasonable accommodations:** Institutions should offer appropriate accommodations, such as extra time for exams and specialized equipment, based on students' needs.
- **Student services offices:** Most institutions have offices dedicated to providing support, advice and resources to students with disabilities.
- **Continuous evaluation:** Institutions are encouraged to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their accessibility policies and services to ensure continuous improvement.

These standards and obligations aim to ensure that students with disabilities have equitable access to post-secondary education by creating inclusive environments and providing the various types of support necessary for their academic success. Institutions must actively commit to these obligations to promote inclusion and equal opportunity.

Good practices

There are a number of practices that can be implemented to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities at the post-secondary level. Here are some of the most effective:

Needs assessment:

- **Early identification:** Assessing students' specific needs upon enrolment to plan appropriate accommodations.
- **Individual intervention plans:** To the extent possible, continuing the same intervention plans that the student enjoyed during their previous studies. Developing personalized plans that take into account the real needs of students and not just the accommodations available. Considering the ecosystem of services for these students and potential intersectionality issues.

Accommodations and support:

- **Academic accommodations:** Offering better conditions for exams, such as one-third extra time for completion. Proposing various evaluation methods with alternatives for course work and activities.
- **Support services:** Providing tutors, mentors or counsellors as well as the assistance of professionals who specialize in or familiar with the issues experienced by students with disabilities to help students adapt and succeed.

Accessibility of infrastructure:

- **Accessible buildings:** Ensuring that all buildings and learning spaces meet accessibility standards, with appropriate ramps, elevators and facilities.
- **Technological resources:** Providing access to technology tools such as screen reading software and assistive devices. Ensuring that these adapted technology resources are available and accessible.

Awareness and training:

- **Staff training:** Training teachers and staff on accessibility issues, types of disabilities and best practices in inclusive teaching.
- **Raising student awareness:** Implementing campaigns to promote understanding and openness to the dynamics and barriers faced by students with disabilities in post-secondary education.
- **Philosophy and practice of inclusive education:** Encouraging the implementation of inclusive education practices, integrating the concepts of universal design for learning (UDL) and the social model of disability into courses to ensure a healthy environment conducive to learning and personal development for students with disabilities.

Encouraging participation:

- **Social and academic activities:** Encouraging the participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities and group projects to strengthen their social integration. Facilitating the creation of student

associations for these students to encourage them to defend their rights and interests.

- **Feedback and involvement:** Ensuring that students with disabilities are consulted and represented in decision-making and the development processes of inclusion policies.

Interdisciplinary collaboration:

- **Partnerships:** Working with community organizations, health professionals and accessibility experts to better meet students' needs. Informing these students of resources available outside the institutions.
- **Support networks:** Creating support networks among students to encourage mutual assistance and sharing of experiences.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- **Continuous evaluation:** Regularly assessing the effectiveness of services and accommodations to ensure that they meet student needs. Giving students the opportunity to evaluate the services and accommodations received through surveys at the end of each semester or year. Using feedback to improve practices and services.

These best practices aim to create an inclusive and equitable environment for all students with disabilities, giving them full access to post-secondary education and enabling them to succeed in their academic journey. The engagement of the entire educational community is essential to successfully implement these practices.

References

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁶ stipulates that every child has the right to thrive and reach their full potential in a healthy environment free from discrimination.

⁶ [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | OHCHR](#)

Here are some references and resource materials to help you deepen your understanding of best practices for the inclusion of students with disabilities in post-secondary education:

- **Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) du Québec:** This organization offers numerous resources and recommendations to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education.
 - CDPDJ report and documents – Rights of persons with disabilities in education: This report discusses the rights of students with disabilities, the obligations of educational institutions and provides recommendations for improving inclusion.
 - Accessibility and inclusion: This document provides guidelines on how educational institutions can better accommodate students with disabilities.
- **Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (Québec):** *Lignes directrices pour l'intégration scolaire des élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage* [Guidelines for educational integration of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties]. This document provides guidelines on integration and accessibility in educational settings.
- ***Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration:*** This legislation outlines the rights of persons with disabilities and specifies the obligations of educational institutions.
- **Association canadienne pour les personnes handicapées (ACPH):** Offers various tools and resources for the inclusion of students with disabilities in education.
- **Institut national de la santé publique du Québec (INSPQ):** Publishes research and recommendations on accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

- **Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability:** This journal publishes research papers on best practices and policies for inclusion in higher education institutions.
- **American Council on Education (ACE):** Provides resources and studies on the inclusion of students with disabilities in post-secondary education.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in education, also consult the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[20. Environmental health](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Sergeline Isidore (MBDE) and André Prévost (COPHAN).



7. Elementary and secondary education

Ensuring accessible practices in education

What is an accessible practice in education?

A good accessible practice in the education sector can be approached from different angles. Inclusive education, as defined below, describes the philosophy or paradigm that supports and guides pedagogical practices to make them accessible and effective for all. Differentiated instruction is a set of practices designed to ensure the success or improvement of everyone's learning, taking into account the diversity of learners in a group. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) identifies organizational and structural strategies that enable students to fully participate in their learning and academic success.

The practice of education accessibility is based on a moral and professional commitment to the student and their ecosystem. It aims to ensure barrier-free access to learning, activities and locations. These practices take into account the diversity as well as the difficulties and functional limitations of the individuals concerned.

Overview of the situation

The education of students with disabilities presents significant challenges, but has also seen significant progress. In many countries, efforts have been made to integrate these students into mainstream schools, thus promoting inclusion and equal opportunity.

Advances include:

- **Legislation and policies:** Many countries have adopted laws guaranteeing the right to education for students with disabilities, and providing them with support and guidance.
- **Inclusion programs:** Specific programs aimed at integrating these students into mainstream classrooms, with the help of specialized teachers and school life assistants.

- **Awareness:** Increased awareness of disability in schools helps reduce stereotypes and foster acceptance of differences.

Challenges include:

- **Limited resources:** Many institutions lack the resources needed to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities, including teacher training and adapted equipment.
- **Teacher training:** Not all teachers are trained to manage the diversity of disabilities, which can lead to inequalities in student support.
- **Stigma and isolation:** Despite inclusion efforts, some students may still feel stigmatized or find themselves isolated in the classroom.
- **Accessibility:** Physical accessibility of institutions remains an issue in some regions, limiting some students' access to education.

In Québec, the state of education for students with disabilities can be summed up by the following key statistics and initiatives:⁷

- **Prevalence:** About 12% of students in the Québec school system are identified as having a disability or special needs, according to data from the Ministère de l'Éducation.
- **Types of disabilities:** The most common disabilities include learning disabilities, mental health disorders and physical disabilities.
- **Support:** In 2020, nearly 30% of schools in Québec had specialized classes in place to accommodate students with special needs.
- **Resources:** The Government of Québec has invested millions of dollars to improve access to adapted resources, including school-based support programs.
- **Integration rate:** About 85% of students with disabilities attend regular classes, although the quality of inclusion varies considerably from school to school.
- **Teacher training:** Although training programs are available, a significant proportion of teachers report that they do not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

⁷ **Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec:** Their official website regularly publishes reports and statistics on students with disabilities. / **Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ):** This organization provides statistical data on various aspects of education, including studies on students with special needs / **Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ):** The Commission publishes reports on the rights of persons with disabilities and on access to education.

These figures illustrate the progress made and the challenges that remain in ensuring fair and inclusive education for all students in Québec.

Component 1: Inclusive education

School inclusion is both a philosophy and a set of pedagogical practices designed to allow each student to feel valued, confident and safe, so that they can reach their full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centred on the well-being of the child, fostering active participation in learning and school life as well as a sense of belonging, enriching social development and positive interaction with peers and the school community.⁸

Children live in a healthy, stigma-free environment that fosters self-esteem and acceptance of others.⁹

According to the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and education: all means all, programs need to focus on tackling entrenched views that certain students are deficient and unable to learn. School leaders need to be trained to build and promote an inclusive school ethos.¹⁰

Recommendations

The practice of resource accessibility in inclusive education includes:

- Ensuring faculty and support staff have access to models of diversity.
- The adaptation of educational services by the Centre de services scolaire (CSS) to the specific needs of handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (special needs students), based on an assessment of their abilities (section 235 of the *Education Act*).¹¹
- Ensuring teachers have full access to training on different teaching methods so that they are well equipped to meet the needs of all students.

Component 2: Access to resources

⁸ [Definition of inclusive education](#)

⁹ [Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all](#)

¹⁰ [Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all](#)

¹¹ [I-13.3 - Education Act](#)

According to section 4.3 of the Special Education Policy, various entities of the school organization have powers and responsibilities to ensure the accessibility of resources. One of these organizations is the Special Needs Advisory Committee, which can directly advise the school board on various matters. The school team, in a spirit of shared responsibility, also has a duty to facilitate access to information and resources. Parents and students have the right to access the necessary resources.

Recommendations

The practice of resource accessibility in inclusive education includes:

- Ensuring that parents' voices are heard by the Special Needs Advisory Committee so that they can express the needs, challenges, expectations and concerns of their children and other parents, and that these concerns are addressed by the school board.
- Identifying and implementing means or strategies to make all relevant information easily accessible to parents of special needs students in order to support them in their child's academic journey (section 4.3.3 of the Special Education Policy).
- Respecting the right of special needs students to defend their needs and to actively participate in meetings in the development of their intervention plan. (section 4.8)
- Reviewing the entire funding and organization model for special need student services. In June 2022, the Ombudsperson identified three priorities: providing services based on students' actual needs (rather than available budgets), establishing a minimum threshold for services, and encouraging coordinated action and collaboration among stakeholders.¹²

Component 3: Collaboration between the school team and the family

Recommendations

The practice of accessibility in school team/family collaboration includes:

¹² Upcoming changes to professional services for special needs students:
<https://www.fppe.ca/grands-dossiers/services-aux-eleves-a-besoins-particuliers/>

- Recognizing parents' skills and experience, making sure that they feel respected and that their role with their child is recognized and valued.¹³ According to the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec, parental engagement promotes student success and helps promote public education.
- Implementing specific support measures for students with disabilities.
- Creating and managing a unit for parents and legal guardians of students with disabilities or experiencing difficulties at school where they can have their concerns addressed.
- Encouraging school participation in the [National Parental Engagement in Education Week](#) (SNEP).
- Informing parents of their right to access their child's confidential file with the school board, following established procedures. They also have a duty to contribute to the information recorded therein.

Component 4: School transportation

In Québec, the *Regulation respecting road vehicles used for the transportation of school children* stipulates that only a school bus or minibus (10 or more occupants) or a vehicle intended to transport students (4 to 9 occupants) may be used to transport students to and from school.¹⁴

Under the Highway Safety Code, the *Regulation respecting road vehicles adapted for the transportation of handicapped persons* regulates the transportation of persons with disabilities in minibuses and buses to ensure their safety while taking into account their specific needs.¹⁵

Recommendations

The practice of accessibility in school transportation includes:

- Using geolocation applications to reduce waiting times for regular and adapted school transportation. The MTransport app, for example, enables

¹³ [Dénouer les enjeux liés à la relation école-famille, un nœud à la fois](#) [Untangling school-family issues, one knot at a time]

¹⁴ [School transportation - Transports et Mobilité durable Québec](#)

¹⁵ [Paratransit - Transports et Mobilité durable Québec](#)

bus tracking, identification of students with special needs, communication of delays or cancellations, and peace of mind for parents and guardians.

- Training school transportation drivers to promote safe, caring and effective interventions for special needs students. This training is provided by the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec.
- Ensuring the continuity of school transportation services for students with disabilities by providing, where necessary, an additional support resource and/or equipment to ensure passenger safety.

Continuing the efforts to improve the education of students with disabilities is paramount, with a focus on inclusion, teacher training and the allocation of adequate resources. An inclusive school environment benefits not only students with disabilities, but also the entire educational community.

References

- Article 24: According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,¹⁶ every child has the right to thrive and reach their full potential in a healthy environment free from discrimination.
- E-20.1: *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration.*¹⁷
- AuCoin, A. and Vienneau, R. (2010). Inclusion scolaire et dénormalisation. In N. Rousseau (ed.), *La pédagogie de l'inclusion scolaire – Pistes d'action pour apprendre tous ensemble* (pp. 63–86). Québec City: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Beaucher, V. and Jutras, F. (2007). Comparative study of metasynthesis and qualitative meta-analysis. *Qualitative research*, 27(2), 58–77.
- The Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) produced the guide [*Mieux connaître les élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation*](#)

¹⁶ [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | OHCHR](#)

¹⁷ [E-20.1 - Act to ensure the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities with a view to their academic, professional and social integration](#)

[ou d'apprentissage : portrait annuel](#) (published 2023), which includes statistics on school attendance, student graduation and qualifications.

- [Inclusion Canada](#)
- [Radio-Canada : Handicap et inclusion scolaire : et si le Québec s'inspirait d'autres provinces?](#)

International references on best practices in inclusive schools:

- UNESCO, Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All. Read the report here.
- OECD, Report: Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages: Policies and Practices. Read the report here. World Bank, Inclusive Education: A Global Review. Read the report here.

Other resources in organizations:

- [Récit](#): A network focused on developing student skills through the integration of technology.
- [AQEPA](#): The Association du Québec pour enfants avec problèmes auditifs (AQEPA) is a network of regional associations of families, young adults living with deafness, and allies, supported by a provincial association.
- [National Parental Engagement in Education Week](#)
- [Upcoming changes to professional services for special needs students](#)
- [Réflexion sur le financement et l'organisation des services aux élèves HDAA : vers un nouveau chantier](#) - Survey results, November 2020 (2nd version).¹⁸

¹⁸ [Réflexion sur le financement et l'organisation des services aux élèves HDAA : vers un nouveau chantier](#)

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in education, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

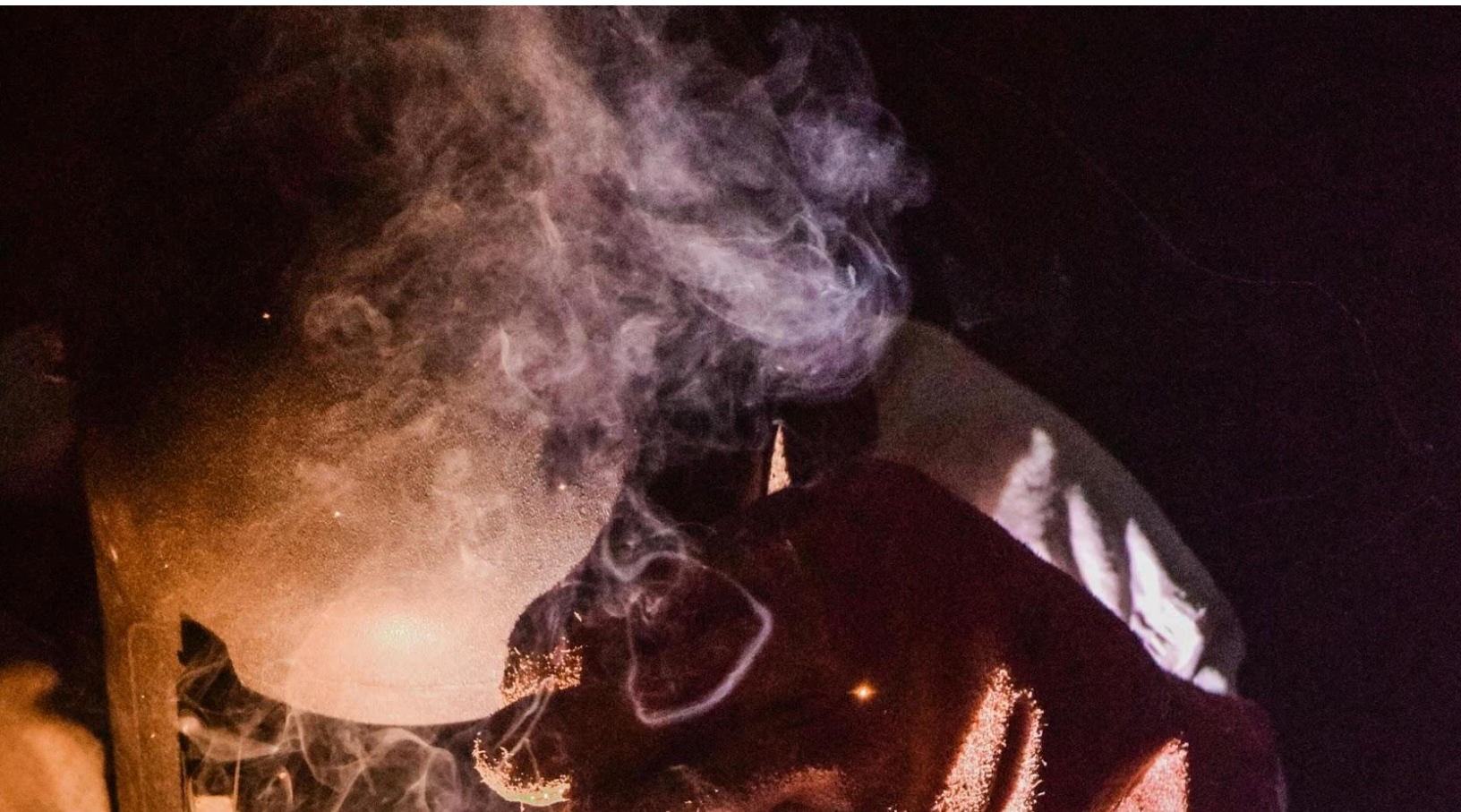
[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[20. Environmental health](#)

[22. Childcare centres](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Sergeline Isidore (MBDE), with feedback from Lucie Nault (ReQIS).



8. Employment

Becoming an accessible and inclusive employer

What is an accessible and inclusive employer?

An accessible and inclusive employer provides equitable opportunities for all staff, regardless of their abilities. This involves putting in place policies, practices and work environments that promote success, equal opportunity, respect, well-being and acceptance of every individual. By adopting a universal accessibility approach, the employer no longer simply adapts to a few individuals, but ensures that all team members can thrive in a barrier-free work environment.

Overview of the situation

Persons with disabilities remain under-represented in the workforce. They have a [lower employment rate](#) than that of the general population (51.1% versus 79.3%) and more often hold precarious jobs (temporary, on-call or part-time) at [twice the rate](#) of the general population. Although their professional constraints vary, they share common challenges, including job searching, professional integration and work relationships. To promote inclusion, it is imperative to challenge prejudices and adapt certain practices.

Barriers that employers can address:

- Lack of workplace accessibility
- Lack of accessible communication tools
- Lack of flexibility in work policies
- Limited access to reasonable accommodations
- Cognitive biases or restrictive beliefs throughout the employment cycle
- Discrimination (direct, indirect or systemic)

An accessible and inclusive workplace helps reduce or eliminate these barriers, contributing to an environment where everyone can develop freely.

Standards and obligations

There are frameworks to guide organizations in creating more inclusive practices. Some are mandatory, while others encourage organizations to go further.

Duty to accommodate

The duty to accommodate means that the employer must adapt working conditions to allow employees with disabilities or special needs to perform their duties. For more information, consult the following guides: [Developing a Workplace Accommodation Policy](#) and [Traitement d'une demande d'accommodement](#) [Handling an accommodation request].

Canadian Standard on employment (CAN-ASC-1.1 to be published in 2024)

This standard aims to create a work environment that is accessible, inclusive, barrier-free and discrimination-free for all workers, regardless of their abilities. Information on the [draft submitted for public review](#) is available on the Accessibility Standards Canada website. The [Ontario Employment Standards](#) also provide relevant information.

Canadian Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013 (C2022))

This standard provides measures, tools and resources to promote employee mental health and prevent psychological harm. It is available free of charge on the [CSA Group](#) website. See also the Mental Health Commission of Canada's [Implementation Guide](#) and the [free training](#) offered by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

Equal opportunity employment program (PAEE) in Québec and Workplace Equity Program in Canada

In Québec and Canada, many organizations are required to participate in an [equal access employment program](#) or [workplace equity program](#). In particular, these programs require organizations to set recruitment targets for certain groups, including persons with disabilities.

Good practices to improve the employment component of your action plan

Becoming an accessible and inclusive employer is not always easy. Here are some concrete steps to enhance your action plans. These suggestions are neither exhaustive nor applicable as is. As such, it's best to adapt them to the reality of your organization.

Accessibility benefits all staff, but it is crucial for certain profiles of persons with disabilities. Pay special attention to the pictograms to better understand their needs.



Establishing more inclusive governance

- Designating a team member responsible for accessibility and inclusion.
- Setting hiring targets for persons with disabilities and tracking outcomes, taking into account job types and levels. Under Québec's equal employment opportunity programs, the average target for persons with disabilities is: [10.5](#). Any organization can benefit from joining this type of program to assess its progress.
- Incorporating accessibility measures into Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and programs.
- Using tools to analyze employment inclusion skills, such as [INCLUVIS](#) in Québec, as well as the [Disability Equality Index](#) or the [NOD Employment Tracker](#) internationally. These tools allow you to assess your strengths,

compare yourself with other organizations and chart a roadmap for progress.

- Organizing regular conferences or exchanges on accessibility and inclusion to normalize the topic. Each year, Microsoft organizes the [Ability Hack](#), a hackathon that challenges staff to solve accessibility issues using technology.

Adopting more inclusive work policies

- Implementing occupational health and safety policies that address mental health and psychological safety. 🧠
- Introducing flexible work, telework or hybrid work policies.
- Adopting a fragrance-free workplace policy. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety proposes a [methodology and a policy template in this area](#). 🏰
- Developing a policy and processes for reasonable accommodation (or workplace adaptation) that follow each team member's career path throughout their employment. The federal government's [Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) is particularly inspiring.

Improving accessibility of workplaces and work tools

- Using WCAG-compliant technology platforms (at least Level AA) for website, intranet, video conferencing platforms, etc. 👁
- Optimizing office acoustics, especially in open spaces.
- Clarifying and summarizing organizational communications to improve understanding. 🧠
- Writing clear, concise and direct instructions. This video on [communications adaptation](#) in manufacturing is a good example. 🧠
- Assessing each employee's workstation ergonomics.

- Implementing a procurement policy for office equipment and training that incorporates accessibility criteria. The Office des personnes handicapées du Québec has [a guide](#) on this subject.
- Ensuring inclusive meetings by sending agendas and materials in advance, describing visuals and using clear language.

Improving staffing practices

- Offering varied and rewarding part-time jobs.
- Implementing a communication campaign encouraging persons with disabilities to apply for jobs at your organization.
 - For example, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has strengthened its employer brand to [attract applications from persons with disabilities](#) by promoting testimonials from staff with disabilities, an inclusive culture and information about the accommodation process.
- Establishing partnerships with specialized labour services in the region ([SSMO-PH](#)) for recruitment and job retention.
- Providing paid internship programs for persons with disabilities. Many organizations already have such programs in place to facilitate the transition between education and employment or retraining.
 - Hydro-Québec, for example, offers a [program for students](#), [CHU Sainte-Justine](#) offers a transition support program, Radio-Canada offers [junior positions](#) and the federal government is proposing a [two-year internship program](#) in the public service.
- Participating in job entry programs, where relevant to job vacancies. The program [Ready, Willing and Able](#) is a good example of this.
 - Posting more inclusive job postings by using clear language, respecting digital and graphic accessibility principles, clearly distinguishing requirements from assets and identifying a contact person. Refer to the guide [Pour le déploiement du recrutement inclusif](#) [Implementing an inclusive hiring process] or the fact sheet [L'affichage d'une offre d'emploi inclusive](#) [Posting an inclusive job

offer] from the Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées (ROSEPH).

- Providing a way for applicants to outline their accessibility needs in the application process.
- Preparing candidates for interviews by indicating the duration, names of committee members as well as the number and type of questions. Ideally, provide all or some of the questions 24 hours to 30 minutes in advance.

Promoting job retention and progression

- Implementing a peer-led mentoring program for staff with disabilities.
- Creating a working committee or resource group dedicated to staff with disabilities to identify barriers in employment and suggest solutions in collaboration with the responsible entities.
- Introducing an employee assistance program to provide confidential support for various personal issues. 🤖
- Providing ongoing training opportunities to foster the professional development of each staff member.

Available resources

Training

- [Being a Mindful Employee: An Orientation to Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#), Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.
- [Leading Inclusion](#), Hire for Talent.
- [Formation sur les personnes en situation de handicap au travail](#) [Training on persons with disabilities in the workplace], Conseil du patronat du Québec.
- [Various training courses on supervising workers with functional limitations](#) or modules such as [Mieux comprendre les travailleurs vivant avec limitations](#), [Better understanding workers with limitations] Conseil québécois des entreprises adaptés (CQEA).
- [Parcours 10/10. Formation et accompagnement. Inclusion et emploi](#), [Training and support – inclusion and employment] Cégep du Vieux Montréal and CRISPESH.
- [Mental Health First Aid](#), Mental Health Commission of Canada.
- [Assembling the Pieces Toolkit](#) for the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.
- [Webinars on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace](#), Comité consultatif Personnes handicapées (CCPH).

Grants

- [Québec government measures and programs](#): tax benefits, work integration contract (CIT) and other subsidies for employment and accommodation expenses.
- [Canadian government measures and programs](#): tax benefits, the Enabling Accessibility Fund and other wage subsidies.

Documents

- [Accessible workplaces](#) A toolkit based on the Employment Standard of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA).
- [Developing a Workplace Accommodation Policy](#), Canadian Human Rights Commission.
- [Measures related to the management role of a public organization](#), Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.
- [Employment of persons with disabilities resource portal](#), Comité consultatif Personnes handicapées (CCPH).
- [Recruter sans discriminer](#) [Hiring without discriminating]: a guide to interviewing persons with disabilities from the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse (CDPDJ).
- [Répondre à une divulgation de situation de handicap, de problème de santé mentale et/ou de maladie chronique](#) [Responding to Disclosures of Disability, Mental Health and/or Chronic Illness], McGill University and ROSEPH.
- [Traitement d'une demande d'accommodement](#): a virtual guide from the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse (CDPDJ).
- [Employer Toolkit](#): A practical resource from Hire for Talent covering the entire job cycle.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in employment, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[20. Environmental health](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Sandrina Adam (COSME), Julie Boisvert (CQEA), Pascale Chanoux (CCPH), Chloé Freslon (URelles), Evelyn McDuff and Christine Morin.



9. Built environment

Developing an accessible and inclusive built environment

What is an accessible and inclusive built environment?

An accessible and inclusive built environment is a place where everyone, regardless of their capacities, abilities or age, can participate in the activities offered and enjoy the experience equally and simultaneously with other users. It is a space where the barriers encountered by persons with disabilities are removed thanks to facilities that benefit all users. When it is no longer possible to meet all needs through the inclusiveness of the layout, additional adaptations are put in place.

As a result, environments are designed, constructed, renovated and maintained in such a way that:

- The site is organized to integrate the building harmoniously into its immediate environment (orientation, topography, location).
- The site allows for safe and easy movement of different modes of travel, connecting the various functions of the site to each other.
- The architectural concept promotes the legibility of spaces and simplifies paths using clear, legible and straightforward signage.
- All entrances to the building are accessible and on the same level with a visual link to the outside.
- Horizontal circulation provides access to all rooms and services on the same floor area.
- Vertical circulation allows access to all levels of the building and its outdoor spaces, with an elevator as a priority solution.
- The safety of everyone is ensured in the event of an emergency requiring rapid evacuation or shelter (alarms visible to all, accessible exits, refuge areas at each level served by an elevator).

- Universal washroom facilities are available on each floor and in each sanitary block of the building.
- Furniture and equipment, both inside and outside, are easy to use for everyone (quantity, layout and adapted features).
- Finishes and lighting contribute to a simple and enjoyable use of the building.

Overview of the situation

Truly high-performance accessible and inclusive buildings remain rare, and those that exist are mostly new builds. This is due to a variety of factors: most buildings were built in the 1970s, while the first accessibility requirements in construction regulations date from 1976. In addition, depending on their size and use, some new buildings are still exempt from any regulatory requirements regarding accessibility.

Québec's regulatory environment leads to disparities in accessibility requirements between newly built or renovated buildings, depending on their size and use. Large buildings are subject to uniform requirements across Québec, while smaller buildings fall under variable conditions defined by more than 1,000 municipalities. One [recent study](#) of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec reveals that 94% of Québec municipalities do not have minimum accessibility requirements for small buildings built on their territory. This study also demonstrated the inaccessibility of existing small buildings. In particular, the assessment of a representative sample goods and services buildings in three regions of Québec showed that none met the 57 minimum accessibility requirements currently imposed on larger buildings, thereby disproving the idea of market self-regulation.

Building new accessible and inclusive buildings is relatively simple and does not generate any additional costs, as the necessary knowledge, products and materials are widely available. However, not all property owners, contractors and development professionals are willing to exceed the minimum regulatory requirements for accessibility. Municipalities with a population of 15,000 or more tend to rank better in terms of accessibility of their buildings. This is probably due to their proximity to citizens and their obligation to produce an action plan for the integration of persons with disabilities. The federal government also stands out

favourably, particularly since the adoption of the *Accessible Canada Act*, while private sector and provincial government initiatives show varying degrees of adherence to the principles of accessibility and inclusiveness in the built environment.

Making existing buildings more accessible and inclusive is a daunting challenge, often requiring significant renovations or alterations. The need to upgrade certain building components frequently serves as a trigger to improve the accessibility of a site, thus enabling a gradual transformation of the existing real estate stock. The maintenance deficit in Québec's publicly owned real estate presents both an opportunity and a challenge, given the investments required.

It is important to note that executing an optimal development project involves making trade-offs between different objectives. The objective of universal accessibility may end up competing with heritage preservation and enhancement, ecological transition, resilience to climate change, active design and other concepts. If there is no one in the design teams advocating for functionality for all users, the initial goal of universal accessibility may be forgotten during the project.

Finally, planning, designing and carrying out the construction or renovation of a building is a complex process involving multiple steps and multiple stakeholders. This process often spans several years or more than a decade for large projects. Creating an accessible and inclusive building stock is therefore a long-term project, whereas users face daily challenges and hope for immediate improvements.

Standards and obligations

Construction falls under provincial jurisdiction, and authorities have a responsibility to adopt and enforce laws and regulations on construction. In establishing these regulations, the provinces rely (with the necessary amendments) on model codes developed by the National Research Council of Canada, which are regularly revised.

In Québec, the first accessibility requirements were introduced in 1976. Initially rather limited, these requirements applied only to new buildings. Over time, additional accessibility requirements have been added, with standards writing bodies acting in a reactive and prudent manner. These requirements, which are

not retroactive, vary depending on the year of construction or conversion of the buildings.

The requirements of the National Building Code of Canada are a minimum threshold for accessibility, but they do not cover all needs or types of disabilities. Thus, the Code's accessibility objective is to limit the probability that a person with a physical or sensory limitation will be unacceptably impeded from accessing or using the building or its facilities.¹⁹ However, there is a willingness to accelerate improvements in accessibility requirements, in particular due to more progressive provincial regulations (e.g., [British Columbia](#) and [Ontario](#)) and stricter federal legislation (e.g., the [Accessible Canada Act](#)).

It should be noted that Accessibility Standards Canada, an entity created by the adoption of the *Accessible Canada Act*, is currently developing [several standards](#) for the federal government and federally regulated entities. The ultimate goal is for these standards to be adopted by the provinces and apply to all Canadian buildings.

In Québec, construction requirements are enacted by regulation under the *Building Act*. Some buildings are exempt from the application of the [Québec Construction Code](#), and responsibility for their regulation is transferred to municipalities. These are mainly small buildings, such as residential buildings with a maximum of two storeys or with a maximum of eight dwellings, commercial establishments with a floor area of less than 300 m² or business establishments with a maximum of two storeys. Municipalities may adopt accessibility requirements for these buildings, as well as higher standards than those of the Construction Code for non-exempt buildings constructed or converted in their jurisdiction.

Also in Québec, the Construction Code includes a section on requirements when converting or changing the use of an existing building. Accessibility requirements are less stringent than those for a new build. In addition, since the Code doesn't apply to simple "cosmetic" renovations, some projects, despite receiving substantial investment, fail to deliver any improvements in accessibility.

Compliance with construction regulations therefore does not necessarily create accessible and inclusive built environments. Fortunately, there are several

¹⁹ [Policy Paper: Accessibility in Buildings](#), National Research Council of Canada

standards and best practices to allow owners and contractors to go further. However, these standards are voluntary. They include:

[CSA-B651-23](#) Accessible design for the built environment, Accessibility Standards Canada standards, and guides produced by municipalities including [Ville de Montréal's Accessibilité universelle des bâtiments municipaux montréalais](#) [Universal accessibility in Montréal's municipal buildings], Ville de Québec's [Guide pratique d'accessibilité universelle](#) [Practical guide to universal accessibility] and Ville de Gatineau's [universal accessibility tip sheets](#).

Good practices for improving the accessibility of the built environment

The following are good practices for improving the accessibility of the built environment in the action plan of municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants.

As a citizen:

- Informing the owner or occupant of a building of any difficulties encountered in its use. These barriers are often ignored by owners or occupants, who are then unable to remedy them when maintaining, renovating or converting the site.
- Participating in public consultation activities during the start-up and planning stages of construction, conversion or renovation projects for public buildings.
- Sitting on the Urban Planning Advisory Committee of their borough or municipality.
- Participating in public consultations with Accessibility Standards Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), the Régie du bâtiment du Québec and the municipality regarding the development of accessibility standards and regulations.

As a designer:

- Take training in designing accessible and inclusive built environments.

- Encouraging clients to exceed minimum regulatory requirements.
- Promoting compromises that strike the right balance between project objectives by identifying the specific imperatives of each discipline.

As an owner or developer (private or public):

- Adopting minimum accessibility requirements (by using an existing standard such as CSA-B651-23 or by developing their own design and construction standards).
- Requiring designers and builders to meet these standards in architectural competitions, calls for tenders and contracts.
- Organizing walkabouts with groups of people living with various functional limitations to better understand barriers in an existing building.
- Consulting with users with disabilities to understand difficulties encountered before and after the construction, renovation or conversion of a site.
- Ensuring the objective of universal accessibility is achieved throughout the design and construction process.
- Developing an emergency response plan and maintenance/snow removal plan that takes into account universal accessibility.
- Disseminating information about the accessibility of a site.

As a municipality:

- Acting as a role model for accessibility and inclusion for municipal buildings. Taking advantage of every opportunity (maintenance, renovation, conversion or new construction) to improve the performance of municipal real estate.
- Lobbying public bodies and organizations to ensure that projects carried out in its territory meet the highest accessibility and inclusion criteria.
- Adopting regulatory accessibility requirements for small buildings built on its territory.

- Adopting regulatory accessibility requirements other than those of the Québec Construction Code for applicable buildings.
- Adopting regulatory accessibility requirements for renovations.
- Providing financial incentives to improve accessibility of existing buildings.
- Making municipal funding allocations subject to universal accessibility conditions.
- Highlighting outstanding examples of accessibility projects in its territory.

As a provincial government:

- Acting as a role model for accessibility and inclusion in government buildings. Taking advantage of every opportunity (maintenance, renovation, conversion or new construction) to improve the performance of the real estate under the responsibility of the provincial government (government services, justice, education, health, culture, low-rent housing, etc.).
- Making small buildings subject to the requirements of the Québec Construction Code.
- Establishing accessibility requirements during renovations, not just during conversions or changes in use.
- Requiring accessibility in buildings built before 1976.
- Providing financial incentives to improve accessibility of existing buildings.
- Making provincial funding allocations subject to universal accessibility conditions.

At the federal level:

- Acting as a role model for accessibility and inclusion in government buildings. Taking advantage of every opportunity (maintenance, renovation, conversion or new construction) to improve the performance of real estate under the responsibility of the federal government.

- Lobbying Accessibility Standards Canada, the National Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) to accelerate improvements to the regulatory and normative framework for accessibility and inclusion.
- Providing financial incentives to improve accessibility of existing buildings.
- Making funding allocations subject to universal accessibility conditions.

Available resources

Training

- [Conception sans obstacle, vos projets sont-ils vraiment conformes?](#) [Barrier-free design, are your projects truly compliant?], Ordre des architectes du Québec.
- [Aménagements piétonniers, parcs, places publiques, sécurisation aux abords des chantiers, urbanisme, design universel](#) [Pedestrian, park, and public space development, safety around construction sites, urban planning, universal design], Société Logique.
- [Training | Idéaux](#).

Subsidies

- **Federal**
 - [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#): financial assistance for large and small development projects, Government of Canada.
- **Provincial**
 - [Petits établissements accessibles](#) [Small accessible establishments program]: financial assistance to owners and tenants of commercial, business or community buildings that are not subject to a legal obligation in terms of accessibility so they can perform the work to comply with the Construction Code's accessibility requirements, Société d'habitation du Québec.

- [Programme d'accessibilité des établissements touristiques](#) [Tourism establishment accessibility program]: financial assistance for improving accessibility of tourist establishments, Ministère du Tourisme.
- **Municipal**
 - **Montréal**
 - [Subsidy for universal access to businesses](#): financial assistance for making existing small businesses in Montréal accessible.
 - **Ville de Québec**
 - [Programme Petits établissements accessibles](#) [Small accessible establishments program]: program to improve accessibility in small establishments for persons with disabilities or with reduced mobility.
 - **Victoriaville**
 - [Victoriaville ville inclusive](#) [Inclusive city]: financial assistance program for residential, commercial and service building accessibility in Victoriaville.
 - **Trois-Rivières**
 - [Accessibilité universelle aux établissements commerciaux et de services](#) [Universal accessibility in commercial and service establishments]: a program promoting barrier-free and safe infrastructure in all at commercial establishments in certain areas.

Check the types of universal accessibility subsidies available in your municipality.

Documents

- [*Politique nationale de l'architecture et de l'aménagement du territoire*](#) [National architecture and land use planning policy], Government of Québec.
- [*Aide-mémoire sur la qualité architecturale*](#) [Architectural quality reference guide], Government of Québec.
- [*CSA-B651-23 standard*](#), Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- [*Accessibility Standards Canada*](#).
- [*Accessibilité universelle des bâtiments municipaux montréalais*](#), Ville de Montréal.
- [*Guide pratique d'accessibilité universelle*](#), Ville de Québec.
- [*Fiches conseils Accessibilité universelle*](#), Ville de Gatineau.
- [*Illustrated technical data sheets*](#), Kérout.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure accessibility of the built environment, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[2. Art and culture](#)

[6. Post-secondary education](#)

[7. Elementary and secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[13. Housing](#)

[14. Recreation, sports and tourism](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[17. Parks and green spaces](#)

[18. Civic engagement](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

[27. Air and train travel](#)

[29. Urban planning](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Société Logique, with feedback from Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm), and DéPhy Montréal.

10. Event planning

Organizing an inclusive event

What is an inclusive event?

An inclusive event is a gathering or other event organized in such a way that it is accessible and open to all, regardless of age, gender, background, physical abilities, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic. An inclusive event ensures the same or equivalent participation for all those attending, taking into account the environment and physical access to the venue, staff attitude, communication and services offered.

During an event, it is essential to set up spaces to ensure everyone can move around freely and safely, including those with mobility devices such as wheelchairs. Logistically, this also includes the provision of adapted services for participants with special sensory needs. It is therefore important to offer a variety of food options and solutions to cover all requirements for the event and ensure good conditions for everyone.

What are the benefits for an organizer of making their event accessible and inclusive?

- Reach as many people as possible
- Increase the number of participants
- Be a forward-thinking and caring organization
- Develop new partnerships
- Build loyalty among participants
- Gain a competitive edge over other similar events that are not accessible to everyone
- Create a sense of community

Overview of the situation

In Québec, 33% of the population report having a functional limitation. However, 100% of people will experience this at some point in time. Inclusion, diversity and social equality are therefore becoming fundamental for the evolution of society. Québec has seen recent progress in meeting this commitment through numerous initiatives and events aimed at promoting inclusion, diversity and social equality.

For example, the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN) organizes several gatherings, including the National Disability Summit, to discuss the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Other conferences are also organized to address these issues. On the occasion of Peace Day, the Institut national pour l'équité, l'égalité et l'inclusion des personnes en situation de handicap (INEEI-PSH) hosted a workshop-conference entitled "[*Égalité et handicap – Parcours atypiques*](#)," giving participants an opportunity to share their experiences and discuss inclusion. Last May, a conference entitled "[*Musée et Accessibilité au Québec – Vers un avenir inclusif*](#)," organized by Inclusive Society, was also held to discuss the future of accessibility in museums.

Other initiatives, such as [*Inclusiv Day*](#) or the creation of festivals such as the [*Festival Générations*](#), the [*Festival de Jazz de Montréal*](#), the [*Francofolies*](#) and Trois-Rivières' [*FESTIVOIX*](#) are also part of this commitment. These events include concrete measures promoting inclusion and accessibility: free entry for companions, spaces adapted to wheelchairs and other specific needs, adapted free shuttles allowing access to sites, reserved parking, and washrooms accessible to persons with disabilities.

These initiatives celebrate and integrate diverse communities, particularly persons with disabilities, while raising public awareness of the importance of inclusion and social equality. They demonstrate a clear desire to strengthen this movement and reduce disparities in Québec.

Standards and obligations

Currently, there are no strict standards or requirements on the accessibility of events. However, several organizations have developed guides to help event managers incorporate accessibility measures. Some existing accessibility standards include:

At the federal level:

- [**Accessible Canada Act \(2019\)**](#)

This law aims to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040. Its objective is to identify, remove and prevent barriers in areas of federal jurisdiction, particularly in the fields of the built environment, communication and transportation.

- **National Standard of Canada:** [**Accessible Design for the Built Environment \(CSA/ASC B651:23, 2023\)**](#)

This standard is intended to make buildings and other facilities accessible to persons with a range of physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. For events, sections 5 (Interior circulation), 6 (Interior facilities), 8 (Exterior circulation, spaces, and amenities) and 9 (Vehicular access) are particularly relevant.

- [**Canadian Outdoor Spaces Standard \(CAN/ASC-2.1, to be published in 2025\)**](#)

This standard, currently under review, includes requirements for accessibility to outdoor spaces, including site layout, furniture, outdoor surfaces, orientation, and equipment needed to host inclusive outdoor events.

At the provincial level:

- [**Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms \(C-12\)**](#)

The Charter recognizes that all individuals are equal in worth and dignity, and have the right to exercise their rights and freedoms, regardless of their personal characteristics: age, social condition, political convictions, marital status, disability, language, religion, sex, etc. The right to equality protects all individuals from discrimination and discriminatory harassment.

- [**Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration \(E-20.1\)**](#)

This act protects the rights of persons with disabilities and aims to promote their integration into society. Government departments and agencies as well as private organizations apply this legislation to encourage the implementation of measures to support persons with disabilities, their

families and their living environments, as well as the development and organization of resources and services available to them.

- **Québec Construction Code:** [Guide sur l'accessibilité des bâtiments \(2022\)](#)

This guide brings together design standards for accessibility and explains the reasons behind certain requirements. Sections on barrier-free paths, entrances and parking lots are particularly relevant for park and green space development. Since July 2023, this guide is mandatory for any new construction or renovation in Québec.

Good practices

When organizing an inclusive event, several elements need to be taken into account, from physical access to communication. The following is a non-exhaustive list of good practices that could be implemented:

Built environment

- Using large parking lots located near the entrances of the event venues and providing an accessible drop-off zone.
- Ensuring that outside paths leading to the entrance are easily and fully accessible.
- Providing areas adapted to different needs to promote independent participation (seating, open spaces, etc.).
- Providing universally accessible washroom areas.
- Choosing a location that offers physical accessibility to all services (entrance, washrooms, ticketing, catering, etc.).
- Choosing a location close to public transit with accessible parking nearby.
- Developing the space to meet the diverse needs of users (wheelchairs, strollers, etc.).
- If the event is outside, providing rest areas in the shade.

- Providing a space for service dogs to hydrate, rest and recharge.

Communication and signage

- Using multiple channels to disseminate event information (social media, email, website, posters, newspapers, radio ads, etc.).
- Using large, legible fonts with good contrast between text and background.
- Installing signs that are visible and at a height accessible to everyone.
- Using clear signage and pictograms on site to indicate washrooms, exits and emergency exits.
- Providing sign language interpretation services, hearing loops and subtitles for musical performances.
- Organizing translation services in other languages, depending on the audience.

Technology

- Ensuring that the event website is accessible, up-to-date and contains reliable information.
- Providing information in text and audio format to cater to different preferences and needs.
- Promoting the event on various platforms to foster inclusion.
- Highlighting (as soon as the event is promoted) the accessible services offered so participants know what to expect.
- Having a mobile payment service to facilitate on-site transactions.

Attitude and policies

- Educating and training staff so they are ready to welcome and help anyone requiring assistance.
- Identifying environmental factors that enhance or limit participants' accessibility and quality of experience.
- Developing an inclusive safety plan, taking into account the specific needs of persons with disabilities for evacuations or emergencies.
- Including criteria for universal accessibility in calls for tenders.

Services

- Providing a diverse food offering that meets the needs of different diets.

Available resources

Training

- [*Conception d'événements inclusifs - Vers une participation accrue*](#) [Designing inclusive events to attract participants], Idéaux.
- [Accessible & Inclusive Event Planning for Knowledge Mobilization](#), Research Impact Canada
- [Accessibilité universelle des événements](#) [Universal accessibility of events], AlterGo.
- [Organisation d'événements accessibles](#), [Organizing accessible events] Ville de Gaspé, 2023.

Subsidies

- **Federal**
 - [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#): financial assistance for large and small development projects, Government of Canada.
- **Provincial**
 - [Funding for festivals and tourism events](#): financial assistance for the organization of festivals and tourism events, Government of Québec.
 - [Aide financière : Appel de projets Culture et Inclusion](#) [Financial assistance: culture and inclusion call for proposals]: support for projects that use culture to intervene on social issues, Government of Québec.
- **Municipal**
 - [Financial support for inclusive recreation](#): financial assistance allocated to cover expenses related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in recreation activities offered to the general population,

with a view to diversifying and strengthening the offer of inclusive activities in the area, Ville de Québec.

Documents

- [Inclusive event planning](#), Government of Canada.
- [Guide Accessibilité universelle des événements](#) [Universal accessibility of events], AlterGo.
- [EDI Event Guide](#), Telfer
- [Organiser un événement inclusif et accessible: le guide complet](#) (The complete guide to organizing an accessible event), WEEZEVENT.
- [Fiche pour un événement inclusif](#) (Inclusive event fact sheet), Réseau des universités du Québec.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion at events, also consult the following fact sheets:

[2. Art and culture](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[14. Recreation, sports and tourism](#)

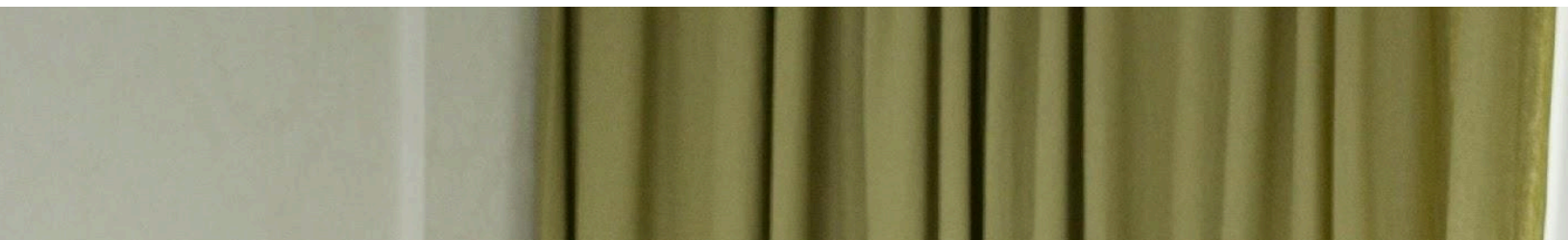
[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[17. Parks and green spaces](#)

[18. Civic engagement](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm).



11. Lodging

Public, private and community continuum

Accommodation for persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities generally prefer to stay at home with appropriate services rather than living in an institutional setting. However, some people require accommodation adapted to their specific needs. It is therefore essential to focus on providing a range of alternative living environments rather than relying on private accommodation. This will avoid the commodification of health.

Currently, many persons with disabilities are being lodged due to a lack of adequate alternative resources, such as social housing or home care services.

There is evidence of operators exploiting this clientele by prioritizing their profits at the expense of the quality of services. In addition, the quality of services varies considerably between the different operators and the types of accommodation (community shelters, intermediate or family-type resources (RI-RTF), long-term care centres (CHSLD) and seniors' homes). There are also several accommodation options offered by charities such as Maisons Martin-Matte and the Fondation Louis et Véro.

The limited income of persons with disabilities, combined with limited access to home support, sometimes leads to their institutionalization, and in some cases to the use of medical assistance in dying, which is increasingly accessible.

Table 1: Monthly incomes of single persons with disabilities receiving social assistance, by province (2022 figures).

	Monthly income from social assistance (2022) ²	Monthly income from social assistance (2022) ² + \$200 per month	% of \$1601.51 per month = OAS + GIS January 2022	% of Canada's 2022 Official Poverty Line ³	% of 2022 Extreme Poverty Line ⁴
New Brunswick	\$907.00	\$1,107.00	69%	54%	73%
Nova Scotia	\$1,057.25	\$1,257.25	79%	58%	77%
Manitoba	\$1,177.08	\$1,377.08	86%	65%	87%
Ontario	\$1,322.58	\$1,522.58	95%	66%	88%
Québec	\$1,362.92	\$1,562.92	98%	81%	109%
Saskatchewan	\$1,419.92	\$1,619.92	101%	75%	100%
British Columbia	\$1,504.50	\$1,704.50	106%	73%	98%
Prince Edward Island	\$1,559.58	\$1,759.58	110%	83%	110%
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$1,700.00	\$1,900.00	119%	90%	119%
Alberta (AISH ¹)	\$1,776.58	\$1,976.58	123%	85%	113%

¹ AISH: Alberta's Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

² https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2022.pdf

³ Canada's Official Poverty Line = Market Basket Measure (MBM)

⁴ Extreme poverty line = 75% of the Market Basket Measure (MBM) = Cost of obtaining a basket of essential goods and services to meet basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other necessities)

Persons with disabilities want to live in the community and participate actively in society. While fact sheet 13, Housing (Residential Adaptation Assistance Program (RAAP)) deals with the non-institutional environment, it is relevant to mention the existence of numerous options aimed at providing better housing to persons with disabilities: [Residential Adaptation Assistance Program, Shelter](#)

[Allowance Program](#), [Low-Rental Housing Program](#), [AccèsLogis Program](#)²⁰ and [Québec Rent Supplement Program](#).

[The home care and support services \(SAD\) model in Québec needs to be reviewed](#). That is the opinion of Health and Welfare Commissioner Joanne Castonguay, who finds the situation “worrying”. During a press conference in January 2024, she said that the home care and support system can no longer adequately meet the current needs of the population and that it seems poorly equipped to deal with future demands. Better access to SAD is needed to help persons with disabilities remain at home.

Overview of the situation

As of March 31, 2021, 36,350 people in Québec were living in long-term care centres (CHSLDs), 18,742 adults in intermediate resources (RIs) and 7,816 adults in family-type resources (RTFs). Ninety-one percent of people living in long-term care centres were aged 65 and over, with an average length of stay of about two years. As for adults in RIs or RTFs, 41% were users of intellectual disability, physical disability or autism spectrum disorder programs, 39% were users of the support program for the autonomy of seniors, and 20% were users of the mental health program.

Residential services aim to provide a supportive living environment for people with autism spectrum disorders and disabilities, taking into account the nature and complexity of their needs, abilities, disabilities and life plans. These settings include but are not limited to RIs and RTFs, supervised apartments, social housing with services, long-term care centres and alternative homes.

According to section 108 of Québec’s *Act respecting health services and social services*, many public institutions prefer to purchase accommodation spaces from private resources rather than create public RIs or CHSLDs. However, these resources have gaps in the quality of services and in the level of resources

²⁰ **The program has three components:**

Component 1: Permanent dwellings for low- and moderate-income households (families, people living alone, independent seniors, independent disabled people).

Component 2: Permanent dwellings with services (e.g., meals, home support services, housekeeping) for seniors with slightly diminishing independence.

Component 3: Temporary, transitional or permanent dwellings with services for people with special housing needs.

available because they are not subject to accreditation, certification or MSSS inspections in the RI-RTFs.

Barriers to accommodation for persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities face many barriers regarding accommodation, including:

- Limited income
- Limited availability of accessible housing
- High cost of adapted housing
- Lack of access to the Home Support Program
- Lack of desire for institutional accommodation (CHSLD and RI-RTF)
- Disparities in institutional and non-institutional accommodation between CISSS-CIUSSS, territories and regions
- Wage inequalities for health care professionals between public, private and community institutions
- High staff turnover across the housing continuum
- [Differences in staff training between the various types of accommodation](#)
- Variability in service quality between types of accommodation
- Waiting lists, indicating rationing in access to services
- [The housing crisis and its impact on persons with disabilities](#)

Renoviction still present in Québec

We remain deeply concerned about the rise in fraudulent tactics used by some landlords to force vulnerable tenants out of their homes in very short timeframes.

Dwelling repossession, evictions for major renovations (known as “renovictions”) or alterations, and excessive rent increases have become common practices for many landlords. Persons with disabilities are often forced to take legal action to get

their landlords to remove everyday barriers and make their living environment safer. Common demands include the installation of ramps, accessible parking spaces, automatic doors, improved lighting, wider entrances, and handrails. These examples illustrate some of the reasons why persons with functional limitations have taken their cases to human rights tribunals.

In fact, many of the tenants who win their case before the Tribunal administratif du logement (TAL) end up leaving their apartment, fed up with the harassment and reprisals from landlords. It is important to note that housing discrimination is illegal in Québec. A landlord cannot refuse to sign a lease with a tenant because of their personal characteristics such as skin colour, religion, age or type of disability.

In this difficult context, it is essential to remember that the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms still applies to housing.

Technological innovation as a solution

To help persons with disabilities in their housing search, the Comité d'action des personnes vivant des situations de handicap (CAPVISH) has developed a web application specializing in adapted housing—the [AppLOAD](#). This app is the first of its kind in the greater Québec City area.

Launched by CAPVISH, the app allows users to search for a dwelling based on several specific criteria: location of the neighbourhood, size of the dwelling, number of rooms, type of rental, or the accessibility services available. The app is designed to be user-friendly for persons with disabilities.

Standards and obligations

It is essential to understand the *Mécanisme régional d'accès à l'hébergement* and grasp its complexity.

In addition to public, private and community accommodation resources in the area of health and social services, [the Ordre des architectes du Québec](#) advocates for improved housing accessibility for persons with disabilities. For persons with reduced mobility, the path to finding accommodation suited to their needs resembles an obstacle course.

The Régie du bâtiment du Québec (RBQ) therefore adopted [new regulations to align construction of accessible housing](#). These regulations will enable Québec to catch up or surpass provinces that already require 5 to 15% of multi-unit dwellings to be accessible or adaptable. However, the City of Vancouver goes even further, imposing 100% adaptable housing.

Good practices

Good practices are simple, but applying them consistently across Québec remains an ongoing commitment on the part of public health and social services institutions:

- Assisting the person so they can find suitable housing with the necessary services according to their changing condition and needs (by planning the anticipated evolution of these needs).
- Respecting the choices of individuals based on their life history.
- Ensuring consistency in the quality of accommodation and equality in the services offered to people with similar needs, regardless of the models proposed or available (Maison des aînés, CHSLD, RI-RTF, RPA, community residential resources, etc.).
- Implementing scent-free policies in accommodation settings to take into account the needs of people affected by multiple chemical sensitivities.

Particularities according to disability type

Welcoming more than 300,000 visitors with disabilities, the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games highlighted the best in hospitality, ensuring optimal conditions for persons with disabilities.

[Le guide pratique de l'hébergement handi-accueillant](#), a guide to making accommodation accessible for the event provides recommendations tailored to the following disabilities or categories:

- Hearing disability
- Visual impairment

- Intellectual disability
- Families
- Seniors
- Wheelchair users

What may seem appropriate for a large temporary event may also be relevant in the medium to long term.

Available resources

- See the *Mécanisme régional d'accès à l'hébergement* to understand its complexity.
- *Pour le mieux-être des personnes hébergées - [Plan d'action pour l'hébergement de longue durée 2021-2026](#)*, [Action plan for ensuring the well-being of persons in long-term accommodation] Government of Québec
- Accommodation in a public facility (definition, costs and eligibility), RAMQ.
- [Accommodation via an intermediate resource](#) (definition, costs and eligibility), RAMQ.
- [L'inaccessibilité du soutien à domicile](#), Le Devoir.
- [Un projet-pilote pour sortir les adultes handicapés des CHSLD](#), Radio-Canada Info.
- [De la rénoviction pour évincer des personnes handicapées](#), Le Soleil.
- [Recherche de logement adapté: innovation à Québec pour les personnes handicapées](#), Journal de Québec.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in housing (public, private and community continuum), also consult the following fact sheets:

[9. Built environment](#)

[13. Housing](#)

[19. Income](#)

[20. Environmental health](#)

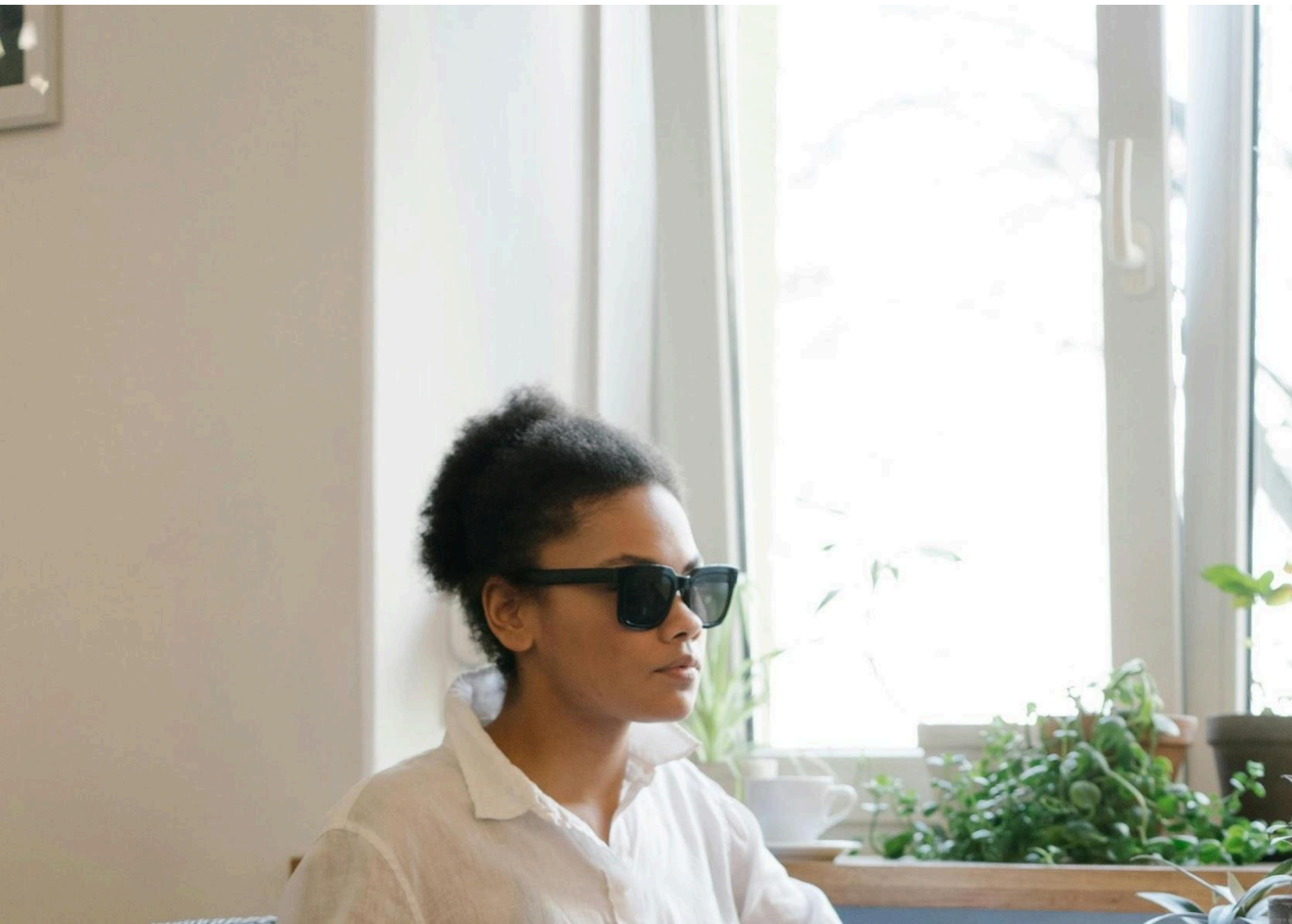
[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

[29. Urban planning](#)

Fact sheet prepared by André Prévost, in collaboration with Mathieu Noël (COPHAN).



12. Immigration

Ensuring equitable inclusion for immigrants with disabilities

Overview of the situation

Immigrants with disabilities face unique challenges, dealing with dual discrimination due to their migration status and disability. They often face barriers in accessing adequate housing, health services, employment opportunities and accessible infrastructure. Biases, language and cultural barriers, as well as a lack of awareness exacerbate their difficulties. An inclusive approach is needed to address their specific needs and foster their integration.

Some specific barriers and how to address them:

- **Limited access to health services:** Health services are often ill-suited to the needs of persons with disabilities, and even more so for immigrants. Training medical staff to be more inclusive and providing language interpretation services is crucial.
- **Inaccessible and expensive housing:** Adapted housing is often rare and expensive. Increasing the availability of social and accessible housing and providing specific support tools and services for immigrants with disabilities is essential.
- **Recognition of qualifications:** Immigrants with disabilities may have qualifications and skills that their host country does not recognize. Qualification recognition programs and additional training are needed to facilitate their professional integration.
- **Discrimination and prejudice:** Immigrants with disabilities often experience multiple discrimination. Awareness campaigns and training on diversity and inclusion can help reduce bias and promote a more welcoming environment.
- **Accessibility of transportation:** Paratransit services can be inadequate or poorly planned. Improving public transit accessibility and providing more efficient paratransit options should be priorities.

Standards and obligations

There are frameworks to guide organizations in creating more inclusive practices. Some are mandatory, while others encourage organizations to go further.

- **Duty to accommodate:** Employers and service providers must adjust their practices to meet the needs of immigrants with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations.
- **Accessibility standards:** Québec employers, schools and public institutions are required to respect human rights laws that guarantee accessibility and prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Immigrants with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations to fully participate in professional and social life.
- ***Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights:*** This Québec law aims to promote the integration and autonomy of persons with disabilities by imposing accessibility standards on public and private institutions.

Good practices

- **Partnering with specialized organizations:** Working with organizations supporting immigrants and persons with disabilities to deliver integrated and adapted services.
- **Offering mentoring programs:** Establishing mentorship programs to help immigrants with disabilities navigate health, housing and employment systems.
- **Improving the accessibility of information:** Providing information in multiple languages and accessible formats (Braille, audio, etc.) to ensure that all immigrants with disabilities can access the necessary resources.
- **Raising awareness and training staff:** Training public and private services staff in welcoming and supporting immigrants with disabilities.

- **Simplifying administrative procedures:** Facilitating access to public, social and health services for immigrants with disabilities by simplifying procedures and providing personalized support.
- **Inclusive occupational integration programs:** Putting in place employment support programs that address immigration-related barriers (recognition of foreign qualifications) and disability-related needs.
- **Accommodations in schools:** Providing specific support in educational institutions for immigrant students with disabilities, including pedagogical support, adaptive technologies and teacher training on inclusion.
- **Collaborating with ethnocultural communities:** Working with ethnocultural community groups to raise awareness and support for families accompanying persons with disabilities, thereby facilitating access to necessary resources and supports.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Organizing campaigns to raise public awareness on the rights of immigrants with disabilities and to combat prejudice and discrimination.
- **Strengthening inclusion policies:** Advocating for more inclusive public policies, particularly in public and private sector recruitment to promote the employment of immigrants with disabilities.

The inclusion of immigrants with disabilities is based on concrete measures and an inclusive approach at several levels: awareness-raising, accessibility of services, professional integration and public infrastructure development. By adopting these good practices, Québec can contribute to a fairer society where all citizens can participate fully, regardless of their origin or situation.

Available resources

- **Subsidies and support programs:** Using available subsidies to improve accessibility and provide financial support to immigrants with disabilities.
- **Documentation and practical guides:** Disseminating practical guides and resources to promote the inclusion of immigrants with disabilities.

Creating an accessible and inclusive environment for immigrants with disabilities is an ongoing process that requires coordinated effort and adaptability. By implementing inclusive practices and raising community awareness, we are helping to build a more equitable and welcoming society for all. And in doing so, every individual can flourish, regardless of their abilities and migratory status.

References

Official documents and government reports

- Legislative and regulatory framework for immigration in Canada, Government of Canada.
 - This document explains Canadian immigration laws and regulations, including medical eligibility criteria that affect immigrants with disabilities.
- *Plan d'action à l'égard des personnes handicapées*, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).
 - This action plan presents the specific measures put in place to improve accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Québec.
- *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*.
 - This Québec law governs the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities and may be relevant to immigrants.

Organization reports and studies on the inclusion of immigrants with disabilities

- Barriers to the inclusion of immigrants with disabilities, Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR).
 - This report examines the specific challenges faced by immigrants with disabilities in Canada, including access to health and social services.

- *Pour une pleine participation des personnes immigrantes en situation de handicap* [Fostering the inclusion of immigrants with disabilities], Institute for Socio-economic Research and Information (IRIS).
 - This paper analyzes public policies in Québec and proposes recommendations to improve the inclusion of immigrants with disabilities.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure the inclusion of immigrants with disabilities, see also the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[6. Post-secondary education](#)

[7. Elementary and secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

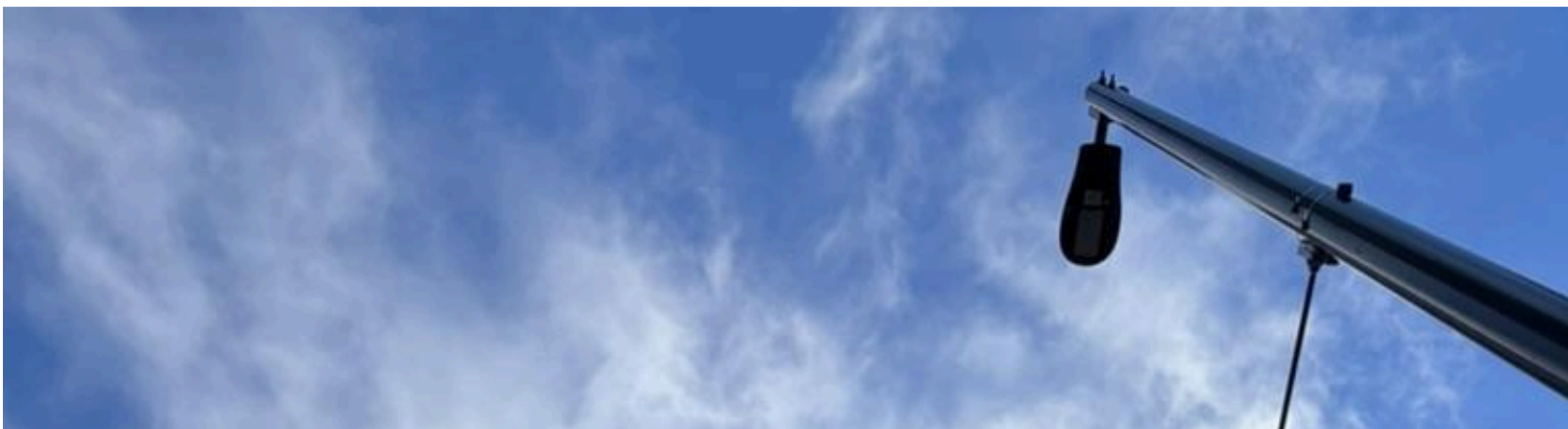
[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Alexandra Bustillo, psychosocial worker (AMEIPH).



13. Housing

Providing accessible and inclusive housing

What is an accessible and inclusive dwelling?

A dwelling is a stable place of residence that can take several forms: single-family home, plex, multi-family building, condominium, apartment, bedroom, student residence, seniors' residence, etc.

An accessible and inclusive dwelling is a space designed for anyone, regardless of their abilities, capacities or age, in which they can live, carry out their daily activities and assume their family and parental responsibilities. This type of housing eliminates barriers for persons with disabilities through accommodations that also benefit all other residents. When inclusive accommodations reach their limits, home care services, assistive devices and adaptations are provided to meet specific needs.

In addition to the general characteristics of an accessible and inclusive built environment, accessible and inclusive housing must be designed, built, renovated and maintained to ensure that:

- **Passageways inside the building** allow access to all common services and to each unit. In plex and multi-family buildings without an elevator, only ground floor units are accessible.
- **Passageways in each housing unit** give access to all rooms and functions. Two-storey dwellings should be avoided. Otherwise, a bedroom and full bathroom must be provided on the ground floor.
- **Washrooms** are big enough to move around in and are equipped for all users.
- **The rooms** are large enough to move around in once furnished.
- **The kitchen** offers circulation areas and equipment that can be used by everyone.
- **All controls and equipment** (height and opening of windows, temperature control, etc.) are accessible and can be used by everyone.

- **Future adaptations to the specific needs** of a person with disabilities can be carried out easily, with minimal work.

Overview of the situation

In Québec, there is a shortage of accessible and inclusive housing, while the demand for this type of housing is high. This puts a lot of pressure on home adaptation programs, which are often seen as the only way to make the necessary adjustments. The work can be years in the waiting, forcing many people to live in environments that do not meet their needs. Unlike other citizens, persons with disabilities often cannot freely choose their housing, move to another neighbourhood closer to work, or adapt to a change in the composition of their household.

By definition, accessible and inclusive housing can be occupied by everyone. However, due to its scarcity, this type of housing is often reserved for persons with disabilities, which can lead to a risk of ghettoization.

Making the majority of dwellings accessible and inclusive is essential to providing persons with disabilities with meaningful housing choices so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of such housing. Although Québec has made headway with the regulatory changes adopted in 2018, the resulting benefits for those affected have yet to be seen.

Finally, Québec is facing an unprecedented housing availability and affordability crisis. Measures to resolve this crisis must include universal accessibility to ensure that no one is neglected. Framing these efforts through a national policy on housing (which has been under development for more than a decade) and a government action plan on housing (announced several times as imminent in recent years) is also necessary to provide a structured solution.

Current accessible and inclusive housing supply

Québec does not have an exhaustive inventory of accessible housing, specifying the quantity, location or type. The diverse terminology (visitable, adapted, accessible, adaptable), varied characteristics, and multiple owners makes it difficult to count them. In addition, there is no specific marketing system to facilitate the search for accessible housing for persons with disabilities, nor to allow landlords to find tenants or buyers for these dwellings.

As with the built environment in general, the majority of homes in Québec date back several decades. In Montréal, for example, [71% of dwellings were built before 1980](#), with configurations often not suitable for universal accessibility (exterior stairs, spiral staircases, raised ground floor, etc.). Major renovation or home adaptation work is needed to make them accessible, with such work carried out only on a voluntary basis.

Since 1976, new residential buildings of three storeys or more, comprising at least eight units, must meet certain accessibility requirements in their common areas. Forty years later, in 2018, the first regulatory accessibility requirements for the interior of housing units were introduced. These requirements were based on studies showing that the [additional costs for minimally accessible or adaptable design](#) (accessible and inclusive) were minimal. After a period of adaptation for designers and developers, construction of the first non-voluntary accessible units began in 2020. That year, construction began on [38,000 multiple family units](#) (apartments), accounting for less than 1% of Québec's residential housing stock. While these units are a breakthrough, they are often minimally accessible, small and more expensive than existing units, thus limiting their affordability for many persons with disabilities.

By 2022, Québec had close to [136,000 social housing units](#). According to the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, only [1% of these units](#) were reserved for persons with disabilities. Under the AccèsLogis program (36,200 units built), the Société d'habitation du Québec had set high accessibility requirements: 10% of dwellings had to be adaptable in small residential buildings, and 100% (i.e., 30% in Montréal) in larger buildings. However, little data is available on the units actually completed and [the majority of adaptable housing](#) delivered under the program in Montréal were intended for seniors. The [Québec Affordable Housing Program](#), which replaced AccèsLogis, now requires that 10% of units be adaptable regardless of the size of the building—which is a setback.

In Montréal, of the 20,810 low-rent housing units managed by the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal, only [631 are adapted](#) (3%), of which 104 (0.5%) are for families. Wait times for low-rent housing are increasing across Québec, with families requiring adaptable or accessible housing particularly affected. In 2021, the [average wait in Montréal](#) was [5.7 years](#).

Accessible and inclusive housing demand

There have been no specific analyses on the demand for accessible and inclusive housing. However, in 2017, in Québec, 1,053,350 people reported having a significant and persistent disability affecting their daily activities, representing [16.1% of the population](#). Of this group, more than 260,000 used special accommodations in their homes, and 15% (39,000 people) lived in poorly adapted housing. In addition, [70,000 people](#) did not have specific accommodations, despite requiring them, bringing the number of people in need of accessible and inclusive housing in the short term to almost 110,000.

This demand is heightened by an aging population. The prevalence of functional limitations increases drastically with age, with a [disability rate](#) of 57.2% among Quebecers aged 65 and over, and 84% among those aged 85 and over. With 25% of the Québec population aged 65 and over by 2031, and 25% of the population aged 85 and over by 2061, future demand for accessible and inclusive housing is expected to grow exponentially. Many seniors already want this type of housing so they can remain independent for as long as possible. Family and friends of seniors and people with disabilities are also looking for accessible and inclusive housing due to an increased sensitivity to accessibility issues as well as the visitability, practicality and functionality of such housing.

Persons with disabilities do not always live alone. In 2017, for example, [21% lived in a household with at least one child under the age of 18](#). In the absence of suitable housing for large households, their only option is often a bigger home unsuitable for functional limitations, which creates dependency and vulnerability. As a result, there is a demand for accessible and inclusive housing of different sizes to accommodate different life choices.

[Persons with disabilities are also more often renters](#) compared to those without disabilities. Almost half of those with mobility difficulties are renters, with the majority living below the low-income cut-off. However, only [one in seven persons with disabilities](#) lives in subsidized housing. This situation is becoming critical in times of housing shortages, with discrimination by some landlords, refusal to carry out adaptation work, and rising rents.

Lastly, [9.4% of persons with disabilities](#) live in housing in need of major repairs, compared with 6.7% of people without disabilities.

Home adaptation

When a person's needs change, when they can't find a suitable home or when an accessible and inclusive home requires modifications, there is often only one solution—home adaptation. This sometimes leads to major renovation work. However, not everyone has the will or the means to embark on such a project, especially since living in unsuitable housing is already an everyday challenge.

A few home adaptation assistance programs exist, each aimed at specific clients with its own rules and criteria. Some are simpler and/or more generous than others, which creates inequalities between applicants in terms of waiting times, assistance and financial support. This includes programs for victims of workplace or road accidents, for veterans, or for people living in an Indigenous community.

The majority of persons with disabilities who do not meet the criteria of these specific programs must turn to the Société d'habitation du Québec's Residential Adaptation Assistance Program (or its municipal equivalent for the Ville de Montréal) to get help with the work needed to meet their basic needs. In 2022, this program only achieved [1,101 home adaptations](#). Since its inception in 1990, the program has never been able to meet demand, experiencing prolonged wait times, high abandonment rates, partially met needs, and a clientele mainly made up of owner-occupiers, whereas persons with disabilities are primarily renters.

Low-rent housing units are not eligible for the Residential Adaptation Assistance Program. The necessary adaptations to these units must be financed from the building maintenance and repair budgets at a time when there is a chronic maintenance deficit in Québec's low-rent housing stock.

Other considerations

Other factors influence the ability of a person with disabilities to leave home and interact with the community. They include:

- The cost of their housing based on their financial capacities.
- The availability, variety and accessibility of shops and services close to their residence.
- The availability and accessibility of means of transport: public transit, paratransit, pedestrian amenities, parking, etc.
- Sufficient home support services.

In addition, some people living independently require supervision or assistance in carrying out everyday activities. This support can take many forms, ranging from home support services to pooling hours of service for a continuous presence (24/7), or even parent-initiated projects for persons with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorders. In all cases, flexibility and collaboration with the health and social services network are essential to avoid institutionalization.

Standards and obligations

In Québec, building requirements come under the responsibility of the Régie du bâtiment du Québec for large buildings (more than three storeys or more than eight units), and under municipal jurisdiction for small buildings (three storeys or fewer and eight units or fewer).

Since 1976, the common areas of large residential buildings must meet accessibility standards, while the first requirements for home interiors did not appear until 2018. For buildings of four storeys or fewer, the current regulations do not include any requirement for an elevator, reducing the number of accessible units, even with the new requirements in effect. Housing units located in seniors' residences are not subject to these standards.

[Some municipalities in Québec](#) have adopted more stringent accessibility requirements than specified in the Québec Construction Code for new buildings in their territory. In Laval, in addition to making the main entrance accessible, 50% of other entrances must also be accessible, and 10% of units in buildings with 13 or more units must be adaptable. The city of Drummondville requires widened doors, and Victoriaville requires corridors and widened doors in all types of housing, including single-family homes.

In addition to the standards for large buildings, the Construction Code contains directives for small buildings. For example, if the height difference between the entrance to the apartment building and the ground floor is 600 mm or more, accessibility is not required, resulting in buildings with semi-basement dwellings or interior staircases in the entrance hall, making subsequent adaptations very difficult. Municipalities may also require increased universal accessibility in certain areas or for certain projects through their planning by-laws. Public consultations allow citizens to influence these by-laws to give greater consideration to universal accessibility.

In addition to by-laws, there are standards and voluntary programs encouraging homeowners and contractors to improve housing accessibility.

The [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation](#) (CMHC) has supported accessible housing for many years, promoting the development and renovation of social and community housing, as well as contributing to research and knowledge sharing related to housing. It also offers numerous information documents on housing accessibility.

The [Société d'habitation du Québec](#) (SHQ) manages many housing improvement programs. In addition to home adaptation, it establishes rules and budgets for the deployment and maintenance of low-rent housing stock, the management of AccèsLogis units and affordable housing ([Québec Affordable Housing Program](#)), and provides financial support to certain households to pay their rent. Although many SHQ programs include accessibility components, it is neither systematic nor cross-cutting. In February 2023, the government announced it was ending the AccèsLogis program without proposing a replacement to ensure housing accessibility.

The Canadian Standards Association developed the [B652 standard](#) on accessible housing, which provides dimensions and solutions to facilitate housing accessibility, but its application remains optional.

Good practices

As a citizen:

- Learning about accessible and inclusive housing.
- Contacting your municipal, provincial and federal elected officials to express your support for accessible and inclusive housing initiatives.
- Sharing your concerns on social media.
- Participating in municipal public consultations on housing projects to advocate universal accessibility for all units planned.

As a municipality:

- Adopting more ambitious building by-laws for universal accessibility in housing, particularly for buildings with three or fewer floors and eight or fewer units.
- Prohibiting the construction of semi-basement dwellings.
- Establishing an accessibility committee including persons with disabilities or their representatives to review all new residential projects to ensure universal accessibility is integrated.
- Implementing measures to convert existing residential buildings into universally accessible housing.
- Integrating universal accessibility into special urban planning programs (PPUs) and planning and architectural integration programs (PIIAs).
- Using universal accessibility as a criterion in permit applications for specific building construction, alteration or occupancy projects (PPCMEs).
- Making universal accessibility a condition for obtaining subsidies in municipal programs that support the creation or renovation of housing.

At the provincial level:

- Following Ontario's lead by adopting a universal accessibility act with robust housing provisions.
- Adopting a national policy on housing (which has been under discussion for more than a decade) and a government action plan on housing (often announced as imminent).
- Strengthening the requirements of the Québec Construction Code to meet the current and future needs of the population, including:
 - Making requirements for adaptable housing units mandatory.
 - Regulating the accessibility of units in seniors' residences, which are currently exempt.
 - Removing the exception that almost systematically exempts small buildings from accessibility requirements in Part 9 of the Québec Construction Code. Imposing accessibility for buildings of three storeys or fewer and eight units or fewer, which is currently under municipal jurisdiction.

- Requiring accessibility in buildings and units during major renovations.
- Creating a centralized inventory of accessible, adaptable or adapted housing available in Québec.
- Integrating universally accessible housing into a government action plan on housing and the *Politique nationale de l'architecture et de l'aménagement du territoire* [National policy on architecture and land use planning].
- Strengthening accessible and adaptable social and community housing programs and ensuring their sustainability.
- Increasing budgets, streamlining processes and expanding capacity to process home adaptation applications.
- Making universal accessibility a requirement for provincial initiatives and programs that support housing construction or renovation projects.
- Providing municipalities and RCMs with the necessary tools to integrate universal accessibility into their planning by-laws and their accessibility action plans.
- Ensuring a continuum between housing and accommodation, enabling a smooth transition that respects the life choices of persons with disabilities.

At the federal level:

- Incorporating requirements for universally accessible housing into the National Building Code (NBC), drawing, in particular, on the practices of the [CSA B652 standard](#) on accessible housing.
- Making universal accessibility mandatory in federal programs and initiatives that support housing construction or renovation projects.

Available resources

Subsidies

- [Residential Adaptation Assistance Program](#), Société d'habitation du Québec.
- [Montréal Home Adaptation Program](#), Ville de Montréal.

- [*Adaptation de domicile*](#) [Home adaptation], Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité au travail.
- [Home adaptation](#), Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec.
- [Québec Affordable Housing Program](#), Société d'habitation du Québec.

Documents

- [Experience 303](#) : a reference site for information on construction and renovation as well as a window on the concept of universal design that places the individual at the very heart of the space, Société Logique.
- [C'est aussi ça le logement universellement accessible](#): promotion and mobilization campaign for accessible and inclusive housing, Société Logique, Ex aequo and many other partners.
- [Guide des bonnes pratiques pour le développement d'un projet d'habitation sociale et communautaire universellement accessible](#) [Guide to best practices for developing a universally accessible social and community housing project], Ex aequo.
- [Accessibilité à l'intérieur des logements d'habitation](#) [Accessibility inside housing units], Régie du bâtiment du Québec.
- [Reference documents on accessible housing](#), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- [Accessible Housing Network](#): A collaboration of over 70 Canadian organizations advocating for accessible and inclusive housing.
- [Guidelines on accessible and inclusive housing for people with cognitive disabilities](#), Centre for Excellence in Universal Design

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure accessibility and inclusion of housing, also consult the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[11. Lodging](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[19. Income](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

[29. Urban planning](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Société Logique.



14. Recreation, sports and tourism

Improving accessibility in the recreation, sport and tourism sectors in Québec and Canada

It is essential that all people, especially those with disabilities, can fully enjoy recreational, sporting and tourist activities in order to foster a truly inclusive society.

Overview of the situation

Importance of accessibility in recreation, sports, and tourism

Accessibility is essential for everyone to enjoy the benefits of recreation and tourism, whether in terms of physical, mental or social well-being. It also gives a boost to the local economy by reaching more people who may want to participate in activities in these sectors.

The numbers regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities in recreation, sport and tourism in Québec and Canada are encouraging, but there is still more work to be done. Here are some key statistics and facts:

In Canada:

- In 2017, 22% of Canadians aged 15 and over reported having at least one form of disability, totalling about 6.2 million people.
- 3.8% of Canadians have a mobility disability.
- Canada's Accessibility Action Plan (2022) aims to improve access to public places, including sports and tourism facilities, with clear targets to be achieved by 2040.

In Québec:

- In Québec, approximately 16% of the population (1.2 million people) live with a disability.

- According to a 2019 study, 42% of persons with disabilities in Québec reported difficulties accessing tourism or sports facilities.
- Approximately 53% of Québec municipalities offer accessible recreational infrastructure, such as adapted swimming pools or accessible hiking trails.

Initiatives and progress

The Government of Québec has established programs such as the *Programme d'aide financière aux infrastructures récréatives et sportives* (PAFIRS) [Recreational and sports infrastructure financial assistance program], which funds the deployment of accessible infrastructure.

Organizations such as Kéroul, a key player in tourism accessibility in Québec, collaborate with governments and businesses to improve access to tourist sites. To date, Kéroul has helped make more than 400 tourist establishments accessible.

These figures show significant awareness and progress, but challenges remain to make Québec and Canada fully accessible to persons with disabilities in the sport and tourism sectors.

Canadian legal framework and standards

Accessible environments for all citizens and visitors in Canada must be created in accordance with national and international accessibility policies.

- **Compliance with national and provincial standards:** Strict adherence to the standards established by the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) as well as provincial standards such as the AODA.
- **In-depth education and awareness:** Offering advanced training programs for all professionals in the sector.
- **Accessibility innovation:** Encouraging the adoption of new technologies and designs to improve the user experience.

The following two documents are key in this regard, and should be consulted and complied with:

- *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*: Ensures equal rights and opportunities for all Canadians.
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*: Sets accessibility standards for organizations in Ontario.

Good practices

1. Comprehensive accessibility assessments

- **Conducting audits**: Conducting comprehensive facility and service audits at least annually, involving accessibility experts and users with disabilities.
- **Detailed checklists**: Using checklists based on AODA standards, including criteria such as door width, washroom accessibility, ramps, elevators, as well as digital accessibility of websites and applications.
- **Transparent reporting**: Publishing audit results and action plans to address identified weaknesses.

2. Advanced assistive technology

- **Guidance applications**: Developing and implementing mobile applications using augmented reality technologies or GPS systems to help visitors navigate facilities.
- **Adaptive interfaces**: Installing interactive information kiosks with adaptive interfaces including high contrast options, screen readers and voice commands.
- **Technology partnerships**: Collaborating with technology companies to test and implement new assistive solutions.

3. Interactive training for staff

- **Continuing education programs:** Ongoing training sessions for staff, including online modules and practical in-person workshops.
- **Practical simulations:** Implementing simulations and role plays to help staff understand the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and respond appropriately.
- **Accessibility certification:** Encouraging staff to obtain recognized accessibility certifications and value these qualifications within the organization.

4. Community outreach programs

- **Awareness days:** Organizing accessibility awareness days for the public to learn more about the importance of inclusion, with interactive activities and assistive technology demonstrations.
- **Educational partnerships:** Working with schools and universities to incorporate accessibility modules into their educational programs.
- **Media campaigns:** Launching media campaigns to promote accessibility initiatives and share stories from people benefiting from these initiatives.

5. Accessibility improvement grants

- **Clear information:** Providing accessible information on available grants for projects to improve accessibility.
- **Information workshops:** Organizing workshops to help businesses and organizations apply for these grants and use the funds effectively.
- **Follow-up and support:** Providing ongoing follow-up and support for funded projects to ensure that funds are used optimally and that improvements bring tangible benefits.

6. Outreach strategies for accessible tourist attractions and recreation

- **Inclusive marketing campaigns**

- **Inclusive multimedia content:** Creating videos, photos and testimonials of persons with disabilities enjoying the facilities and sharing this content across various platforms.
- **Targeted promotion:** Using social media and traditional media to reach a broad audience.
- **Strategic partnerships:** Collaborating with marketing agencies specializing in inclusion to develop effective campaigns.
- **Collaborations with influencers with disabilities**
 - **Influencer selection:** Identifying and collaborating with influencers with disabilities who can promote accessible tourist sites with genuine authenticity.
 - **Creating authentic content:** Encouraging these influencers to share their personal experiences and provide feedback on the facilities.
 - **Amplifying reach:** Using influencers' social networks to reach a broader and more diverse audience.
- **Educational school programs**
 - **Inclusive school excursions:** Organizing outings to show students the accessible features at tourist attractions, coupled with educational workshops on the importance of accessibility.
 - **Education modules:** Developing education modules on accessibility to be integrated into school curriculums.
 - **Educational partnerships:** Working with schools to incorporate these programs into their curriculums.
- **Special accessibility days**
 - **Adapted events:** Organizing days with specific accommodations for persons with disabilities, including discounted rates and special offers.

- **Specialized guided tours:** Offering guided tours with sign language interpreters and trained guides to meet the specific needs of visitors with disabilities.
- **Interactive workshops:** Organizing interactive workshops to educate the general public about accessibility.
- **Partnerships with advocacy organizations**
 - **Creating accessible guides:** Working with disability advocacy organizations to create accessible travel guides and brochures.
 - **Wide distribution:** Distributing these guides in tourist information centres, hotels and online.
 - **Continuous feedback:** Establishing continuous feedback mechanisms to improve the guides and services offered.

Resources

1. [Parks Canada](#)

Parks Canada has implemented accessibility strategies at its national sites. For example, the Parc national des Îles-de-Boucherville in Québec has developed accessible hiking trails and adapted facilities, such as ramps, accessible washrooms and information panels in Braille. Parks Canada has also introduced technological tools such as mobile applications to guide visually impaired visitors.

2. [Paralympic Games in Canada](#)

Canada hosted a variety of Paralympic events, putting in place accessible sports infrastructure. The 2010 Paralympic Games in Vancouver is a great example, with sports facilities designed to be fully accessible, including adapted transportation systems for athletes and spectators. The event also included educational programs to raise awareness of the importance of inclusion in sport.

3. [Ripley's Aquarium in Toronto](#)

The Ripley's Aquarium in Toronto is an example of a tourist site that has fully integrated accessibility. It has accessible ramps and elevators, special seating for wheelchair visitors, and silent visiting sessions for people with autism or sensory disabilities. The aquarium also offers audio descriptions for exhibitions and Braille brochures.

4. [Royal Ontario Museum \(ROM\)](#)

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto has taken significant steps to make its exhibits accessible to everyone. This includes guided sign language tours, touch cards for visually impaired visitors, and educational programs specifically designed for persons with disabilities. The museum regularly collaborates with advocacy organizations to continuously improve its services.

5. [Stanley Park in Vancouver](#)

Stanley Park is another example of an accessibility initiative. The park has accessible trails, adapted beaches with special ramps and beach chairs, as well as inclusion programs for outdoor activities. Digital maps and

guides detail the accessible sections of the park, helping visitors plan their visit.

Promoting accessibility in recreation, sport and tourism is essential to building an inclusive Canada. This requires ongoing collaboration between governments, private companies and communities to ensure that recreation and tourism are not only accessible but also welcoming to all. This helps strengthen our national identity as a country that values every citizen.

References

Here are some reference documents and sources for you to explore the topic of accessibility in recreation, sport and tourism for persons with disabilities in Québec and Canada:

1. [Government of Canada](#): 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)
2. Kéroul - Tourism accessibility in Québec.
3. Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur du Québec:
Programme d'aide financière aux infrastructures récréatives et sportives (PAFIRS)
4. Observatoire québécois du loisir: Recreational infrastructure accessibility in Québec.
5. Loisir et Sport Montérégie: Study on the accessibility of sports facilities.
6. UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) - Manual on Accessible Tourism for All.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in employment, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

9. Built environment

16. Emergency measures and public safety

20. Environmental health

25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit



15. Rare diseases

Improving the situation for patients and their families

Québec faces a number of issues regarding rare diseases, but initiatives are underway to address them. About 7,000 rare diseases affect a small portion of the population, often making it difficult to diagnose and get access to complex treatments. Here are some key points:

- Québec has implemented measures to improve access to care for people with rare diseases, but gaps remain, including early diagnosis and follow-up.
- Specialized reference centres have been set up to better manage these diseases, but their availability varies by region.
- Government and various organizations support research on rare diseases, while also raising awareness among the public and health professionals.
- Resources and support are available to families, but there is an increased need for psychological and social services.
- The creation of databases on rare diseases provides a better understanding of their prevalence and helps inform public policy.

Continued efforts are needed to improve the situation for patients and their families.

Overview of the situation

The portrait of rare diseases in Québec is characterized by several key elements:

Incidence and prevalence:

About 1 in 20 people are affected by a rare disease, which represents about 400,000 people in Québec. Although most rare diseases are individual, their diversity means that thousands of new cases can emerge each year. Prevalence varies by disease, with some more frequent in certain populations.

Characteristics:

Rare diseases include genetic, metabolic, neurological and immune-related disorders, among many others. About 80% of rare diseases have a genetic origin. These diseases can affect all age groups, although they are often diagnosed during childhood.

Epidemiological challenges:

Many cases remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, making it difficult to accurately estimate incidence and prevalence. Data may be incomplete due to lack of awareness and expertise in detecting these diseases.

Resources and studies:

Studies are underway to better understand the epidemiology of rare diseases in Québec, with research initiatives aimed at establishing registries and databases to collect more comprehensive information. The epidemiology of rare diseases in Québec is marked by challenges related to diagnosis and data collection. Ongoing efforts are needed to better understand the incidence and prevalence of rare diseases to improve patient care and support.

Standards and obligations

In Québec, standards and obligations for rare diseases are governed by several laws and policies. Key aspects include:

Laws and regulations:

- ***Act respecting health services and social services***: This law guarantees citizens' right to appropriate health care, including for persons with rare diseases.
- ***Privacy Act***: This legislation governs the management of health data, including that of patients with rare diseases.

Public health programs:

- Neonatal screening programs identify certain rare diseases at birth, thus facilitating early diagnosis and rapid management.

- Specialized centres have been set up for the diagnosis and treatment of rare diseases, offering adapted and coordinated care.

Access to treatments:

- Québec has policies to promote access to treatment for rare diseases, including financial assistance programs for expensive drugs.
- New therapies for rare diseases are evaluated for efficacy and safety prior to reimbursement.

Family support:

- Government and community agencies provide support to affected families, including psychosocial services and information on available resources.

Research and innovation:

- Funding is allocated for rare disease research and collaborations are encouraged between health institutions and universities.

The regulatory framework for rare diseases in Québec aims to ensure equitable access to care and treatment, while supporting research and protecting patient rights. Ongoing efforts are needed to bolster these initiatives and improve the quality of life of those affected.

Good practices

There are a number of good practices internationally that focus on innovative strategies and approaches to manage rare diseases. Notable practices include:

Specialized reference centres:

- **Creating centres of excellence:** These centres bring together experts and resources to deliver multidisciplinary care adapted to patients with rare diseases.
- **Neonatal screening programs:** Many countries implement screening programs to identify rare diseases from birth, thus facilitating early interventions.

Access to treatments:

- **Orphan drug policies:** Regulations have been adopted to encourage the development and access to medicines for rare diseases, often accompanied by financial incentives for pharmaceutical companies.

Database and registries:

- **Data collection:** The creation of databases and registries provides a better understanding of the epidemiology of rare diseases, facilitating the research and development of treatments.

Psychosocial support:

- **Family support programs:** Psychological and social support services help families cope with the challenges of managing rare diseases.

Awareness and training:

- **Training for health care professionals:** Educating doctors and health professionals about rare diseases is crucial to improving diagnosis and care.

Collaborative research:

- **International partnerships:** Collaboration between research institutions, universities and businesses fosters innovation and knowledge sharing.

Inclusive policies:

- **Inclusion of patients in decisions:** Involving patients and their families in the development of health policies to ensure their needs are taken into account.

International leaders:

- **European Union:** Creation of European Reference Networks for rare diseases.
- **USA:** The Rare Disease Day program and initiatives such as the FDA's Orphan Drug Designation facilitate access to treatment.

Best practices for rare disease management are based on an integrated approach that combines care, research, awareness and collaboration. These strategies contribute to improving patients' quality of life and driving meaningful advances in the field.

Available resources

References to relevant literature and resources on rare diseases and related interventions and actions include:

Works:

- **Rare Diseases: A Global Perspective**, Paolo P. F. F. A. De Marco et al.
This book covers global challenges related to rare diseases, exploring health policy and intervention strategies.
- **The Rare Disease Patient Journey**, Rachael M. Franks et al.
This book studies the journey of patients with rare diseases, focusing on best care practices.
- **Handbook of Rare Diseases**, Michael R. Kelly et al.
A comprehensive resource that details various rare diseases, treatments and associated clinical approaches.
- **Rare Disorders and Orphan Drugs: A Global Perspective**, C. K. Chawla et al.
This book discusses orphan drugs, health policies and ethical issues related to rare diseases.

Digital resources:

- **Orphanet**: an information portal on rare diseases and orphan drugs, providing data on research and available resources.
- **European Organization for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS)**: an organization representing rare disease patients in Europe, providing resources, studies and reports.
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH) - Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center (GARD)**: a resource dedicated to information on rare

diseases and genetic conditions, providing data on treatments and research.

Scientific articles:

- **Current and Emerging Therapies for Rare Diseases**, Journal of Rare Diseases
This article reviews current and emerging therapies for rare diseases, with a focus on innovations in the field.
- **Patient Advocacy and Rare Diseases**, Health Policy
A study that explores the role of patient advocacy groups in raising awareness of rare diseases and improving care for those affected.

These resources provide essential information on rare diseases, their treatments and best practices for intervention. They are particularly useful for health professionals, researchers, and families affected by these conditions.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in education, also consult the following fact sheets:

[20. Environmental health](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)



intelligence.

16. Emergency measures and public safety

Planning for accessible and inclusive emergency measures

What are accessible and inclusive emergency measures?

Emergency measures cover all the resources deployed during an incident or disaster to ensure personal safety as far as possible, save lives and help people. Planning for accessible and inclusive emergency response takes into account the diversity of abilities and needs of the entire population. The aim is to put in place means and actions that will meet the needs of as many people as possible, while providing for specific adaptations for particular needs.

Emergency measures are planned and organized so that:

- When an emergency occurs, information and communications on what to do are easily accessible and understood by everyone.
 - This includes people of all abilities, skills and ages. The aim is to quickly warn everyone concerned so that they can act immediately.
- The amenities and equipment to be used during an emergency maximize the autonomy of individuals and are as accessible and inclusive as possible.
 - This is intended to reduce the number of people requiring direct assistance, allowing emergency services to focus on those with specific needs and disaster management. Having similar actions and pathways for everyone also makes evacuation and action more intuitive.
- Adapted amenities and equipment are available in sufficient quantities and placed in strategic locations.
 - These amenities must allow people to report their presence and remain safe until emergency services arrive. This includes the ability to rescue people who cannot use inclusive amenities or equipment, wherever they are in the affected area.
- Support and monitoring for people affected is accessible and inclusive.

- This includes providing adapted vehicles and locations to relocate affected persons, providing home assistance in temporary accommodation, providing guide or service dogs and transporting mobility aids for emergency evacuees.
- Rescue teams are trained in the diversity of those affected.
 - This includes knowledge of each person's specific abilities and proficiency in the appropriate actions to be taken, as well as the use of adapted facilities and equipment.

Overview of the situation

There is a wide variety of emergency response plans, including:

- building fire safety plans
- disaster plans (major power outages, drinking water outages, flooding, etc.) developed by municipalities
- public transit system service interruption or disaster plans
- provincial and federal government plans for major events

Shared responsibilities

Building fire and safety responsibilities are shared between several stakeholders.

- At the time of the construction, renovation or conversion of a site, the architect and owner are required to design and provide the necessary facilities and equipment to ensure everyone's safety and enable evacuation in the event of an emergency. These measures must comply with the construction regulations in force. It is important to remember that these regulations represent the minimum required and do not necessarily cover all needs.
- During the everyday use of the building, the owner and manager have the following roles:
 - establish an evacuation plan and procedure

- maintain facilities and equipment in good working order
- organize regular evacuation drills to ensure occupants know what to do in the event of an emergency
- Within its territory, the municipality is responsible for prevention, which includes raising awareness of and reducing fire risks and managing the fire department.
 - This department is responsible for risk assessment, implementing prevention actions and conducting emergency operations. In several municipalities, firefighters also act as first responders during a medical emergency. In certain areas, they are volunteers.
- For smaller municipalities, which do not have the capacity to assume these responsibilities alone, the RCMs take charge of:
 - developing a fire safety cover plan
 - coordinating interventions and resources for municipalities in their territories
- The Ministère de la Sécurité publique's role is to:
 - set out the broad guidelines for prevention, workforce training and response and emergency preparedness
 - coordinate the actions of the various government departments and agencies
 - approve the fire safety cover plans developed by the RCMs

Proactivity and gaps

Some stakeholders are adopting a proactive approach to accessibility and inclusiveness. They work with those directly involved to design adapted measures and actions.

Others, on the other hand, take a more reactive approach, adjusting their plans only after finding gaps. This approach can create risks and lead to dissatisfaction among those involved.

Finally, some stakeholders fall somewhere between these two extremes: they partially plan means and actions to make their plans more accessible, but without considering all the necessary activities, such as the evacuation or temporary relocation of a person with specific abilities or needs.

Consistency is key

To guarantee the safety of everyone in a building, it is necessary to ensure consistency between:

- existing facilities and equipment
- the information provided to occupants
- fire department response procedures

Unfortunately, there has been little change in building regulations regarding fire safety for persons with disabilities. Not to mention that the accommodations required often do not meet their needs.

For example:

- Visual fire alarms and street-level exits are not required by regulation, which limits the ability of deaf or hearing-impaired people to be alerted to the hazard as well as the ability of persons with motor impairments to evacuate the building independently.
- Building layouts do not always correspond to firefighters' practices, for example, access to a balcony is one of four approaches designed to ensure safety on floor areas served by elevators in residential buildings. However, firefighters are reticent about such an approach due to the high risk of being trapped on a balcony during a fire on the lower floors.
- Emergency response time is also a key factor. In urban areas, it can be a few minutes. While in areas with volunteer firefighters, this can take over half an hour.

To better adapt facilities and equipment to local intervention practices, the municipality's fire department should be consulted during the construction, renovation or conversion of a building.

Freedom of choice

For a person with moderate or significant motor impairment, living on or visiting a floor served by an elevator means that they will not be able to evacuate independently in the event of an accident, as elevators and lifting platforms are not to be used. This creates a dependency on others for rescue. Once fully informed of the risks, each person should be able to choose whether to live in or visit this location.

However, this freedom of choice may be questioned if the fire department believes that it cannot intervene adequately and in a timely manner that ensures the safety of all occupants.

Issues may include:

- Too many non-autonomous people to evacuate
- Lack of adapted facilities or equipment
- Longer response time of volunteer firefighters

In such cases, corrective measures may be required from the owner, which may end up leading to a change in the use of the building, particularly for multi-unit residences. Some landlords faced with significant and costly work or legal obligations to their tenants may try to avoid these situations by adopting discriminatory practices, such as evicting tenants or refusing to rent to persons with disabilities.

Standards and obligations

In Québec, the [Fire Safety Act](#) establishes the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, training of firefighters, and investigative mechanisms. Responsibility for fire safety is entrusted to the Ministère de la Sécurité publique, which publishes the [Orientations du ministre de la Sécurité publique en matière de sécurité incendie](#) [Minister of Public Security's guidelines on fire safety].

The regulatory requirements for buildings are specified in the [Québec Construction Code \(Chapter I – Building\)](#). This code defines in particular:

- Exit requirements
- Protection and detection systems (e.g., visual fire alarms in each unit, as well as in buildings used primarily by persons with hearing disabilities)
- Measures guaranteeing safety on floor areas served by an obstacle-free path (sprinklers, compartmentalization of areas, lift for fire department use or access to the balcony for residential buildings).

As with the built environment, municipalities are responsible for adopting regulatory requirements for small buildings. Unlike most building standards, fire safety standards can be retroactive, even for an existing building that is not undergoing a renovation or conversion. For example, this includes upgrading fire alarm panels or mandatory sprinkler installation in seniors' residences.

The regulatory requirements related to building use, which directly concern owners, are set out in the [Safety Code \(Chapter VIII, Building\)](#).

In addition to the general standards applicable to all buildings, specific obligations apply to certain types of premises. For example, the [Guide sur la sécurité incendie des résidences accueillant des personnes présentant des limitations à l'évacuation](#) [Fire safety guide for residences accommodating persons with evacuation limitations] provides safety guidelines in specific contexts.

Heavy transport facilities (commuter trains, subways, trams, etc.) or those under federal jurisdiction, such as rail and airport infrastructure, are subject to additional regulations or normative frameworks. The [Canadian Transportation Agency](#) governs many of these regulations.

Good practices to strengthen emergency measures

For citizens:

- Making their specific needs known and learning about the fire safety plan in force from their owner, employer, school, and the cultural and leisure venues frequented.
- Getting informed and consulting with the municipality and public transit providers to ensure that emergency plans take into account the needs of all individuals.
- Working with the fire department to coordinate the installation of fire safety facilities and equipment in the structure to be built, converted or renovated.
- Incorporating measures, including street-level exits, sufficient lighting and continuous handrails on stairs, uniform evacuation routes for all occupants, visual fire alarms visible on all floor areas and at least two safety solutions for areas served by an elevator (e.g., sprinklers and a spacious refuge area with an integrated communication system).

For owners and developers (private or public):

- Ensuring that all information relating to emergency situations is accessible to all, with a clear and simple presentation, large print and alternative formats (visual, audio, sign language, etc.).
- Developing a fire safety plan in collaboration with the parties involved and the fire department to ensure the safety of all occupants.
- Training workers in the diversity of people's needs, actions adapted to each person's abilities and skills, and in the use of accessible facilities and equipment.

For municipalities:

- Training fire department personnel in the diversity of individual abilities, appropriate actions according to each person's abilities, and in the use of adapted facilities.
- Providing resources to help designers and owners identify best practices, equipment and strategies to ensure people's safety in an emergency.
- Acting in an exemplary manner by adopting accessible and inclusive emergency measures in municipal buildings.

For regional county municipalities (RCMs):

- Integrating accessibility and inclusiveness into the fire risk coverage plan to effectively coordinate the interventions and resources of the various municipalities.

For the provincial government:

- Setting an example by applying accessible and inclusive emergency measures in government buildings.
- Including accessibility and inclusiveness in the general prevention guidelines and in the approval requirements for risk coverage plans submitted to the Ministère de la Sécurité publique.

Available resources

Documents

- [CSA-B651-23: Accessible Design for the Built Environment](#).
- [Accessibility Standards Canada](#).
- [Accessibilité universelle des bâtiments municipaux montréalais](#) [Universal accessibility in Montréal's municipal buildings], Ville de Montréal.
- [Guide pratique d'accessibilité universelle](#), Ville de Québec.
- [Guide sur la sécurité incendie des résidences accueillant des personnes présentant des limitations à l'évacuation](#), Ministère de la Sécurité publique.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusive emergency measures and public safety, also consult the following sheets:

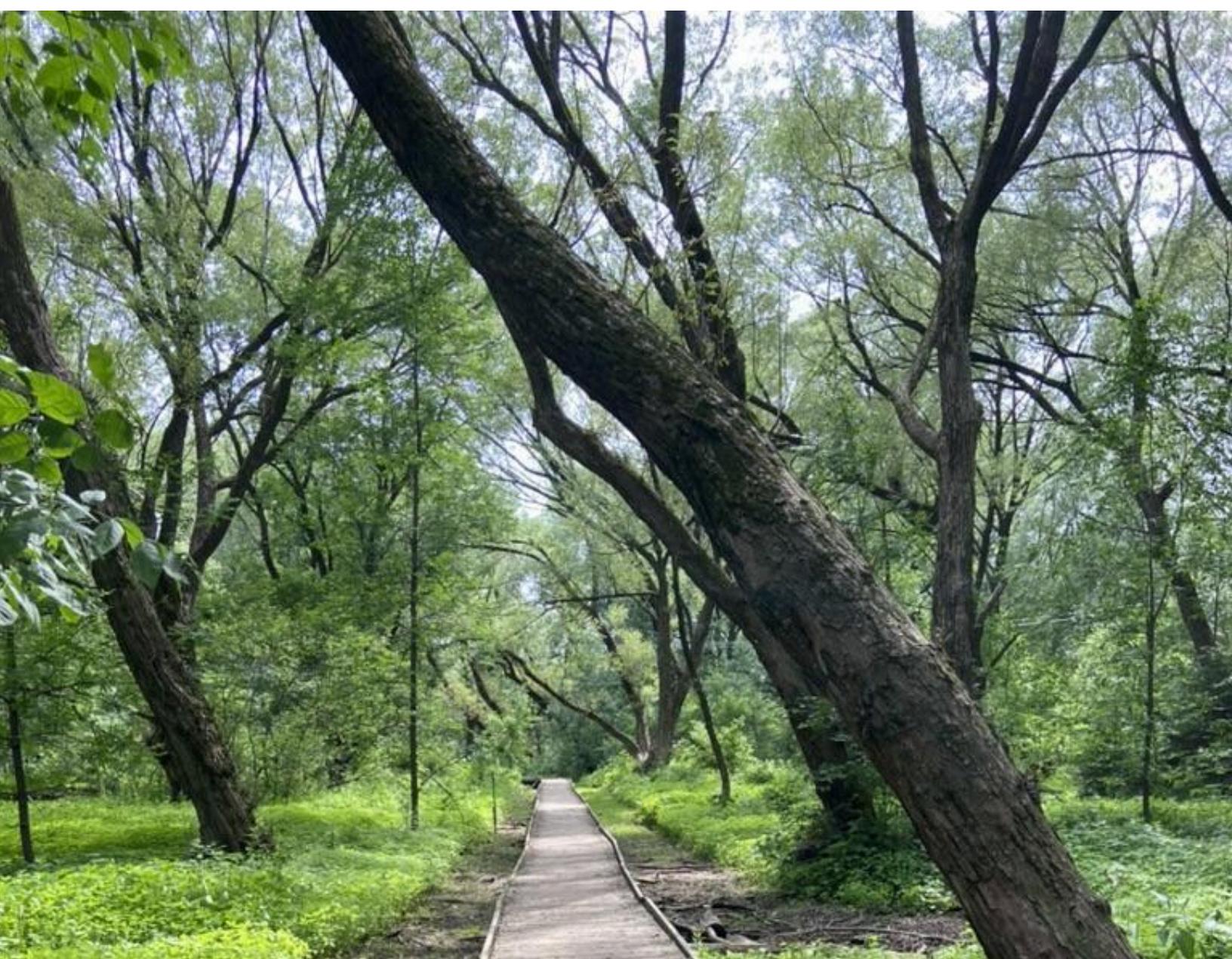
[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Société Logique, with feedback from Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility consulting firm).



17. Parks and green spaces

Developing accessible and inclusive parks

What is an inclusive park and green space?

Inclusive parks and green spaces are places designed to be accessible and welcoming to all people, regardless of age, physical abilities, cultural background or socio-economic status. These spaces can include several adapted parking spaces, easy-to-access walking trails, outdoor playgrounds for children and adults, accessible water games for cooling off, and street furniture to take a break and enjoy nature.

Having access to a park contributes significantly to the well-being of the population. Living close to these spaces promotes physical activity, social interaction and stress reduction, leading to a healthier and more balanced life. In addition to their positive effects on health and well-being, parks and green spaces also have a positive impact on the environment. These spaces promote equality, inclusiveness and community well-being by providing safe, accessible and attractive environments for all.

They must be designed in a way that promotes inclusion in all its forms, whatever the needs or circumstances of users. These needs may relate to motor, physical, sensory, cognitive and/or socio-emotional aspects, both for users and staff. Park accessibility can take different forms for each individual due to their specific needs. It is therefore essential to offer a variety of facilities and not just a single solution to address accessibility issues.

By creating an inclusive environment, every location and activity should be organized in a way that maximizes the positive experience for all, without exception. Above all, park facilities and policies must ensure the safety, respect and dignity of all persons visiting the park.

Overview of the situation

While parks and green spaces are popular, many persons with disabilities, along with their companions, still face barriers that prevent them from taking full advantage of these environments. Canada has fallen behind other countries,

such as the United States, on park accessibility. The lack of diversity and age of some facilities pose accessibility challenges.

That said, one of the main accessibility challenges for parks is the lack of information available prior to visiting. Despite the growing presence of specialized equipment and functional devices in many areas, information is not always communicated adequately or in sufficient detail to allow visitors to determine whether the facilities meet their needs.

When it comes to playgrounds, schools and municipalities will need to adapt in the coming years to provide more accessible spaces. Many of these spaces are now outdated and present significant accessibility issues.

Finally, it is important to highlight the significance of national parks for many Indigenous communities. The development of these sites must always take place in a spirit of recognition and collaboration.

Standards and obligations

Improvements are needed to ensure accessibility of these spaces beyond just the physical barriers. While many standards focus primarily on the built environment of spaces, it is essential to go beyond these criteria to include a greater diversity of people. Visual, auditory and cognitive impairments as well as learning disabilities (such as dyslexia, ADHD, etc.) should also be considered when developing these spaces.

At the federal level:

- ***Accessible Canada Act*, adopted in 2019**

The objective of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) is to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040. It aims to identify, remove and prevent barriers in areas of federal jurisdiction, particularly in the fields of the built environment, communication and transportation.

- **National Standard of Canada: [Accessible Design for the Built Environment](#) (CSA/ASC B651:23), published in 2023**

The [Accessible Design for the Built Environment standard](#) is intended to make buildings and other facilities accessible to persons with a range of physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. For parks and green spaces,

sections 8 (Exterior circulation, spaces, and amenities) and 9 (Vehicular access) deserve special attention.

- **Canadian Outdoor Spaces Standard - CAN/ASC-2.1, to be published in 2025**

The [Outdoor spaces standard](#), currently under review, includes requirements for the accessibility of outdoor spaces. It covers site planning, furniture, outdoor surfaces, wayfinding and equipment used to access outdoor activities.

- **National Standard of Canada: Children's playground equipment and surfacing - CSA Z614:20, published in 2020**

The [standard on playground equipment](#) provides recommendations on the technical requirements and principles for the design, fabrication, installation, maintenance and inspection of public playground equipment and their associated spaces. More specifically, Annex H focuses on playgrounds and equipment accessible to persons with disabilities.

At the provincial level:

- **Québec Construction Code: *Guide sur l'accessibilité des bâtiments*, published in 2022**

The [Guide sur l'accessibilité des bâtiments](#) [Building accessibility guide] consolidates all design standards related to accessibility and provides explanations of the underlying reasons for certain requirements. The sections covering barrier-free paths, entrances and parking are particularly relevant for the development of parks and green spaces. Since July 2023, this guide is mandatory for any new construction or renovation in Québec.

Good practices

There are several ways to develop parks and green spaces to make them inclusive. These good practices can be applied during the planning and development of the space and can even be implemented after construction. It is never too late to turn a space into an inclusive place.

Built environment

- Using large parking spaces located close to the entrance.

- Providing space for an accessible drop-off zone.
- Ensuring that the exterior path to the park entrance is fully accessible and respects users' autonomy.
- Wherever possible, using asphalt trails and paths, which are easier to use for wheelchairs or strollers.
- Using a variety of accessible and inclusive furniture (e.g., picnic tables with an extension to accommodate wheelchair users, different types of seating, etc.).
- Providing a universally accessible washroom.
- Ensuring proper drainage of trails to prevent the accumulation of water that could block users' passage.

Communication and signage

- Using clear and uniform signage, including contrasting colours, pictograms, appropriate text size for the reading distance, and Braille indications. Embossing can also be a helpful solution for maps.
- Ensuring that park information is detailed, reliable and accessible online or over the phone. This allows visitors to know what services are available (parking, washrooms, attendant rates, etc.) and determine if the location is suitable for them.
- Using various wayfinding methods, such as cables along the trails.
- If the site has a web presence, ensuring that it is accessible, up-to-date and has reliable information.

Approach

- Understanding the expectations and needs of persons living with limitations with respect to outdoor activities in an urban environment.
- Understanding the conditions necessary for an inclusive outdoor experience in an urban park.

- Identifying environmental factors that can facilitate or limit the quality of the accessible outdoor experience in an urban park.
- Forming a team to begin the planning process, involving parents, teachers and members of the disability community.

Policy

- Including universal accessibility requirements in calls for tenders
- Developing a detailed emergency plan that takes into account the range of barriers that users may encounter.

Available resources

Training

- [*Formation pour un plein air inclusif et sécuritaire*](#) [Inclusive and safe outdoor training], Association québécoise pour le loisir des personnes handicapées (AQLPH).
- [*Parcs et espaces verts inclusifs*](#) [Inclusive parks and green spaces], Idéaux.
- Training on Annex H of the standard CSA Z614 - Children's playground equipment and surfacing, Idéaux.
- Conference on universal accessibility in parks and public spaces, Kéroul.
- Conference on outdoor accessibility: inspiring practices and adapted equipment, Kéroul.
- [*Formation pour un plein air inclusif et sécuritaire*](#) [Inclusive and safe outdoor training], Association québécoise pour le loisir des personnes handicapées (AQLPH).

Subsidies

- **Federal**
 - [*Enabling Accessibility Fund*](#): financial assistance for large and small development projects, Government of Canada.
- **Provincial**
 - [*Programme de développement de l'offre touristique des parcs régionaux \(DOTPR\)*](#) [Regional park tourism development program]: financial assistance to support the development of an accessible and safe four-season recreational tourism offering in Québec's regional parks, Government of Québec.
 - [*Petits établissements accessibles*](#) [Accessible small establishments program]: financial assistance to owners and tenants of commercial, business and community establishments not subject to

any legal obligations regarding accessibility, for the performance of work that meets the accessibility requirements of the Québec Construction Code, Société d'habitation du Québec.

- [Programme d'assistance financière au loisir des personnes handicapées \(PAFLPH\)](#) [Financial assistance for persons with disabilities program]: financial assistance to increase the accessibility of recreation activities for persons with disabilities in a healthy and safe environment, Government of Québec.
- [Programme de soutien aux infrastructures sportives et récréatives de petite envergure \(PSISRPE\)](#) [Small-scale sports and recreational infrastructure support program]: funding for the renovation, upgrading, construction and development of small-scale sports and recreational infrastructure, Government of Québec.
- [Programme Accessibilité des établissements touristiques \(PAET\)](#) [Tourism establishment accessibility program]: financial assistance to make Québec tourist establishments and their services more accessible to persons with disabilities, Kéroul.
- [The Adaptive Sports Foundation \(ASF\)](#): financial assistance to get children with physical disabilities involved in and empowered by sports and recreational activities, Adaptive Sports Foundation.
- [Fondation Bon Départ](#): supporting the development of children and adults living in vulnerable situations by offering respite stays and holiday camps.

- **Municipal**

- Check with the municipality to see if grant options are available for park and green space accessibility in connection with universal accessibility.

Documents

- [*Vers des parcours sans obstacle*](#) [Towards barrier-free pathways], Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.
- [*Guide sur les aires de jeux accessibles*](#) [Accessible playground guide], Kéroul.
- [*Guide sur le plein air accessible*](#) [Outdoor accessibility guide], Kéroul.
- [*Ressources et références pour améliorer l'accessibilité universelle des parcs*](#) [Resources and references to improve universal accessibility in parks], AlterGo.
- [*Guide d'accompagnement en mobilier urbain*](#) [Street furniture guide], Government of Québec
- [*Guide des aires et des appareils de jeu*](#) [Playground equipment and play spaces guide] Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ).
- [*Let's Play Toolkit: Creating Inclusive Play Spaces for Children of All Abilities*](#), Rick Hansen.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in parks and green spaces, also consult the following fact sheets:

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[14. Recreation, sports and tourism](#)

[20. Environmental health](#)

[29. Urban planning](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm).



18. Civic engagement

Ensuring accessible and inclusive citizen engagement

What is accessible and inclusive citizen engagement?

Accessible and inclusive citizen engagement means that all people, including those with disabilities, can fully engage in public life. This includes the right to information, freedom of expression, the right to vote and the opportunity to contribute to collective decisions. To achieve this goal, communities must implement concrete actions, such as involving persons with disabilities and their associations, organizing accessible consultations and using appropriate tools to remove barriers to participation.

WORKING FOR		Gradient of Participation			WORKING WITH
Information	Consultation	Concertation	Co-construction		Co-decision
An essential foundation	Gathering opinions	Sharing visions and expertise, exchanging arguments to move the project forward	Collective construction of proposals		Negotiation, sharing of decision-making power

Moving from “working for” to “working with,” the [gradient of participation from CEREMA](#).

This concept emphasizes the importance of working directly with those involved rather than deciding for them. True inclusion relies on constructive dialogue and co-creation of initiatives that meet everyone’s needs.

Overview of the situation

Persons with disabilities do not always feel recognized as citizens in their own right. They feel that their contributions are not valued by representatives of decision-making bodies. They feel that they are neither listened to nor heard. In some cases, they feel that they are being used in consultative processes that do

not give them any real authority over decisions ([Hudon and Tremblay](#), 2017). They want to be able to speak up, speak on their own behalf and learn to make their demands heard ([CREMIS](#), 2011).

Their sense of political effectiveness, both internal and external, is inferior to that of the general population.

- “Internal political effectiveness” means their civic competence.
- “External effectiveness” refers to their perception of the influence they can exert on politicians and policymakers ([Schur et al.](#), 2003).

These perceptions have a negative impact on their voter turnout, although local data on this issue are limited ([Prince](#), 2012 – see 3.1). This lower political effectiveness is mainly due to factors external to disability, such as lower levels of education, underemployment or lower incomes. These elements limit opportunities to develop civic skills and gain experience. Thus, systemic barriers impede active citizen engagement for these individuals ([Hudon and Tremblay](#), 2017).

To ensure their full social participation, decision-making bodies have a responsibility to integrate persons with disabilities into governance processes, consultation practices and decision-making.

Standards and obligations

There are currently no specific accessibility standards regarding public participation.

That said, in Québec, there is a related obligation in the [*Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*](#) (E-20.1). It states that it is necessary to “facilitate the autonomy of handicapped persons and their participation in individual or collective decisions that concern them and in managing the services offered to them.” This directive particularly applies to government departments, municipalities, and public and private organizations.

Good practices to strengthen citizen participation

Here are some concrete steps to enhance your action plans. Make sure you adapt them according to the specific characteristics of your organization.

Establishing inclusive governance

- Assigning a seat on the board of directors to a person with a disability.
 - The [Act respecting public transit authorities \(s-30.01\)](#) requires a paratransit user to sit on the board of directors of the transportation companies concerned (section 83).
 - The Government of Québec has adopted a policy to ensure that [boards of directors of government corporations](#) have at least one representative from each of the four under-represented groups.
- Identifying a steering committee or advisory committee for all disability-related plans such as action plans for persons with disabilities or accessibility plans and policies.
 - The Ville de Québec's [Table de concertation en accessibilité universelle](#) [Consultation table on universal accessibility] is one example of a dynamic structure that has a real influence on decisions.
- Establishing tools for differentiated analysis based on disability types and implementing a system to collect disaggregated data when planning and executing projects.
 - For example, the European Commission monitors the [disability voting gap](#), which refers to the gap in voter turnout of citizens with disabilities compared to citizens without disabilities (PDF, 1099 KB).
 - In New Zealand, [a post-election survey of the general public](#) highlights statistics on persons with disabilities (PDF, 360 KB).
- Providing financial compensation for persons with disabilities.

- The members of the [Elections Québec Universal Accessibility Committee](#) receive an allowance per full day or half-day of work, including preparation and travel time.
- Establishing clear guidelines and commitments for public participation, with a specific focus on accessibility and accommodations.
- Measuring the extent to which the changing needs of persons with disabilities are taken into account across all policies and practices, not just those that directly affect them.
 - The Ville de Montréal conducted this exercise through its [Chantier en accessibilité universelle](#) [Universal accessibility workshop], which assessed the level of integration of universal accessibility across services using a maturity model.

Ensuring accessible citizen bodies

- Providing live Québec Sign Language interpretation of city council meetings or a video summary of the sessions.
 - The municipality of Victoriaville has offered [live interpretation](#) of all its meetings since 2017.
- Providing oral and written communication methods adapted to various needs.
- Providing opportunities for participation both online and in-person.
- Implementing a simple, user-friendly online participation platform that follows best practices in user experience and digital accessibility.
 - Refer to fact sheet 4 on Digital Communications and the guide *[Rendre la participation publique en ligne accessible pour tous](#)* [Making online public participation accessible to all].
- Providing support in interactions with citizen bodies, whether online or in person, on site or from a bus or subway stop.
- Analyzing barriers at all stages of public participation processes and identifying solutions to overcome them.

- Ensuring accessible and inclusive logistics for meetings, whether in-person or online (choice of venue, communication methods, signage, facilitation, etc.).
 - Refer to fact sheet 10 of this guide on [Event management](#).
- Defining mandatory and optimal accessibility criteria for consultation or polling sites.
 - Elections Canada has developed a [suitability checklist](#) to ensure the accessibility of polling sites

Ensuring inclusive consultation processes

- Adding a question on adaptation or accessibility needs to consultation registration forms.
- Drafting public participation documents (invitation, analysis documents, conclusions, etc.) in plain language or even simplified language and including video formats or visual aids.
- Using dynamic and interactive public participation tools and facilitation techniques.
 - The technical group of accessibility officers from inclusive cities (GT-RAVI) offers [practical and varied tools for persons with disabilities](#), such as exploratory walks, tactile maps, visual tools and video summaries.
 - The Institut du Nouveau Monde also offers a [tool box](#) for putting citizen engagement into practice.
- Conducting consultations directly on site at disability associations' premises.
- Establishing a mentoring or pairing program, whether in collaboration or not with an organization, to support persons with disabilities in their participation in bodies and consultations.

- Developing a guide to public participation dedicated to persons with disabilities, explaining in particular the municipal structure, complaint procedures and how public consultations work.
- Introducing a feedback process indicating how citizen contributions were considered.
 - The Government of Canada has created a page summarizing each of its public consultations, such as the [Accessibility regulations for information and communication technologies](#).

Developing an accessible electoral process

- Providing information packages in plain language and alternative formats that include, but are not limited to, information on the voting process, terminology used, governance structure and party programs.
- Providing, upon request, various adaptation tools to facilitate voting, such as large print templates, Braille templates or a lighted magnifying glass.
 - Elections Québec has proposed offering an [accessibility kit, available on request at](#) polling stations.
- Offering large ballot papers incorporating party colours and logos, as well as photos of candidates.
- Enabling early voting, mail-in voting or arranging a shuttle service for voters.
- Installing more polling stations in community facilities or creating mobile polling stations.
- Clearly identifying the accessible and adapted services offered.
 - For example, Elections Ontario provides a very clear overview of all its accessibility services and commitments.
- Implementing a campaign specifically aimed at encouraging persons with disabilities to vote, explaining the adaptation mechanisms and how the process works.

- The 2024 campaign [My vote, My Choice](#) in the UK encouraged people with learning disabilities to exercise their right to vote.

Available resources

- [Bonifier l'accessibilité de vos collaborations à distance](#) [Improving the accessibility of your remote collaborations], Co-savoir, 2018.
- [A Guide for Planning Union Conferences in Clear Language](#), Canadian Labour Congress, 2007.
- [La bonne gouvernance passe par l'inclusion : l'inclusion des personnes handicapées dans les activités de promotion de la bonne gouvernance](#) [Inclusion is key to good governance: inclusion of persons with disabilities in activities to promote good governance] (PDF, 665 KB), GIZ, Germany, 2019.
- [Electoral participation of electors with disabilities: Canadian practices in a comparative context](#) (PDF, 1.1 MB), Elections Canada, 2012.
- [Les outils de la participation pour les personnes handicapées](#) [Participation tools for persons with disabilities], GT-Ravi, Pays basque, 2022.
- [Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations: Consulting persons with disabilities](#), Government of Canada.
- [S'engager pour une voie sans obstacle : Recherche sur la participation des jeunes montréalais et montréalaises en situation de handicap](#) [Embarking on a barrier-free path: research on the participation of Montréal youth with disabilities], Ex aequo, 2015.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusive civic engagement, also consult the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[10. Event planning](#)

[21. Customer service](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Oanh Nguyen (AlterGo) and Benoit Racette.



19. Income

The financial struggle of persons with disabilities in Québec and Canada: excessive spending and insufficient income

What are the financial struggles of persons with disabilities?

Personal income of persons with and without disabilities
aged 15 and over in Québec in 2016

Income	Estimated population of persons with disabilities	Percentage of persons with disabilities	Percentage of persons without disabilities
No income or less than \$15,000	342,350	32.5% (+)	22.2%
\$15,000 to \$29,999	318,880	30.3% (+)	22.7%
\$30,000 to \$49,999	195,570	18.6% (-)	25.4%
\$50,000 and over	196,560	18.7% (-)	29.7%
Total	1,053,350	100%	100%

The income of persons with disabilities in Canada is a complex and largely neglected subject, despite the considerable challenges faced by this demographic. The daily lives of persons with disabilities often result in higher costs than those without disabilities, due in part to additional needs for health care, accessibility and support services. This reality is all the more problematic in a financial support system that frequently struggles to meet the real needs of these individuals.

Some specific barriers and how to address them:

One of the main income challenges faced by persons with disabilities is the difficulty in finding enough money to meet their basic needs. Costs associated with specialized equipment, therapies, mobility aids and health care can quickly accumulate, leaving little room for other expenses, such as housing, food and recreation. This makes for an economically precarious life for many persons with disabilities in Canada.

In terms of housing, persons with disabilities face additional challenges. Accessible and adapted housing is often scarce and expensive, making it difficult for many persons with disabilities to find housing that meets their needs without spending a significant portion of their disposable income. Moreover, the modifications needed to make housing accessible can be costly, often forcing occupants to rely on government assistance or charity to obtain the necessary accommodations.

In addition to housing and medical costs, it is important to recognize that simply living with a disability creates additional costs in many other areas. Adapted transportation, home support services, specific personal care products and technological equipment are all examples of expenses that many persons with disabilities face on a daily basis. These costs contribute to a high level of poverty and financial insecurity among persons with disabilities in Canada.

Despite these challenges, government programs to provide financial support to persons with disabilities do not fully meet their needs. Disability benefits and other financial assistance are often too low to enable persons with disabilities to adequately meet their needs, leaving them in persistent financial precariousness.

Persons with disabilities in Canada face many financial challenges, including the difficulty of setting a sufficient budget to cover the costs of daily living, the high price of accessible housing, and additional disability-related expenses. To improve this situation, it is imperative that the government recognize these realities and take meaningful steps to ensure adequate financial support, thereby enabling persons with disabilities to live independently and in a dignified manner.

Overview of the situation

While the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) will not solve every problem,²¹ the new CDB is an important step forward in recognizing and supporting Canadians with disabilities. However, its real impact on the lives of this population remains up for debate. This fact sheet examines the characteristics of the CDB, its ability to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and their ongoing challenges.

Announced in the federal budget, the CDB provides an annual benefit of up to \$2,400 (or \$200 per month) to eligible Canadians with disabilities. The eligibility process is based on the disability tax credit (DTC). However, despite these advances, concerns remain about the adequacy of this benefit with respect to the real needs of persons with disabilities.

With 41% of low-income Canadians living with disabilities and 16.5% living in poverty, the CDB is a necessary but perhaps insufficient response. More than 1.5 million persons with disabilities live in precarious conditions, underscoring the urgency of more effective government action.

While the CDB represents progress, its monthly amount remains insufficient to lift persons with disabilities out of poverty. It is essential that the federal government review its approach to ensure that this community is truly financially self-sufficient. The dependence of the CDB's eligibility process on the disability tax credit is often criticized. It is imperative that the eligibility criteria be revised, and the tax credit program be reformed to better meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

Coordination between the two levels of government, particularly with respect to Québec's Basic Income Program (BIP), is crucial. It is vital that government

²¹ Sources: Statistics Canada, Disability Advisory Committee, Centre on Diversity and Inclusion

policies do not contradict each other and further aggravate the financial situation of persons with disabilities.

The COPHAN believes that the CDB represents an important first step towards recognizing the financial support needs of persons with disabilities. However, adjustments are needed to ensure that this benefit truly meets the realities and challenges facing this population in Canada.

The BIP is a relevant measure, but it is difficult to qualify for. To be eligible for the BIP, individuals must wait at least five and a half years as recipients of the Social Solidarity Program, where they receive only \$1,138 a month. We believe such recipients should be immediately eligible for the BIP.

In addition, the BIP was intended to allow for the individualization of benefits, thereby promoting living together as a couple and eliminating financial dependence on a spouse. Unfortunately, the spouse's earnings from work will always be taken into account and deducted from the benefit on a declining basis starting at \$28,000.

Standards and obligations

- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international treaty adopted in 2006 to protect the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. Canada, along with 183 other States Parties, has accepted the legal obligations contained in this Convention.

- **Article 28: Adequate standard of living and social protection**

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including access to adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement in their living conditions. They shall also take appropriate measures to safeguard and promote the exercise of this right, without discrimination on the basis of disability.
2. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to social protection and to the enjoyment of that right without discrimination on the basis of disability. They shall take appropriate measures to safeguard and promote the exercise of this right, including measures to:

- Ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to clean water services, and to ensure access to appropriate and affordable services, devices and other assistance for disability-related needs.
- Ensure access by persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, to social protection programs and poverty reduction programs.
- Ensure access by persons with disabilities and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance from the State with disability-related expenses, including adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care.
- Ensure access by persons with disabilities to public housing programs.
- Ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to retirement benefits and programs.

Good practices

Making the amount for severe and prolonged impairment of mental or physical functions refundable.

Although an estimated 430,000 people aged 15 and over have a severe or very severe disability in Québec, only 120,000 claimed the amount for severe and prolonged impairment in mental or physical functions. This represents about 28% of the population concerned. In addition, of these 120,000 people, almost two-thirds (75,000) did not pay tax and therefore could not benefit from this non-refundable tax credit.

It should be noted that taxpayers with severe and prolonged impairments in mental or physical functions have a reduced ability to pay taxes—33% of them live on less than \$15,000 per year.

Although the State acknowledges its obligation to offset any additional costs related to limitations, in accordance with the *À part entière* policy, the objective of this measure is not being met in this regard. It is therefore necessary to:

- Make the amount for severe and prolonged impairment of mental or physical functions refundable from fiscal year 2024, in order to effectively

offset the additional costs associated with the limitations for all persons living with this severe and prolonged impairment.

- Promote the Severe and prolonged impairment in mental or physical functions amount so that more people who may be eligible apply for it.
- Abolish the five-and-a-half-year wait for Social Solidarity Program recipients to qualify for the BIP.
- Allow benefits to be individualized, thus enabling couples to live together and eliminating financial dependence on a spouse.
- Ensure alignment between the future Canada Disability Benefit (CDB), the Basic Income Program (BIP) and the disability pension to lift persons with disabilities out of poverty.

Available resources

- [*Statistiques sur le revenu des personnes handicapées*](#) [Statistics on the income of persons with disabilities], Government of Québec
- [*Tax credits and deductions for persons with disabilities*](#), Government of Canada.
- [*Tax measures and pensions for people with disabilities*](#), Government of Québec
- [*Backgrounder: Supporting Canadians with disabilities - Canada Disability Benefit*](#), Government of Canada.
- [*Québec lance le Programme de revenu de base : une avancée majeure pour mieux soutenir les personnes ayant des contraintes sévères à l'emploi*](#) [Québec launches the Basic Income Program: a major step forward to better support people with severe employment constraints], Government of Québec
- [*Le gouvernement doit étendre le programme de Revenu de base à l'ensemble des personnes assistées sociales*](#), [Government to extend Basic Income Program to all social assistance recipients], the Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté.

Related fact sheets in this guide

The following fact sheets cover the impacts of limited income on persons with disabilities:

[1. Procurement](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[6. Post-secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[13. Housing](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Dominique Salgado in collaboration with COPHAN.



20. Environmental health

The workplace and multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)

What is multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) and how does it impact the workplace?

Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) is a recognized disability (CHRC, CHRA, 2007) that affects an individual's ability to tolerate exposure to chemicals that most people find harmless. Common triggers include perfumes, personal care products, cleaning and laundry agents, building materials and office supplies. People with MCS can experience a wide range of symptoms, including breathing problems, fatigue, cognitive difficulties, dizziness, headaches and skin irritation. These manifestations can seriously compromise an individual's ability to work in an environment where chemical triggers are present.

Overview of the situation

Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) is a common condition: Statistics Canada reports that more than 1.13 million people have been diagnosed, 72% of whom are women, with nearly 50% of those affected over the age of 55 (CCHS 2020).

In light of these statistics, it is crucial that workplaces adapt to these realities, not only to guarantee equal access to employment opportunities, but also to meet legal obligations. Under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities, including those with MCS, to allow them to work in an environment free from harmful chemical triggers.

Some specific barriers and how to address them:

Employees with MCS face unique challenges in their workplace due to their increased sensitivity. In the absence of adapted facilities, their symptoms may affect their ability to perform tasks and maintain employment. Key barriers include:

1. Diagnosis and medical support

Many people with MCS struggle to obtain a formal diagnosis, mainly due to a lack of awareness of the condition among health care professionals. This lack of knowledge may result in delays in obtaining the medical documentation necessary to justify accommodations.

Employers must take a flexible and comprehensive approach, offering adaptive measures even in the absence of an immediate formal diagnosis. The video [“Understanding and Accommodating Employees with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity MCS in the Workplace”](#) can be a valuable resource to overcome these challenges.

2. Employment barriers

Common workplace triggers such as deodorants, cleaning products, perfumes and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from building materials can cause debilitating symptoms. These environmental conditions contribute to higher unemployment rates among people with MCS, as the inability to work in such environments without accommodations often leads to long-term unemployment and financial instability.

To address these issues, it is imperative that employers take a proactive approach to minimize environmental triggers and create a healthy, inclusive and accessible workplace.

Good practices

The purpose of this sheet is to assist employers in adopting comprehensive policies and practices that take into account the needs of people with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). These initiatives promote a healthy work environment and help improve air quality inside buildings. Key measures include implementing a scent-free policy, reducing exposure to volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and using products that are less toxic for cleaning, maintenance and renovations.

A healthier workplace benefits not only people with MCS but also all employees by increasing productivity, morale and overall well-being.

Best practices for an inclusive and supportive environment:

- Developing and enforcing a scent-free policy.

- Ensuring air quality through proper ventilation and use of environmentally friendly products.
- Educating employees and management on MCS and how to support those affected.
- Ensuring flexibility in working conditions to meet the individual needs of people with MCS.

Importance of environmental health in the workplace

Maintaining environmental health in the workplace is vital for several reasons: it improves employee well-being, optimizes productivity and ensures compliance with legal obligations. Clean air and reduced chemical irritants not only benefit people with MCS, but all employees.

Some key reasons why prioritizing environmental health is critical:

1. Employee well-being

Creating a clean and healthy environment, free from chemical irritants, improves the well-being of all employees. This helps to:

- Reduce absenteeism
- Increase job satisfaction
- Keep workers healthy, particularly those affected by conditions such as MCS

2. Productivity and performance

Research shows that good indoor air quality:

- Stimulates cognitive function
- Improves concentration
- Strengthens overall productivity

Employees working in healthy environments are less prone to fatigue or distraction, allowing them to focus fully on their tasks.

3. Retention and recruitment

A workplace that promotes environmental health:

- Makes it easier to retain employees, demonstrating commitment to their well-being.
- Attracts top talent, interested in an inclusive corporate culture that respects diversity and equity.

4. Legal compliance

Ensuring a safe and healthy work environment is not only a moral responsibility, but also a legal requirement. Under disability rights legislation, employers have an obligation to:

- Provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with MCS.
- Provide fair working conditions while avoiding potential legal implications.

Standards and obligations

Accommodations in the workplace

1. Scent-free policy

A scent-free policy is one of the essential accommodations for people with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). This policy covers the entire workplace, not just specific areas. It includes the use of lower toxicity chemicals and environmentally friendly products to eliminate exposure to harmful chemicals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Here are the main guidelines of such a policy:

- **Prohibited products:** Ban scented products such as perfumes, aftershaves, deodorants, shampoos, lotions and scented laundry detergents and softeners. All employees and visitors must not use such products before going to the workplace.
- **Products with least toxicity:** Use only scent-free and eco-friendly cleaning, maintenance and renovation products. These include paints, adhesives, sealants and low-VOC cleaning agents.

- **Third party compliance:** Require contractors, suppliers and other external parties to comply with the scent-free policy when working on site. Include clauses in contracts to ensure adherence to this policy.
- **Best practices:** Draw on the recommendations of the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety \(CCOHS\)](#) and the [Canadian Human Rights Commission \(CHRC\)](#) to ensure the effectiveness of the policy.
- **Education and support:** Educate employees on the importance of selecting scent-free products for personal care, cleaning and office supplies. Provide resources such as the [Eco-Living Guide](#) to accommodate this transition.

2. Indoor air quality control:

Maintaining optimal air quality is crucial, especially for people with MCS. The following actions should be taken:

- **HEPA filters and air purifiers:** Install HEPA filters in ventilation systems to capture dust, allergens and airborne particles. Use portable purifiers equipped with activated carbon filters.
- **Natural ventilation:** Ensure windows can be opened to improve air circulation and dilute indoor pollutants.
- **Regular maintenance:** Clean air ducts and filters frequently. Avoid chemicals in ventilation systems.
- **Humidity control:** Maintain an indoor humidity level of 30% to 50% to prevent mould, which is a trigger for people with MCS.

3. Building materials and furnishings

The choice of materials has a direct impact on air quality. Key recommendations for reducing VOCs in the workplace include:

- **Low-VOC materials:** Use paints, adhesives and floor coverings with no or low VOC content.
- **Off-gassing:** Allow new materials and furniture to ventilate before use.
- **Durable furniture:** Use solid wood, metal or recycled materials. Avoid composite wood products containing formaldehyde.

4. Cleaning and maintenance

Cleaning practices should minimize exposure to harmful substances:

- **Scent-free products:** Use only non-toxic, scent-free cleaning products. Scheduling cleaning to outside of work hours also minimizes exposure to residual odours.
- **Post-cleaning ventilation:** Aerate areas after cleaning to disperse any chemical residue.

5. Sound and lighting

Creating a comfortable environment also involves sound and light management:

- **Natural light:** Maximize access to natural light by positioning workstations near windows.
- **Full spectrum lighting:** Use light bulbs that mimic daylight to reduce visual fatigue and replace fluorescent lamps with energy-efficient and low-emission options.
- **Soundproofing:** Install acoustic panels to reduce ambient noise and help employees concentrate.

6. Smoke-free outdoor spaces:

Designate non-smoking areas near entrances and parking lots to prevent people with MCS being exposed to smoke. Install clear signage to enforce this policy.

7. Landscaping practices:

Use native plants and limit pesticides for environmentally friendly landscaping.

8. Training and awareness:

Organize regular training sessions to inform personnel about MCS and the accommodations required. Educate employees on the importance of a scent-free policy.

9. Organizational flexibility:

Offer employees with MCS telework options or tailored work schedules to reduce their exposure to environmental triggers during their commute.

10. Accommodation procedures

Establish a clear process for requesting accommodations related to MCS, ensuring confidentiality is maintained throughout the process. Ensure that these accommodations are implemented in a timely manner to support the health and well-being of affected employees.

For more information on the process, check out the video [How to ask for accommodation](#) from ASEQ-EHAQ. This resource provides practical advice on the different steps, including initiating requests, understanding your rights and communicating effectively.

11. Emergency preparedness and response

Develop an emergency response protocol for situations where employees are exposed to harmful chemicals (refer to the [First Aid Kit](#)). In addition, implement a confidential reporting system, allowing employees to raise concerns about compliance with the scent-free policy.

12. Monitoring and evaluation

Regularly monitor compliance with the scent-free policy and other workplace accommodations. Use feedback tools, such as surveys, to assess policy effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

[The Tip Sheet on Scent/Fragrance-Free Policies](#) outlines best practices, including posting visible reminders and maintaining confidentiality while investigating reported issues. For more information on implementing and following scent-free policies, check out the video [How to enforce a scent/fragrance-free policy within the workplace](#).

In summary:

By implementing a scent-free policy and ensuring optimal air quality and providing flexible work arrangements, workplaces can be a safe and inclusive environment for people living with MCS. These measures not only comply with legal obligations, but also contribute to the well-being and productivity of all employees.

Available resources

1. **Canadian Human Rights Commission.** [Policy on environmental sensitivities](#). Government of Canada. Last accessed September 6, 2024.
2. **Canadian Human Rights Commission.** [Environmental sensitivity and scent-free policies](#). Government of Canada. Last accessed September 6, 2024.
3. **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.** [Scent-free policies](#). Last accessed September 6, 2024.

4. **Singh A, Syal M, Grady SC, Korkmaz S.** Effects of Green Buildings on Employee Health and Productivity. *Am J Public Health.* 2010;100(9):1665-1668. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.180687
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13. **ASEQ-EHAQ.** [Design, Implement, and Monitor Scent/Fragrance-Free Policies.](#) Last accessed September 6, 2024.
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15. **ASEQ-EHAQ** [How to enforce a scent/fragrance-free policy within the workplace.](#) Last accessed September 6, 2024.
16. **ASEQ-EHAQ.** [Workplace Accommodation – Videos.](#) Last accessed October 9, 2024.

Related fact sheets in this guide

The following fact sheets cover the impacts of limited income on persons with disabilities:

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[6. Post-secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[13. Housing](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Rohini Peris, President and CEO, with feedback from Michel Gaudet, Vice-President and Executive Director of ASEQ-ASEC.

A more detailed version of this guide can be found at:

<https://aseq-ehaq.ca/en/workplace-accommodation/>.



21. Customer service

Providing accessible and inclusive customer service

What is accessible and inclusive customer service?

Accessible and inclusive customer service aims to ensure a quality experience for all customers, regardless of their abilities. It is achieved through adopting specific rules, providing accessible information and processes, as well as diversified solutions adapted to the needs of each individual. It also includes ongoing staff training to ensure respectful and caring interactions.

Overview of the situation

Persons with disabilities struggle to receive customer service that takes into account their needs and how they function. They face different obstacles related to behaviours, communication methods and physical layout of spaces.

More concretely, these barriers can manifest themselves in a number of ways:

- A member of staff speaking only to the accompanying person, without ever speaking directly to the person with a disability
- Difficulty getting help to buy something at a nearby store ([CDPDJ](#), 2013)
- Waiting a long time for assistance at a pharmacy ([CDPDJ](#), 2013)
- Complex documents that make it difficult to understand the information needed to open a bank account
- Difficulty obtaining service over the telephone ([Auditor General of Canada](#), 2019)
- A limited selection of products and services that meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities ([Open Inclusion](#), 2021)
- Staff members' lack of openness to requests for accommodation ([Open Inclusion](#), 2021)

- Incorrect information about the accessibility features of a location, for example, a merchant stating that their store is accessible when there is a step at the entrance.

To overcome these barriers, organizations must take a proactive approach, understand the specific needs of clients with disabilities, and actively seek adapted solutions. Accessible and inclusive customer service is a true guarantee of quality, demonstrating a company's commitment to all its customers.

Standards and obligations

There are frameworks to guide organizations in creating more inclusive practices. Some are mandatory, while others encourage organizations to go further.

Customer Service Standards, Ontario (2008)

As a result of the adoption of the *Ontario Accessibility Act*, the province has gradually introduced [integrated accessibility standards](#). These standards vary depending on the number of employees and the type of organization. They include requirements for policies, practices and procedures, service animals, support persons, collection of customer feedback, and staff training.

Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation, Manitoba (2015)

Following the passage of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act*, the province adopted a regulation establishing [accessible customer service standards](#). These standards require that organizations with at least one employee have policies and procedures in place to ensure barrier-free customer service.

CAN-ASC-5.2 Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services Including Customer Service (to come in 2027)

Accessibility Canada is currently drafting [accessible customer service standards](#).

Good practices to enhance customer service

We propose a few concrete measures to incorporate into your action plans. Feel free to adapt them to the specific realities and needs of your organization.

1. Establishing clear policies, procedures and practices

- Voluntarily adopting customer service standards such as those in Ontario or Manitoba.
- Reviewing your customer service standards to reflect the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Drafting an accessible customer service policy or a quality commitment charter for persons with disabilities:
 - The province of Ontario proposes an [editable sample template of a customer service accessibility policy](#).
 - The [Déclaration de services aux citoyennes et aux citoyens](#) of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec is an excellent example of commitment.
- Issuing guidelines on service dogs to avoid misunderstandings:
 - [Espace pour la vie](#) specifies its procedures for accommodating guide dogs on its website.
- Offering free admission to the accompanying person, such as accepting the [Companion Leisure Card](#) or any other similar program.
- Proposing a solidarity rate to promote social participation among persons with disabilities on low incomes:
 - The Ville de Québec offers cheaper public transit through its [ÉquiMobilité](#) program.
- Identifying a common vocabulary to use systematically in all your communications.

2. Reviewing all aspects of customer service

- Improving the quality of infrastructure: a key foundational component for welcoming people (refer to the Built environment sheet in this guide).

- Identifying a clear feedback process on accessibility that contains a procedure for handling the feedback:
 - The [Ville de Saint-Lambert](#) provides a form to identify barriers in its territory.
- Establishing a flexible communication mechanism so that any process can be carried out through the person's preferred method of communication, whether by telephone, video relay service, email, online chat or in person. It is essential to provide different methods of payment, registration, booking, ordering or obtaining information.
- Facilitating interactions with persons with disabilities (see the Oral and written communication sheet in this guide).
- Creating a tailored program to meet the specific needs of your clients:
 - The Sunflower program allows travellers with disabilities or conditions that are not immediately obvious to discreetly signal their need for assistance or extra time during their journey by wearing a lanyard decorated with sunflowers ([Aéroports de Montréal](#)).
 - Disney amusement parks' [Disability Access Service \(DAS\)](#) program assists persons with disabilities who are unable wait in line and can instead receive an appointment time for each attraction.
 - The Ville de Boucherville's [Biblio hors les murs](#) provides access to books in parks during the summer season.
- Introducing an accessible delivery service or a free delivery service:
 - The Ville de Montréal's [Biblio-courrier](#) service allows seniors or persons with disabilities to receive their books at home at no extra cost.
- Ensuring digital accessibility among the various technologies used, from the online booking system to payment terminals. Regular usability testing is essential to ensure quality (refer to the Digital communications sheet in this guide).

- Training your staff on how to welcome persons with disabilities to better understand their needs and ensure they are treated appropriately, particularly regarding accommodations. Several options are available, including:
 - Training videos, such as the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec's self-study module [Mieux accueillir les personnes handicapées](#) [How to better welcome persons with disabilities].
 - Training courses run by persons with disabilities, such as those offered by [Kéroul](#) or [AlterGo](#).
 - Carefully selected internal focus groups addressing specific issues faced by persons with disabilities.

3. Communicating quality information about accessible places and services

- Writing a web page or publishing an accessibility guide on your organization's website:
 - The [Sépaq](#) details all of its services, programs and locations in a specific section on their website.
 - The [Montreal Science Centre](#) has a detailed guide and essential information on its web page dedicated to visitors.
 - The municipality of Saguenay provides a lot of information in its [Guide des services offerts aux personnes handicapées](#) [Guide to services for persons with disabilities].
- Providing a broadcasting mechanism in case of major malfunction, for example, for elevators or other service interruptions that impact accessibility for some persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring inclusive representation of persons with disabilities in your photos and videos, whether by creating an image bank or including models and extras with disabilities in your sessions:

- The UQAM initiative [Visuallys](#) offers a bank of 250 free images related to mental health.
- Sharing photos and videos of facilities and services that enable persons with disabilities to make informed decisions about accessibility:
 - The borough of Mont-Royal recently collaborated with Promo-Accès to showcase [the accessibility of its pedestrian street](#).
- Planning regular social media posts throughout the year on accessibility and adapted services.
- Listing the accessibility features of your products and services:
 - [Corbeil](#) published an inventory of ADA-compliant appliances, categorized by needs.
 - [Bell](#) provides a section detailing the accessibility features of its phones.
- Developing an accessibility register or requiring an accessibility assessment for all buildings used by the public in a given territory:
 - The [places certified by Kéroul](#) are listed on an online platform where you can search for them according to their characteristics or location.
 - In France, companies that welcome the public must fill out a self-declaration form identifying the accessibility features of its building(s) that will be entered into a [mandatory registry](#)
 - The [Ville de Québec](#) provides key information on the accessibility of its summer entertainment sites.
- Using universally accessible communication practices (refer to the Digital communications and the Oral and written communication sheets in this guide).
- Establishing a clear policy and process for adapting materials into alternative formats:

- The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada's [Policy on Accommodating Clients with Disabilities](#) is an excellent example.

Available resources

Training

- [Service Accomplir](#) from Kéroul (and all its variations).
- [Accueil des personnes ayant une limitation fonctionnelle](#) [Welcoming persons with functional limitations] (or other variation) from AlterGo Expertise.
- [Techniques de guide-voyant](#) [Sight Guide Techniques] from the Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Montréal métropolitain (RAAMM).
- [Formation nationale en accompagnement en loisir des personnes handicapées \(FACC\)](#) [National training in recreational support for persons with disabilities] from the Association québécoise pour le loisir des personnes handicapées (AQLPH).
- Self-study module [Mieux accueillir les personnes handicapées](#) from the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).

Documents

- [AccessAbility Playbook: Delivering accessible client service](#), Government of Canada.
- [Best Practices for Interacting with Persons with Disabilities: A Guide](#), Canadian Transportation Agency.
- [Customer service resources](#), Government of Manitoba

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in customer service, also consult the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Alexandra Gilbert (AQLPH), Kéroul, and Marie-Claude Lépine (Promo-Accès).



22. Childcare centres

Becoming an inclusive childcare centre

What is inclusive childcare?

Inclusive childcare is an environment where all children, educators and parents are welcomed and respected regardless of their needs, abilities or personal circumstances. In addition to providing a suitable physical setting, these services support the development of every child in a safe environment.

Inclusiveness is based on a holistic approach to create a community where diversity is celebrated and every child feels valued. This includes support for learning and development through various means of representation, expression and commitment. The seven principles of inclusive design—equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and space for approach and use—can guide the design of this environment to ensure optimal accessibility and inclusiveness.

All children have the right to learn, play and discover [...]. Their integration into the social and educational environment is essential as this can help them to socialize and learn many different social skills. It also develops successful personal relationships through their practice and inclusion in all educational activities, play and discovery with ordinary children.²²

Overview of the situation

While there has been significant research on educational programs and the inclusion of children in daycare, few studies actually address environments that meet the needs and abilities of each child. There is still room for improvement. Mandatory accessibility standards in built environments are a good starting point, but the optimal solution would be to create spaces that meet the needs of all their users.

In Québec, public childcare services, such as subsidized CPEs and childcare centres, must comply with the requirements of the [Ministère de la Famille](#). This

²² MOHAMED AHMED ABDOL, H., ABDUL LATEEF AHMED GHANAM, A. (2020). "Architectural Role in Achieving Inclusion for Children with Disabilities in Nurseries," JES Journal of Engineering Sciences, 1(1–20).

requires daycare owners to navigate between different regulations to provide inclusive environments that work for everyone.

Standards and obligations

Currently, standards exist to support the accessibility of new construction in Québec, but they do not specifically take into account children or people of small stature. However, some guides and standards incorporate aspects related to children. Here's an overview:

At the federal level:

- “Several aspects of the educational program are now included in law, imposing a legal obligation to administer an educational program that includes activities aimed at:
 - Fostering children’s overall development, enabling them to develop all facets of their person, including their emotional, social, moral, cognitive, language, physical and motor development.
 - Helping children gradually adapt to life in society and integrate a group harmoniously.
 - Providing children with an environment conducive to the acquisition of healthy lifestyle habits and health eating.”²³

²³ GOVERNMENT OF QUÉBEC (2006). [*Act respecting the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine*](#).

- [Accessible Canada Act](#) (2019)

The objective of this act is to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040. It aims to identify, remove and prevent barriers in areas of federal jurisdiction, such as the built environment, communication and transportation.

- **National Standard of Canada: Accessible Design for the Built Environment - CSA/ASC B651:23** (2023)

This standard is intended to make buildings and other facilities accessible to persons with a range of physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities. It will be more suitable for children because it imposes accessibility requirements that are stricter than those of the Québec Construction Code.

- **National Standard of Canada: [Children's playground equipment and surfacing - CSA Z614:20](#)** (2020)

This standard provides technical recommendations for the design, fabrication, installation, maintenance and inspection of public playground equipment and associated spaces. Annex H focuses specifically on playgrounds and equipment accessible to persons with disabilities.

At the provincial level:

- **Québec Construction Code: Guide sur l'accessibilité des bâtiments** [Building accessibility guide] (2022)

This guide consolidates all design standards related to accessibility and provides explanations of the underlying reasons for certain requirements. Since July 2023, this guide is mandatory for any new construction or renovation in Québec.

Good practices

Although buildings specifically designed for children are not yet governed by mandatory standards, it is essential to think about designing an environment suited to their diverse abilities, needs and challenges. Below are some good practices from Canadian and Québec construction guides. While these standards focus primarily on accessibility to the built environment in general, they can be adapted to the needs of children:

- **Parking:** Providing wider parking spaces make it easier for parents with strollers or people using mobility aids to move around.
- **Efficient and barrier-free circulation:** Ensuring a stable, non-reflective floor surface and sufficient corridor width to allow two children using mobility aids to cross paths. Refer to the applicable standards for specific details.
- **Universal toilets:** These facilities offer greater flexibility, more space and allow a child to be accompanied by a person of a different gender. Key points:
 - Adapted bowl height
 - Sufficient space between the toilet and the wall to facilitate the transfer of children using mobility aids
 - Installation of lateral and rear grab bars for greater safety
 - Easy-to-use handles that don't requiring twisting the wrist or pinching actions
- **Accessible controls:** Controls such as switches, faucets, soap or paper dispensers and clothing hooks must meet accessibility standards in the standards guides. Amenities should be at different heights to accommodate children of different sizes.

For more detail, the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADA) (United States) provides specific recommendations regarding accessibility for children.

Going beyond the standards

Good practices are of paramount importance because they allow us to go beyond minimum requirements and imagine innovative solutions. Employers and educators can help create inclusive environments by:

- Designing architectural environments that promote inclusion
- Organizing activities that encourage integration
- Raising children's awareness of the diverse needs of their peers
- Building on other inclusive childcare models
- Communicating their needs to the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine

The contribution of universal design

Applying the [seven universal design principles](#) to the design of an inclusive daycare facility improves accessibility for all children, regardless of their abilities. This fosters a safe, stimulating and supportive environment for cognitive development, social interaction and inclusion. The following is a non-exhaustive description of these principles:

- **Equitable use:** Providing the same means of use for all children, identical whenever possible, or equivalent when necessary.
- **Flexibility in use:** Providing a choice of methods adapted to different needs, while allowing each child to progress at their own pace.
- **Simple and intuitive use:** Designing environments and tools that are easy to understand, regardless of the child's cognitive or linguistic abilities. Limiting unnecessary complexity and guiding children through their activities.
- **Perceptible information:** Communicating instructions through different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) to maximize their understanding.

- **Error tolerance:** Minimizing risks and errors with a thoughtful layout, making high-use items easily accessible and securing hazardous components.
- **Low physical effort:** Offering equipment and games that require little effort for comfortable use without any risk of excessive fatigue.
- **Size and space for approach and use:** Providing optimal visibility of essential elements without obstruction, adapted to the seated or standing position of children and educators, while facilitating ergonomic access to all components, regardless of posture or mobility. This includes a variety of fitted grips and handles, as well as sufficient space for comfortable use of mobility devices.

Examples of good practices

- Offering various light sources adapted to children's activities.
 - For example, using pendant lamps in quiet homework spaces rather than fluorescent ceiling lights. Suspended lighting like this creates a soothing atmosphere that helps children concentrate.²⁴
- Reducing sources of ambient noise that can overstimulate children. Noises such as echoes or air conditioning systems can be particularly intrusive.
 - According to one study, the level of noise is related to signs of stress in children, such as repetitive motor movements, the use of earmuffs, sudden gestures, loud outbursts, eye blinking, etc.²⁵ Limiting these noises contributes to the well-being of each child and educator.

²⁴ STORVAN, L., FRØYTLOG, B., HENRIKSEN, P., L. SAETER, RUTH ASTRID. (2021). Design for Diversity. Universal Design in Schools and Kindergartens in Norway (1st ed.). Kommunesektorens Organisasjon, 83 pp.

²⁵ MOSTAFA, M., SOTELO, M., HONSBERGER, T., HONSBERGER, C., BROOKER LOZOTT, E. and SHANOK, N. (2022). "The Impact of ASPECTSS-Based Design Intervention in Autism School Design: A Case Study." Emerald Publishing Limited, 18(2), 318-339.

- Offering children choices tailored to their needs and preferences during free play times. Some prefer small indoor and outdoor spaces where they can be alone or play in small groups, with an opportunity for a staff member to provide support when needed.
 - On the other hand, other children greatly appreciate large outdoor spaces, which are conducive to more adventurous games.²⁶ Make sure you offer a variety of choices to satisfy each child.
- Adapting playgrounds, equipment, materials and tools to promote inclusion. These elements must meet the abilities of children and their motor, physical, sensory, cognitive and socio-emotional needs. Using different colours and materials to stimulate and inspire children during outdoor play periods. Using a variety of materials to help children find their way through the different areas.²⁷

For more information, see CSA Z614:20 on children's playground equipment and surfacing in the documents section.

²⁶ YTTERHUS, B. and AMOT, I. (2021). "Kindergartens: inclusive spaces for all children?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-17.

²⁷ YTTERHUS, B. and AMOT, I. (2021). "Kindergartens: inclusive spaces for all children?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-17.

Available resources

Training

- [*Formation sur l'aménagement inclusif en milieu de garde*](#) [Training on how to create an inclusive childcare environment], Idéaux.
- [*Spécialisation en éducation inclusive dans les services de garde*](#) [Specialization in inclusive childcare education], Cégep Marie-Victorin.

Subsidies

- **Federal:**
 - [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#): financial assistance for large and small development projects, Government of Canada.
 - [Child Disability Benefit \(CDB\)](#): financial assistance for families supporting a child with severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions, Government of Canada.
- **Provincial:**
 - [Allowance for Integration into Childcare](#): funding for a subsidized educational childcare provider for a child who has an impairment causing a significant and persistent disability, Government of Québec.
 - [Educational Childcare Act, Chapter VII "Parental contributions and subsidies"](#): Act and regulations on contributions and subsidies for educational child care.
 - [Supplement for Handicapped Children](#): financial assistance to families for the custody, care and upbringing of a child whose mental impairment or disorder significantly limits the child in carrying out their lifestyle habits.

Documents

- **Guides on standards:**

- [Guide sur l'accessibilité des bâtiments](#), Québec Construction Code.
- [Table de concertation régionale des associations de personnes handicapées de Lanaudière](#), (TCRAPHL) [Lanaudière regional disability association consultation table]
- [ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#), Department of Justice, United States.

- **Online guides:**

- [Guide pour favoriser l'inclusion des enfants ayant des besoins particuliers dans les services de garde \(0-4 ans\)](#) [Guide to promoting the inclusion of children with special needs in childcare (0-4 years)], TCRAPHL.
- [Aménagement ergonomique d'un service de garde](#) [Ergonomic childcare centre design], ASSTSAS.
- [Aide à la rédaction d'une politique d'inclusion](#) [Inclusion policy drafting guide], AQCPE and Carrick.
- [Intégration d'un enfant handicapé en service de garde](#) [Integrating a child with a disability into childcare], Government of Québec
- [Guide pour l'élaboration d'une politique d'intégration des enfants de nouveaux arrivants et de gestion de la diversité dans les services de garde éducatifs](#) [Guide for developing a policy on integrating children of newcomers and managing diversity in educational childcare], Government of Québec
- [A Guide to Creating Inclusive Classrooms](#), Brightwheel.
- [Universal Design in Kindergarten and School, Guidelines and Universal Tools](#), Rehabilitation International.

- **Websites**

- [Ministère de la Famille](#)
- [Educational Childcare Act](#)
- [Responsabilités des services de garde](#)
- [Observatoire des tout-petits](#): Statistics on “children in need of special support”
- [Carrick project](#): Supporting CPEs/BCs in enhancing their inclusion practices for children in need of special support.
- [Fondation Papillon](#): Resources and support for persons with disabilities and their families.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure an inclusive environment for children, also consult the following fact sheets:

[7. Elementary and secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[23. Health services](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[28. Neurodevelopmental disorders](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm).



23. Health services

Medical and hospital services

What are medical and hospital services?

Health facilities, whether public or private, must commit to providing equal treatment to persons with disabilities in the use of their services, programs, goods and facilities, as well as their accessibility.

They must ensure that persons with disabilities have the same opportunities to access services as others, under the same conditions and in the same place. This commitment applies not only to patients, but also to families, visitors and facility staff, whether they have visible or non-visible disabilities.

Overview of the situation

Nearly 8 out of 10 persons with disabilities have at least one chronic condition. This is a much higher proportion than for people without disabilities. Persons with disabilities are also more likely to smoke and not engage in physical activity. The literature review revealed that persons with disabilities are more likely to develop secondary conditions, i.e., health problems that are more prevalent in them than in the rest of the population.²⁸

The report indicates that persons with disabilities face more barriers to adopting healthy lifestyle habits than the rest of the population. These barriers include dependence on family caregivers, the need for support, the presence of more urgent needs, and difficulties in accessing transportation. It was noted that programs promoting healthy lifestyle habits, specifically adapted to persons with disabilities, would be particularly effective.

In addition, the report highlights the lack of differentiated data regarding access to preventive care for persons with disabilities, especially women's participation in the Québec Breast Cancer Screening Program.

The report suggests that actions be taken to improve accessibility to programs promoting healthy lifestyles and to ensure that persons with disabilities have

²⁸ [Portrait des conditions de vie des personnes handicapées](#) [Portrait of living conditions of persons with disabilities], Office des personnes handicapées du Québec

equal access to preventive care. This would reduce the health inequalities that they experience.

Percentage of Canadians with disabilities, by age group (2017 and 2022)²⁹

Total population aged 15 and older



Youth (15–24 years)



Working-aged adults (25–64 years)



Seniors (65 years and older)



Notes: All changes from 2017 to 2022 are statistically significant.

Source: 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (3251)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Some barriers faced by persons with disabilities and how to address them:

Removing barriers that persons with disabilities face in accessing health care is critical. While these barriers persist in both developed and developing countries, their magnitude varies. Challenges include difficulties in accessing medical care and treatment, therapies, assistive technologies and education, as well as phenomena such as neglect, marginalization, exploitation, stigma and humiliation.

²⁹ [Rate of disability increases in Canada](#), Insurance Portal

Persons with disabilities often experience poorer health than the general population. Until recently, these disparities were often seen as an inevitable consequence of disability. However, it is now widely recognized that these inequalities can be due to discrimination and inequities in access to health care.³⁰

In the health field, stigma and discrimination create additional barriers for persons with disabilities. These barriers are manifested in several ways:

- **Physical barriers**, which prevent persons with disabilities from accessing clinics and hospitals.
- **Information barriers**, which prevent persons with disabilities from accessing medical documentation, brochures and information materials intended for health promotion, prevention and protection.
- **Attitudinal barriers**, which lead to discrimination that can have a significant impact on the rights of persons with disabilities, especially those with psychosocial disabilities.
- **Institutional barriers**, which include legislation, practices and procedures that restrict access to health care for persons with disabilities.

Services for people with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities have also been criticized, particularly because of cultural barriers and communication issues. Differences in access to health and social services may arise depending on the availability of these services. In addition, the quality of services may vary between groups, with some not even aware that certain services exist, either due to their scarcity or because they are not offered to certain groups.

It is important to improve access to the health care system for persons with disabilities and to ensure that it can respond quickly and appropriately to their needs.

Standards and obligations

Under section 61.1 of the *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*,³¹ government departments, the vast majority of public agencies, including health

³⁰ [Inclusive Health Services for Persons with Disabilities, WHO](#)

³¹ 1 CQLR, c. E-20.1

care institutions, and municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants, are required to prepare, adopt and publish an annual action plan for persons with disabilities.

Specifically, the legislation states that this action plan must be developed based on the barriers identified or observed regarding the integration of persons with disabilities and must specify the measures that will be taken in the coming years to address them.

Good practices

The Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 (AODA) is still in force. Hôpital Montfort's policy on access to persons with disabilities combines the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation and the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation, both of which are established under the AODA.

1. Communication

- Communicating with persons with disabilities in a way that is tailored to their specific needs.
- Committing to providing fully accessible telephone services to all patients and clients.
- Offering patients/clients the opportunity to communicate via email, TTY, or relay services if telephone communication is not suitable for their needs or is not available.
- Committing to providing invoices that are accessible to all clients. For this purpose, invoices should be available on request in the following formats: printed copy, large print or email.

2. Assistance

- Persons with disabilities can access public areas with their guide dog or service animal in accordance with infection control procedures.
- If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the establishment ensures that they can enter together and that the person

with a disability has access to their support person for the duration of their presence at these locations.

- The establishment may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person in certain spaces, but only after consulting the person concerned and considering the relevant evidence.

3. Notice of service disruption

The establishment notifies clients, when possible, of any disruption to essential facilities or services that persons with disabilities rely on. This notice shall include the reasons for the disruption, its estimated duration and, if applicable, the available alternative facilities or services. It shall be posted in public entrance areas, at the establishment's service counters and on its website.

3. Accessible formats and communication aids

The establishment ensures that accessible formats and communication aids are provided to the person with disabilities. These formats and communication aids are provided in a timely manner, tailored to the specific accessibility needs of the individual and charged at a cost no greater than that paid by other users.

4. Training of professionals

Educating health service professionals about the care needs of persons with disabilities is of fundamental importance. Beyond understanding their rights and their specific issues, organizations representing these individuals highlighted the ongoing attitudinal barriers in health care, such as condescending and ignorant attitudes by front-line staff. Negative attitudes and mistaken beliefs create major barriers to health care delivery for persons with disabilities.

Actions to make health care services truly inclusive need to address these attitudinal barriers, not least by training health care professionals in the rights of people with disabilities. It is crucial to involve front-line care providers in such training, as they are in daily contact with persons with disabilities. Training is therefore essential to strengthen organizational and individual capacities in order

to offer a range of health services so that persons with disabilities can fully integrate into their communities and live rewarding lives.

5. Accessibility standards

The Fédération des médecins de France proposes accessibility standards regarding the entrance, waiting rooms and treatment rooms.³² Specific criteria must be met to ensure easy and secure access.

Particularities according to disability type

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) requires the participation of persons with disabilities in the development of [accessibility plans](#). About [6.2 million Canadians have disabilities](#). Understanding the different types of disabilities and the barriers they face is vital in promoting their inclusion.

Different types of disabilities include:

- [Vision or seeing disabilities](#)
- [Hearing disabilities](#)
- [Mobility, flexibility and dexterity disabilities](#)
- [Pain-related disabilities](#)
- [Learning disabilities](#)
- [Developmental disabilities](#)
- [Mental health-related disabilities](#)
- [Memory disabilities](#)

Available resources

- Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER H.19
- [Medical Council of Canada Policy](#) on new accessibility standards introduced under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, AODA.

³² [Les normes d'accessibilité](#) [Accessibility standards], Fédération des Médecins de France

- [Accessibility policy for people with disabilities](#), Monfort.
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#): legislation that sets out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards.
- World Health Organization, [Inclusive Health Services for Persons with Disabilities](#) - PDF.
- [Annex: Key disability considerations and concepts](#), Government of Canada.
- [Salle d'attente d'un cabinet médical](#) [Medical practice waiting room], Orisha Healthcare.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in health services, also consult the following fact sheets:

[4. Digital communications](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[20. Environmental health](#)

[24. Social services](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

[29. Urban planning](#)

[30. Violence and safety](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with André Prévost and Mathieu Noël (COPHAN).



24. Social services

Social services in Québec: Critical gaps for persons with disabilities

What social services are available in Québec?

Social services for persons with disabilities in Québec are a major social issue. They aim to ensure the inclusion, dignity and well-being of this vulnerable population. This sheet provides an overview of the facts, current situation, available statistics and recommendations regarding these services.

Québec has several laws and regulatory frameworks designed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. These include the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, the *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*, and the government's *À part entière* policy, focusing on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Social services include a range of supports, including:

- Assistance with daily living and accompaniment
- Adaptation of the living environment
- Access to education, employment and recreation
- Technical and technological assistance

Despite significant progress, persons with disabilities in Québec still face many challenges. These include limited access to services, architectural and social barriers, discrimination and a lack of public awareness. These barriers underscore the importance of intensifying efforts to ensure a truly inclusive and equitable society.

Overview of the situation

Although services are available, many persons with disabilities face barriers to accessing them. These challenges include long waiting lists, restrictive eligibility criteria and complex administrative procedures.

Despite improvements in social inclusion, these individuals continue to endure isolation, stigma and marginalization in various aspects of social, cultural and community life.

The current state of social services in Québec is marked by significant fragmentation, which severely undermines the effectiveness and quality of the supports offered. This fragmentation results in:

- The dispersal of responsibilities among several government agencies
- Uncoordinated programs and services
- Gaps in continuity of care and support

Causes and their impacts

1. Multiple players and inefficient resources

The diversity of actors involved in the delivery of social services often results in duplication and overlap. This creates confusion for users and hinders the efficient use of public resources. For example, health services, social services, rehabilitation services and employment assistance programs are often managed by different departments or agencies. This dynamic complicates the coordination of interventions and the overall management of the needs of individuals.

2. Breaks in continuity of care

This fragmentation can lead to interruptions in continuity of care, negatively impacting the quality of life of those affected. For example, a person with a disability may encounter significant barriers when transitioning from one service to another. These barriers lead to delays in access to care, gaps in follow-up, and, in some cases, a deterioration in the individual's overall condition.

3. Heightened stigma and marginalization

This fragmentation of social services exacerbates barriers between different sectors of society, limiting access to holistic and integrated services. This contributes to stigma and marginalization, thus impairing the autonomy, social inclusion and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Home care in need of support ^{33 and 34}

Home care is a lifeline for many persons with disabilities in Québec. These services allow individuals to receive the necessary care while enjoying the comfort and familiarity of their own homes. Skilled professionals such as nurses, caregivers and therapists, provide invaluable support in the areas of medical care, assistance with daily living, rehabilitation and emotional support. This personalized care promotes autonomy, dignity and quality of life for recipients, while reducing costs and pressure on health care facilities.

However, despite its crucial role, home care in Québec faces numerous challenges:

- **Extended waiting lists:** many people remain uncertain and desperate in the face of endless wait times to access services.
- **Insufficient funding:** limited resources prevent a service offering tailored to real needs.
- **A shortage of qualified staff:** this undermines the availability and quality of home care.
- **The burden on families:** often responsible for providing much of the informal care, families are often exhausted and struggling financially. This state of chronic fatigue can lead to burnout, requiring increased support.

³³ [Soins à domicile | Les listes d'attente s'allongent](#), La Presse

³⁴ [Soutien à domicile | Une réponse « faible » aux besoins des Québécois](#), La Presse

In conclusion, social services for persons with disabilities in Québec play a vital role in their participation and full integration into society. Nevertheless, ongoing challenges require concerted action and policy measures to ensure:

- Equitable access to services
- Better organization of care
- Support for informal caregivers
- Real social inclusion

As noted by Health and Welfare Commissioner Joanne Castonguay:

[Translation] *“Despite an increase in financial resources in recent years, few people are getting the care and services they really need. Increasing budgets without reviewing the organization of services therefore seems to have a limited impact.”*

Standards and obligations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international treaty adopted in 2006 to safeguard and promote the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. Canada, along with 183 other States Parties, is committed to complying with the legal obligations set out in the CRPD.

Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement in their living conditions. They shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability.
2. States Parties also recognize the right of persons with disabilities to equitable social protection and undertake to:

- a) Ensure equal access to drinking water services, and to ensure access to appropriate and affordable services, devices and other assistance for disability-related needs.
- b) Ensure access to social protection programs and poverty reduction programs, particularly for women and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities.
- c) Provide adequate public assistance to persons with disabilities and their families living in poverty to cover disability-related expenses. This includes training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care services.
- d) Facilitate access to social housing programs for persons with disabilities.
- e) Ensure equal access to retirement programs and benefits for persons with disabilities.

Good practices

Enhancing home support is a must for inclusion

Improving the accessibility of the home support program (SAD) for persons with disabilities is a key priority.

Canada and Québec stand out for disproportionately allocating resources to housing at the expense of home care. In Québec, 9.4% of people aged 65 and over live in long-term care facilities, compared with 6.8% in Canada and about 4% in countries such as France, Germany, Norway and the Netherlands. This high proportion of accommodation, which is far more expensive, illustrates an inefficiency in budget allocations.³⁵

³⁵[*Soins à domicile : Le statu quo ne sera plus possible*](#) [Home care: Status quo no longer possible]

The majority of persons with disabilities do not want to live in long-term care facilities (CHSLDs). They wish to remain at home and actively participate in society without moving into institutions that are costly and often ill-adapted. Investing more in home support would avoid such investments in institutional settings (CHSLDs, seniors' homes, etc.), while offering a more human and affordable alternative.

Home support challenges

The Home Support Program (SAD) is seen as a critical solution but currently suffers from multiple gaps, including:

- **Underfunding:** The Québec SAD receives fewer resources than other Canadian provinces and Commonwealth countries.
- **Inequitable accessibility:** Disparities between local CLSC, CES, EESAD and other agencies, as well as between regions limit equitable access to services.
- **Unsatisfactory performance:** Too little of the budget is allocated to direct services in the field, and administrative red tape undermines the effectiveness of the funding.

In addition, clientele living with physical disabilities (PD), intellectual disabilities (ID) or autism spectrum disorders (ASD) require adapted care that is distinct from that of people experiencing loss of autonomy. These people are often professionally active or doing apprenticeships and require flexible services that meet their specific needs.

Priority actions

To address these challenges and strengthen the effectiveness of the home support program, it is necessary to:

1. Increase the SAD budget to ensure adequate funding.
2. Differentiate between clients (PD-ID-ASD and people experiencing loss of autonomy) in terms of service and organization.
3. Reduce red tape to improve program performance and efficiency.

4. Ensure equitable accessibility across territories and regions.
5. Review the CES terms according to users' needs:
 - a. Adjust the allocation of hours based on actual needs.
 - b. Standardize support worker compensation across jurisdictions and institutions.
6. Reduce waiting lists to respond quickly to requests.
7. Invest in training and recruiting qualified staff, including nurses, caregivers and therapists.

At the same time, it is essential to develop initiatives to raise public awareness of disability issues by:

- Promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of society.
- Supporting community organizations engaged in the fight against stigma and social isolation.

Reforming the Home Support Program (SAD) requires a concerted effort between governments, community organizations, social service professionals and persons with disabilities. Together, they can create a more inclusive, effective and adapted system, guaranteeing everyone the right to live with dignity and be fully integrated into society.

Available resources

- **Boivin, L., Bernstein, S., & Verville, M.-H.** (2023). *Un travail de soins à valoriser : Pour une pleine protection des travailleuses employées via le programme québécois d'Allocation Directe/Chèque Emploi-Service* [Making the most of care work: Full protection for employees under Québec's Direct Allowance–Service Employment Paycheque program], [Au bas de l'échelle research report](#).
- **Health and Welfare Commissioner (HWC).** (2023). [Bien vieillir chez soi - Tome 1 : Comprendre l'écosystème](#). [Aging well at home - Volume 1: Understanding the ecosystem]._

- **Health and Welfare Commissioner (HWC).** (2023). [*Bien vieillir chez soi - Tome 2 : Chiffrer la performance*](#) [Aging well at home - Volume 2: Quantifying performance].
- **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).** [*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*](#), United Nations.
- **Lavoie-Moore, M.** (2021). [*Le chèque emploi-service améliore-t-il les services à domicile au Québec ?*](#) [Does the service employment paycheque program improve home care in Québec?], IRIS.
- **AREQ.** [*Les soins et services à domicile au Québec : Pour mieux vous orienter dans le réseau de la santé et des services sociaux*](#) [Home care and services in Québec: Guide to navigating the health and social services network].
- **CREEI.** [*Le financement du soutien à l'autonomie des personnes âgées à la croisée des chemins*](#) [Funding support for seniors at a crossroads].

Related fact sheets in this guide

The following fact sheets are influenced by the limited income of persons with disabilities:

[4. Digital communications](#)

[6. Post-secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[13. Housing](#)

[23. Health services](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Dominique Salgado (CAPVISH), with feedback from COPHAN.



In memory of Serge Poulin, General Director of RUTA Montréal

25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit

Transportation: the foundation of social participation

Overview of the situation

Transportation is the cornerstone of social participation. Without it, it becomes almost impossible for persons with disabilities to access health services, education, employment, or even recreation. In several regions of Québec, paratransit is in a fragile state, a situation amplified by a precarious supply of alternative transportation. This directly impacts essential services such as pre-hospital emergency care (ambulances).

Moreover, the current reality does not take into account the risks faced by citizens who turn to alternative and sometimes illegal means of transport that fall far short of the expected safety standards (lack of permit, inadequate driver training, non-compliant vehicles, etc.). It also ignores the impact of the ever-increasing cost of living resulting from the pandemic and international conflicts.

Paratransit in Québec suffers from a glaring lack of funding and political attention. It is also affected by Bill 17 (taxi reform), particularly in the regions, which compromises the accessibility and quality of services for persons with disabilities. These issues deserve urgent and ongoing attention from the government.

Some specific barriers and how to address them:

Paratransit is much more than a service—it is a vital necessity to ensure the independence and dignity of persons with disabilities. It is imperative that concrete actions be taken to strengthen this pillar of social participation, in collaboration with all stakeholders.

Taxi transportation: necessary measures

In the taxi industry, several solutions could improve the situation:

- Tax credits and measures: Provide tax incentives to facilitate driver recruitment.
- Local calls for tenders: Encourage local businesses to bid in calls for tenders to support the regional economy.
- Improved working conditions: Review driver compensation to make salaries more competitive.

Reform of the *Programme de subvention aux véhicules collectifs* is essential. This could include:

- Adapting used vehicles in good condition rather than requiring new vehicles.
- Increased subsidies to cover modification costs and inclusion of minibuses.
- Support for vehicle purchases, given prices have increased significantly.
- Driver training to ensure quality service.

In September 2023, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport and Sustainable Mobility, Geneviève Guilbault, announced an annual increase of \$3 million to renew and increase the fleet of adapted vehicles. However, there are still many needs to be met.

Sustainable mobility action plan

The sustainable mobility action plan of the Ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable (MTMDQ) includes provisions for paratransit. However, to ensure more effective management, municipal groupings are needed, accompanied by equitable financial means and transparent accountability. Better participation of persons with disabilities in the management of complaints is also expected, with a view to inclusion, safety and dignity. This issue is critically important because without transportation, access to health services, education, employment and recreation becomes extremely difficult.

Consultation committee on paratransit

In October 2023, Geneviève Guilbault also announced the creation of a consultation committee on paratransit, a commitment made to the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN). This committee, chaired by the MNA for Drummond-Bois-Francs, Sébastien Schneeberger, will propose concrete solutions based on customer needs to improve the accessibility and quality of services.

Good practices

In Québec:

Some regions benefit from an organized transportation company or a paratransit service. However, other more isolated or less structured regions struggle to provide adequate services, especially since users have little or no involvement in the organization of the services intended for them. The paratransit program needs to become more accessible and more structured throughout Québec. Accountability and active participation of users must also be strengthened. Accounting statements alone don't tell the whole story. It is crucial to provide other data such as ridership, refusals of service and late trips that negatively impacted users lives.

In Canada:

Vancouver is regarded as a model for public transit accessibility. All vehicles, including buses, trains and the Seabus ferry, as well as stations and terminals, are fully accessible to people with mobility disabilities.³⁶

In British Columbia and Alberta, all taxis are accessible, allowing persons with disabilities to call a taxi and pay by meter. This example could inspire Québec, which could gradually replace its current taxis with accessible vehicles.

International:

Toulouse also stands out as a model to follow, with all infrastructure, including public transit, accessible to people with mobility disabilities.³⁷

³⁶ [Vancouver, un « modèle à suivre » en matière d'accessibilité](#), Radio-Canada

³⁷ *Mobilité et handicap : trouver des transports adaptés*, MDPH Haute-Garonne (31)

Particularities according to disability type

Neurodivergent individuals require specific adaptations when using the various transportation modes. This may include, for example, social inclusion efforts by other users and increased flexibility by carriers to reserve dedicated and adapted spaces.

In 2010, the Regroupement des usagers du transport adapté (RUTA Montréal), a member of COPHAN, developed the [*Guide des besoins des personnes ayant des limitations fonctionnelles en matière de transport en commun*](#) [Guide to public transit needs guide of persons with functional limitations]. Intended to promote universal accessibility, this guide lists the needs of persons with different functional limitations when using regular public transport.

Available resources

Documents

- [*Vancouver, un « modèle à suivre » en matière d'accessibilité*](#), Radio-Canada: Find out how Vancouver stands out for its public transit accessibility initiatives.
- [*Mobilité et handicap : trouver des transports adaptés*](#), MDPH Haute-Garonne (31): Guide to using paratransit services, with practical tips for persons with disabilities.
- [*Guide des besoins des personnes ayant des limitations fonctionnelles en matière de transport en commun*](#), RUTA Montréal: A practical tool identifying the needs of users with different functional limitations, developed to promote universal accessibility in public transit.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in accessible paratransit services, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[21. Customer service](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Mathieu Noël (COPHAN), in collaboration with Paul Lupien (COPHAN President and INÉÉI-PSH representative), Serge Poulin (RUTA de Montréal), André Prévost (COPHAN) and Martin Richer (RUTADP).



27. Air and train travel

Accessible and inclusive air and train travel

What is accessible and inclusive air and train travel?

Transportation is considered accessible and inclusive when each step of the journey is predictable, safe and barrier-free. Services must be designed to meet the needs of all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

The particularities of air and rail transportation

Air and rail transportation, as well as buses, subways or paratransit, are forms of public transportation. However, they are distinguished by their use primarily for long-distance travel, particularly across large geographic areas such as Québec or Canada.

All modes of public transit have challenges related to the accessibility of infrastructure, vehicles, information and assistance. However, long-distance travel presents additional challenges due to its length and possible border crossings. These challenges include:

- Baggage management
- Reservations
- Boarding and disembarkation procedures
- Access to adapted toilets or to food
- Intermodality, where passengers find themselves in unknown places

The division of responsibilities among the different levels of government in Canada means that accessibility is not always the same between regions. Moreover, the international nature of the standards that govern these industries makes it difficult to implement changes. To ensure true accessibility in air and rail transportation, strong leadership from the authorities is essential. Effective coordination among levels of government and a proactive approach are crucial to overcoming barriers and improving these modes of transportation.

Overview of the situation

Despite strict federal regulations, nearly two-thirds of the 2.2 million persons with disabilities who traveled in 2019 and 2020 encountered barriers on planes and trains. Although consultations were held, the [Auditor General of Canada's report](#) highlights several issues, including a lack of staff training, inadequate complaint management and digital accessibility challenges. The shortcomings do not concern the specific obligations or action plans, but rather their implementation.

On the aviation side, the issues are particularly concerning. The media frequently report incidents involving broken or forgotten mobility aids, as well as cases of mistreatment, especially during boarding procedures. The situation has become so critical that a [National Air Accessibility Summit](#) was held in 2024 to address these issues.

In terms of domestic travel in Québec, airlines and railways are subject to much less stringent obligations than at the federal level. This lack of a rigorous framework results in accessibility gaps that make it difficult for persons with disabilities to travel, even on recently commissioned services. EXO commuter trains, especially on the [Montréal-Mascouche](#) lines, as well as the [Réseau Express Métropolitain](#) (REM), are good examples where the needs of persons with disabilities have been neglected.

These findings highlight the urgency of concerted action to improve accessibility and ensure inclusive and respectful travel experiences for all.

Standards and obligations

There are regulatory frameworks to guide organizations towards more inclusive practices. Some are mandatory, while others encourage organizations to go further.

Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations (ATPDR)

Adopted in 2019, after nearly 25 years of changing practices, the [ATPDR](#) sets out mandatory requirements for various interprovincial modes of transportation. The requirements cover air, rail, marine and bus transportation, as well as security

and border checks. There are administrative monetary penalties for non-compliance.

Two complementary regulations reinforce this legislation:

- The [*Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations*](#), which specifies certain obligations.
- The [*Personnel Training for the Assistance of Persons with Disabilities Regulations*](#), which applies to medium-sized carriers.

Transit standards in Ontario and Manitoba

Ontario imposes [*strict accessibility standards*](#) in public transit, as does Manitoba with its [*Accessible Transportation Standard Regulation*](#).

Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration (E-20.1)

In Québec, section 67 of this act requires public transit authorities to prepare a “development program for the purpose of providing, within a reasonable period, public transportation for handicapped persons within the territory served by it”.

These regulatory and normative frameworks are essential tools to ensure equitable access to transportation for persons with disabilities, while encouraging organizations to adopt more inclusive and proactive practices.

Good practices to strengthen the air and rail transportation component of your action plan

Harmonizing practices across the different territories and modes of transportation is essential to guarantee an accessible transportation chain. Here are some concrete measures to incorporate into your action plans. Strategies are divided between service providers and provincial authorities. Other fact sheets in this guide should also be consulted, such as those covering evacuation, communication or customer service measures.

1. Recommended practices for service providers

Acting on the entire travel chain

- **Adopting voluntary standards:** For providers not subject to legal obligations, voluntarily aligning practices with standards such as those of the ATPDR or of Ontario or Manitoba.
- **Auditing the stages of the customer journey:** Identifying gaps at each stage (information, purchasing, boarding, customs). Société Logique's [*Guide pratique pour l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre d'un plan de développement*](#) [Practical guide for preparing and implementing a development plan] provides a detailed methodology for transit authorities.
- **Carrying out exploratory walks:** Collaborating with travellers with disabilities to assess existing infrastructure and vehicles.
- **Establishing service standards:** Documenting and communicating clear procedures for boarding and disembarking persons with disabilities.

Making the experience predictable and safe

- **Informing users on accessibility:** Publishing clear information on network accessibility and adapted services on your website. Any incidents or breakdowns should be mentioned.
 - For example, the [Accessible travel](#) section on Air Canada's website describes aircraft features, while the SNCF uses plain language and pictograms to effectively present its [adapted services](#).
- **Designing visual aids:** Facilitating understanding of the various stages of the journey via emergency measure videos, guides or specialized tools:
 - [Taking a trip in VIA Rail's Accessible Train Cars](#).
 - The series [Take Charge of Your Travel: A Guide for Travellers with Disabilities](#) produced by the Canadian Transportation Agency
 - The visual guide [Prendre l'avion](#) [Taking the plane] by Autism Little Learners and Air Transat.

Encouraging innovation in accessibility

- **Collecting disaggregated data:** Measuring the impact of the programs on passengers with disabilities.
- **Creating an exchange network:** Establishing cross-organizational partnerships to share innovations and best practices.
- **Testing new technologies:** Incorporating usability testing to anticipate needs and gaps.
- **Proactive monitoring:** Monitoring regulatory and technological developments to ensure projects align with emerging issues. Here are some concrete examples:
 - The [new Air Carrier Access Act \(ACAA\) measures](#) proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) aim to respond to the finding that [more than 1.38%](#) mobility aids are damaged during journeys.
 - The requirement for [accessible toilets in new single-aisle planes](#), planned for 2026 in the United States.
 - The development of [prototype seat designs](#) allowing people in wheelchairs to remain in their wheelchair during the flight.
- **Conducting innovative pilot projects:** Testing innovative systems to improve the experience for travellers with disabilities, such as:
 - The [Mon assistant visuel](#) application, which transcribes the announcements made orally on board SNCF trains.
 - The [WHILL Autonomous Drive System](#), a motorized mobility aid capable of moving autonomously.
 - [Adapted baggage carts](#) for use with a mobility aid.
 - Spatial tracking solutions for blind people, such as [Navilens](#) for EXO or [Aira](#) for the Toronto-Pearson Airport.
- **Developing targeted and inclusive programs:** Proposing initiatives that meet the specific needs of a diverse clientele:

- The Sunflower program by [Montréal Airport](#), which allows travellers with non-visible limitations to discreetly signal their accommodation needs.
- The ARTM's [Mobilité inclusive](#) program, which helps persons with disabilities learn how to use the regular network.
- The [Premium Kids](#) program deployed by Aéroports de Montréal and its partners to familiarize children with the various airport processes.
- Air Canada's [buffer zone](#) aims to reduce the presence of allergens around people with severe allergies.

Developing actions in collaboration with a multitude of partners and service providers

- **Engaging complementary service providers:** Designing specific projects or components to involve nearby businesses, the local transport network and taxi services. The aim is to ensure optimum fluidity in the journey.
 - For example, in 2022, Aéroports de Montréal introduced a [category of adapted taxis to its permit system](#).
- **Strengthening partnerships to clarify accessibility responsibilities:** Implementing initiatives that clearly define the chain of responsibilities, whether for travel or site accessibility. Railway crossings and multi-modal travel are good examples of this approach.
- **Promoting inclusion among partners:** Adopting a policy to reserve at least one position for a person with a disability or a representative association in partner bodies.
 - For example, Aéroports de Montréal's [Community Advisory Committee](#) already applies this practice.
- **Complying with legal requirements regarding representation:** The [Act respecting public transit authorities \(S-30.01\)](#) requires a paratransit user to sit on the board of directors of the transport companies concerned (section 83).

2. Recommended practices for provincial authorities

Empowering service providers to improve their accessibility

- **Adopting stringent provincial transportation accessibility legislation or standards:** Drawing on the requirements of the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations* (ATPDR) or legislation in force in Ontario and Manitoba. These standards should cover infrastructure, vehicles, information and assistance, compliance timeframes and penalties for non-compliance. Intermodality issues must also be included in these requirements.

- **Implementing a centralized data system for passengers with disabilities:** Developing an integrated platform including a single medical form, as proposed during the [Summit](#).
- **Revising subsidy programs to incorporate accessibility criteria:**
 - Making all funding requests subject to accessibility conditions being met.
 - Providing a verification mechanism and a reimbursement clause for non-compliance with accessibility obligations.
- **Creating a subsidy program dedicated to upgrading accessibility:** Funding initiatives to ensure accessibility at all stages of the travel journey.
 - For example, the program [*Aide financière à la transformation d'autobus accessibles aux personnes se déplaçant en fauteuil roulant*](#) [Financial assistance for wheelchair-accessible bus conversions] is useful, although it remains insufficient on its own.
- **Encouraging accessibility innovation through specific grants:** Proposing a program to promote and support innovative solutions that improve accessibility in transportation and infrastructure.

Available resources

Subsidies

The Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility offers several subsidies related to [air and rail transportation](#) and for the [rail transportation of transit companies](#). Municipalities may also benefit from a [level crossing development subsidy](#).

Documents

- The [Accessible transportation](#) section, Canadian Transportation Agency.
- [Improving Transport Accessibility for All: Guide to Good Practice](#), European Conference of Ministers of Transport.

- [Examples of design and safety features to improve railway crossings](#), Transportation Safety Board of Canada.
- [Accessibilité des traversées piétonnes aux passages à niveau](#) [Pedestrian crossing accessibility at level crossings], Cerema publications.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To promote inclusion in air and rail transportation, also consult the following fact sheets:

[1. Procurement](#)

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[4. Digital communications](#)

[5. Design and delivery of programs and services](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[21. Customer service](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Julie-Anne Perrault, universal accessibility consultant, with feedback from Kéroul, and Mohamed Reda Khomsi (ESG UQAM).



28. Neurodevelopmental disorders

Understanding neurodevelopmental disorders

What is a neurodevelopmental disorder?

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDs) are behavioural and cognitive disorders that arise during the development period. They involve significant difficulties in the acquisition and execution of specific intellectual, motor, language, or social functions.³⁸ These disorders, which affect various aspects of development, manifest themselves to varying degrees, ranging from specific limitations to more general alterations.

Neurodevelopment refers to the development of the brain and the neural connections to ensure its proper functioning. These disorders have significant impacts on many aspects of life, such as learning, emotions, memory, attention and socialization.

NDs result from genetic and biological predispositions, but also from external factors (socio-cultural, emotional and environmental). They usually begin in early childhood or even during pregnancy and persist into adulthood. Disorders can also coexist (comorbidity), meaning that one person may have multiple disorders at the same time. In addition, health or mental health problems such as sleep disorders, digestive problems, anxiety or depression are frequently associated with NDs.

These disorders, often diagnosed in childhood, can still be identified later in life. A comprehensive approach is therefore essential to consider all dimensions of NDs and their interaction with other health issues.

Main neurodevelopmental disorders according to the DMS-5

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DMS-5) is a global reference used to diagnose and classify mental disorders. It provides detailed diagnostic criteria that are essential for mental health professionals.

³⁸ WHO definition

The list below shows the main NDs and their characteristics. However, it is crucial to remember that each individual is unique, and the combination and intensity of symptoms vary considerably from person to person.

1. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

- Permanent neurodevelopmental difference, where people perceive, think and interact in unique ways. This disorder can affect sensory integration, social communication, emotional and behavioural regulation, and the performance of certain tasks.³⁹

2. Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

- Persistent difficulties managing attention: lapses in attention, difficulty maintaining sustained attention, resisting distractions, or organizing and completing tasks. Frequent forgetfulness, a tendency to lose objects, and difficulty in controlling movements, behaviours and emotions are often observed.⁴⁰

3. Specific learning disorders

- Including *dys* disorders:
 - *Dyslexia*: difficulty identifying words when reading.
 - *Dysorthography*: difficulties related to acquisition of spelling.
 - *Dyscalculie*: difficulty understanding and using numbers.
 - *Dyspraxia* or developmental coordination disorder: difficulties with movement and coordination.
 - *Dysphasia* or language development disorder: difficulties with oral language.

³⁹ [Autism: Overview](#), Canada.ca

⁴⁰ [Association des médecins psychiatres du Québec](#)

4. Tourette syndrome

- Characterized by repetitive and involuntary motor and vocal tics, which may vary in frequency and severity. These tics include sudden movements or involuntary vocalizations.

5. Intellectual development disorder (ID)

- Results in significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, impacting social, practical and conceptual skills.⁴¹ The term *intellectual disability* or *intellectual development disability* is preferred to *intellectual deficiency* because of its stigmatizing connotation.

Overview of the situation

Since access to a diagnosis is sometimes difficult, it is hard to accurately assess the percentage of the population with a neurodevelopmental disorder (ND). It is estimated that [15 to 20% of the population](#) has a language-related learning disability, [1.5%](#) autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and [6 to 17%](#) attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Due to the frequency of comorbidities and under-diagnosis, particularly among women, a realistic estimate of the population with ND sits at 15 to 20%⁴².

Although the diagnosis is usually made during childhood, some people are not diagnosed until they are adults. In Québec, many programs and initiatives have been developed in recent years to promote the optimal development of children and improve services for those experiencing difficulties. Despite these advances, services related to neurodevelopmental disorders remain insufficient, particularly in terms of accessibility, efficiency, coordination and continuity of services.

Neuroinclusion: An approach for all

The term *neuroinclusion* is increasingly used to refer to the inclusion of people who are neurodivergent, neurotypical and/or have neurodegenerative disease.

⁴¹ [Vers une meilleure intégration des soins et des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience](#) [Towards better integration of care and services for persons with disabilities], Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

⁴² [Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults](#), PMC

- **Neurodivergent:** refers to persons whose neurological functioning differs from the norm, with or without a formal diagnosis.
- **Neurotypical:** describes individuals whose neurological functioning is considered standard and who do not have a specific neurological condition.
- **Neurodegenerative disease:** refers to a medical condition marked by progressive deterioration of neurons and the nervous system.

Neuroinclusion aims to create an environment where every individual, regardless of their neurological condition, feels respected, supported and encouraged to thrive in all aspects of their life: educational, social, medical and professional.⁴³

In an employment context, for example, this may include:

- Physical adjustment of the premises (ergonomic arrangements).
- The addition of work accessories or supporting software.
- Tailoring tasks to reflect employees' specific strengths and challenges.

Promoting neuroinclusion helps build open, safe and accessible environments for all.

Standards and obligations

In Canada, there are no accessibility standards specifically focused on neurodevelopmental disorders (NDs). However, certain accessibility standards and obligations can benefit people living with these conditions.

At the federal level:

- **[Accessible Canada Act](#)**
Adopted in 2019, this law aims to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040. Its objective is to recognize, remove and prevent barriers to the full and equitable participation of persons with disabilities, including those with NDs. Areas of federal jurisdiction covered by the Act include:

⁴³ [Neurodiversity website](#)

- The built environment (buildings, infrastructure).
- Communications (websites, accessible documents)
- Transportation (accessibility of transportation networks).
-
- **Building accessibility standards**

Issued by the [National Building Code of Canada](#), these standards include requirements for ramps, elevators, accessible washrooms and designated parking spaces. Although not specifically intended for NDs, these measures facilitate access for many persons with disabilities.

At the provincial level:

- [**Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights \(E-20.1\)**](#)

The purpose of this legislation is to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to promote their academic, professional and social integration in Québec. It is based on the engagement of government departments and their networks, municipalities, and public and private organizations.

The objective is to develop measures adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities and their families, taking into account their living environment and promoting the creation of dedicated resources and services.

- [**Québec Construction Code**](#)

This code establishes accessibility standards to facilitate access to and use of public buildings, work spaces and public spaces for persons with disabilities. These standards cover access ramps, accessible washrooms, designated parking spaces and adapted elevators.

- [**Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms \(C-12\)**](#)

This charter recognizes that all human beings are equal in worth and dignity. Section 10 prohibits discrimination based on disability or the use of any means to palliate a disability. It also places an obligation on employers to accommodate the needs of employees requiring workplace adjustments.

It is important to note that these standards and regulations are intended to promote the inclusion and participation of all persons with disabilities, including those with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Good practices

There are many ways to promote neuroinclusion in schools, workplaces and daily interactions. However, it is necessary to understand that automatically applying a set of recommendations, regardless of the context and its implications, can lead to misunderstanding or frustration on both sides. The needs and preferences in

terms of environment, communication and attitude vary considerably from one neurodivergent person to another. In addition, these preferences may change over time or depending on the situation. For example, while a recommendation may be appropriate for a person in a given context, it may be inadequate or even harmful in other circumstances.

That said, it should be noted that, in most cases, adjustments made to accommodate persons with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDs) benefit everyone. A predictable environment, offering choices (social or sensory) and characterized by spatial and organizational coherence, constitutes a neuroinclusive environment that meets the needs of all.

Finally, it is essential to remember that each person has their own unique characteristics and needs. Offering a diversity of choice is often more relevant than imposing a uniform solution.

1. Built environment

- Prioritizing architectural safety: using solid materials, minimizing sharp edges of furniture or decorative elements, and managing access points to ensure safety.
- Promoting comfort and consistency of ambience: reducing excessive sensory stimuli such as loud noises, ambient noises (air conditioning, fans), bright lights and other sensory distractions where possible.
- Providing flexible accommodations: including spaces such as sensory rooms or quiet areas where individuals can withdraw when needed.
- Organizing the space in an orderly and predictable manner.
- Creating transition spaces in a thoughtful way: for example, areas between two rooms or between the outside and the inside to prepare for the next environment.
- Matching colours of rooms to activities:
 - Purple and blue tones: soothing and neutral.
 - Shades of green: comfortable and relaxing.

- Yellow to red hues: stimulating but potentially too intense.
- Allowing freedom of choice in socialization: organizing the space so that individuals can be alone, in groups or interact at their own pace. A gradual progression of spaces, ranging from private to communal spaces, can be beneficial.

2. Communication

- Using clear, precise and direct language.
- Providing detailed and explicit instructions.
- Using language that is respectful and non-stigmatizing.
- Multiplying communication channels (visual, written, oral, etc.) to provide universal access to information.
- At school, offering students the opportunity to listen to audiobooks instead of reading them.
- Facilitating wayfinding with diverse signage.

3. Attitude

- Recognizing that each person is unique: characteristics and reactions vary from one individual with one ND to another.
- Demonstrating patience and active listening.
- Asking an individual's preferences in order to adapt workplace interactions and environments.

4. Policy

- Implementing an inclusion policy.
- Organizing awareness campaigns to inform and train teams.
- Adapting the recruitment process to ensure it is inclusive.

- Arranging accommodation measures: adjusting schedules and tasks and providing adapted equipment.

These good practices create respectful and inclusive environments where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

Available resources

Training

- [Autoformation : Mieux accueillir les personnes handicapées – Le trouble du spectre de l'autisme](#) [Self study: How to better welcome persons with disabilities – autism spectrum disorder], Government of Québec
- [Mieux comprendre ce qu'est l'autisme](#) [Better understanding autism], Centre d'expertise en autisme SACCADE.
- [Training on neurodevelopmental disorders](#), Centre de formation CENOPe.
- [Training on ADHD](#), Fondation Philippe Laprise.
- [Training on intellectual development disorders](#), [Québec Intellectual Disability Society](#).

Subsidies

In Québec, several programs, action plans and measures have been put in place to support the optimal development of children and improve the service offering for those experiencing difficulties or developmental delays. This list provides a variety of tools to support inclusion and meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

- **Federal:**
 - [Child Disability Benefit \(CDB\)](#): financial assistance for families of children under 18 years of age with severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions.
 - [Registered Disability Savings Plan \(RDSP\)](#): a long-term savings plan for persons with disabilities that can be enhanced by grants.
- **Provincial:**
 - [Supplement for Handicapped Children](#): financial assistance to help families pay for the care and education of a child with significant limitations.
 - [Allowance for Special Needs Program – Youth](#): financial assistance for the education of children with significant disabilities affecting their learning.
 - [Allowance for Special Needs Program – Adults](#): financial assistance for adults with a recognized permanent disability.
 - [Family Support Program](#): direct allowance for families caring for a person with a physical, intellectual or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) on a daily basis.
 - [Assistive devices programs](#): Reimbursement of expenses for specialized assistive devices related to various types of disabilities.

Foundations

- [Fondation Philippe Laprise](#): Awareness and engagement initiatives to improve the future of those affected by ADHD.
- [Fondation Autiste et majeur](#): Support for social integration and quality of life for adults with autism.
- [Fondation Véro & Louis](#): Creation of permanent and adapted living environments for people with autism aged 21 and over.

Documents

- [Info-troubles : Développement](#), Association québécoise des neuropsychologues.
- [Trajectoires de services menant à l'évaluation diagnostique des troubles neurodéveloppementaux chez les enfants](#) [Care pathways leading to the diagnostic assessment of neurodevelopmental disorders in children], Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux.
- [Comprendre la neurodiversité, viser la neuroinclusion : Vocabulaire et outils de réflexion](#) [Understanding neurodiversity, aiming for neuroinclusion: Vocabulary and reflective tools], Collectif autisme de l'UQAM.
- [Facilitating Neuromixed Communication in the Workplace, Crispesh.](#)
- [Inclusive Design for Neurodiversity: Creating Harmonious Spaces for a Diverse Future](#), Modulyss (Belgium).
- [Designing for Neurodiversity and Inclusion](#), Work Design Magazine.

Websites

- [Association québécoise des neuropsychologues.](#)
- [Fédération québécoise de l'autisme.](#)
- [Institut des troubles d'apprentissage.](#)
- [Association québécoise du syndrome de la Tourette.](#)
- [Québec Intellectual Disability Society.](#)

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion of neurodevelopmental disorders, also consult the following fact sheets:

[3. Oral and written communication](#)

[7. Elementary and secondary education](#)

[8. Employment](#)

[9. Built environment](#)

[24. Social services](#)

Fact sheet prepared by Idéaux, inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm, with the collaboration of Irini Blais, Neuro-inclusive Accommodations Advisor.



29. Urban planning

Planning accessible and inclusive cities

What is an accessible and inclusive city?

An inclusive city offers spaces designed and developed in a way that ensures universal accessibility, allowing everyone, regardless of their level of ability, to travel and participate fully in social, democratic and economic life. These locations must be sufficiently varied and close to one another so that users can get around quickly and safely to carry out their daily activities.

An accessible and inclusive city is underpinned by three key elements:

1. Firstly, it ensures public and private spaces are universally accessible, giving everyone equal access to and use of them. Knowing that the premises are universally accessible allows users to visit these sites with confidence, knowing that they can carry out their desired activities there.
2. Secondly, it promotes density, compactness and a mix of uses and functions, creating a range of activities within a short distance. Having a diverse range of services and facilities close to home makes it quicker and easier for people to meet their needs and carry out their activities on a daily basis. This dynamic also makes it possible to meet and mix with new people and build relationships within the neighborhood that foster mutual aid.
3. Thirdly, an accessible and inclusive city guarantees efficient connections between the different activities thanks to simple and fluid circulation. Being able to move easily, quickly and safely from place to place by different modes (walking, cycling, motorized mobility aid, public transit, car) gets people active, reduces isolation and promotes healthy lifestyle habits.

An accessible and inclusive city is part of current urban planning trends, such as the human-centred city, transit-oriented development (TOD), sustainable development, and green, active and healthy neighbourhoods. It also brings an innovative aspect—living environments designed for everyone.

Overview of the situation

Over the past 40 years, architectural and development projects promoting greater accessibility have focused primarily on isolated elements such as buildings, sidewalks, intersections, parks, buses, furniture, etc., without any connection or coordination to create a continuum between these places. Although many cities now have several accessible components, persons with disabilities often see these facilities as fragmented. Significant disparities exist across regions due to lack of resources, knowledge or motivation among decision-makers. To carry out their everyday lives, individuals must use several components of the city. However, there are too many discontinuities interrupting their daily plans.

Urban planning can help to better connect these components. It is defined as [Translation] “all the sciences, techniques and arts relating to the organization and development of urban spaces, with the aim of ensuring human well-being, improving social relations and preserving the environment.”⁴⁴ Urban planning emerged at the beginning of the 20th century in response to a need for larger-scale planning in the face of rapidly growing cities, where the lack of coordination was creating a dangerous, dysfunctional mess.

Urban planning is a municipal responsibility. Cities have a range of tools to plan and regulate the development, transformation, redevelopment or consolidation of the entire municipality or a neighbourhood or site. They must nevertheless respect governmental and regional guidelines, whether for metropolitan areas, agglomerations or regional county municipalities (RCMs).

The main tools of municipal urban planning fall into three categories:

1. The first concerns high-level planning, which covers the entire territory and forms the basis for the establishment of the various regulations: the Urban Plan and the Transport and Mobility Plan. Given the importance of aligning urban planning, transportation and mobility, many municipalities now use an integrated plan, the Urban Planning and Mobility Plan.

⁴⁴ Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales

2. The second category includes the regulations for the entire territory of the municipality, detailing the requirements relating to permitted uses, building layout and form, traffic routes, subdivisions, etc. These are the Zoning By-law, the Form-Based By-law, the Subdivision By-law and the Construction By-law.
3. The third category concerns regulations affecting a specific part of the territory, i.e., areas requiring special attention, areas undergoing a development project by a single developer, or areas where conditions for the acceptance of a non-conforming use are specified. These are the Special Planning Program, the Comprehensive Development Plan By-law, the Site Planning and Architectural Integration By-law and the By-law concerning specific construction, alteration or occupancy proposals for an immovable. Each of these tools can be leveraged to make the municipality more accessible and inclusive.

All municipalities required to produce an action plan for the integration of persons with disabilities have an urban planning department and the tools mentioned above. However, few are using them in the development and implementation of their action plans. What's more, few seniors' or persons with disabilities' associations advocate for the use of municipal planning during the various committees and public consultations.

Standards and obligations

Urban planning

Several laws govern regional and municipal responsibilities for urban planning. The Government of Québec defines the broad guidelines to be followed in various policies and action plans. For example, the recent [*Act to amend the Act respecting land use planning and development*](#) clarifies the government's intention by emphasizing that one of the purposes of territorial planning is the creation of complete, quality, convivial living environments that are conducive to the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. This act refers to the [*Politique nationale de l'architecture et de l'aménagement du territoire*](#) [National architecture and land use policy] and to the [*Aide-mémoire sur la qualité architecturale*](#) [Architectural quality reference guide], where inclusiveness and universal accessibility are among the 11 guiding quality principles.

At the regional level, metropolitan communities are obliged to draw up a Metropolitan Planning and Development Plan in line with governmental guidelines. The directions of this plan must then be reflected in the land use plans produced by the regional county municipalities (RCMs). RCMs must also draw up their own plans and planning by-laws in accordance with their land use plans.

Buildings

Building accessibility standards and obligations are detailed in the Built environment fact sheet of this guide.

It should be noted that municipalities are responsible, through their Construction By-laws, for defining requirements for small buildings, such as two-storey residential buildings or those with no more than eight units, commercial establishments with a floor area of less than 300 m², and business establishments with no more than two storeys. They may also adopt additional requirements for buildings subject to the Québec Construction Code.

Roadway development

The [roadway design and construction standards](#) are defined by Québec's Ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable. They cover requirements relating to streets, sidewalks, stops, traffic lights, sound lights and more, all with a view to road safety. However, they do not address the ease of use and friendliness of travel or transitional or temporary developments.

Some municipalities have adopted best practice guides for street development, such as the Ville de Montréal's [Fascicule 5 : Aménagements piétons universellement accessibles](#) [Universally accessible pedestrian facilities], or the shared street development joint project [Rues partagées](#) initiated by the Ville de Montréal and the Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille. The [NACTO](#) (National Association of City Transportation Officials) is an association of some 100 major North American cities and transit agencies that produces comprehensive guides on accessible and inclusive street topologies.

Other developments in the city

Parks, public spaces, public transit and many other types of development are neither standardized nor regulated, giving developers and designers considerable latitude. This leads to significant disparities in the accessibility performance of these amenities. However, certain components and equipment used in the development of these sites are standardized or regulated.

Good practices

As a citizen:

- Informing the municipality of the barriers you encounter in your daily activities.
- Raising awareness among elected officials and municipal managers and professionals of the importance of universal accessibility in regulations and planning projects.
- Participating in public consultations on the adoption of government and regional directions, as well as municipal planning and planning by-laws in order to advocate for universal accessibility.

- Participating in public consultations on specific projects, advisory committees and municipal or community working groups to reinforce the importance of considering universal accessibility.
- Working with local associations, agencies and advocacy groups to advance universal accessibility.
- Including universal accessibility in upstream planning:
 - Sharing municipal intentions and the challenges in making the city more accessible and inclusive.
 - Organizing inclusive public consultations to enable persons with disabilities and their families to express their needs and preferences.

In the Urban Plan and the Transport and Mobility Plan:

- Favouring the adoption of a Urban Planning and Mobility Plan, given that the alignment of urban functions and travel is essential for an accessible and inclusive city.
- Introducing universal accessibility as the guiding principles of the plan.
- Promoting a mix of local uses in residential areas.
- Promoting compactness through building density.
- Encouraging the development of active and public transit networks to serve popular destination areas, particularly urban parks.
- Prioritizing traffic calming measures around schools, senior residences and health facilities.
- Establishing design rules that minimize confrontations between pedestrians and cyclists.

In the Zoning By-law and the Form-Based By-law:

- Authorizing businesses and local services to operate in all residential areas.

- Regulating the height of buildings to avoid the development of semi-basement dwellings.
- Requiring single-storey buildings or, failing that, a combination of front setbacks and difference in level to allow for a gentle slope or access ramp.
- Imposing a minimum number of reserved spaces for off-street parking.
- Promoting a grid of premises wide enough to install shops and local services with the ground floor on one level.
- Defining street typologies with efficient pedestrian infrastructure.
- Encouraging undeveloped spaces around buildings to create rest areas, passageways and activity zones away from pedestrian traffic.

In the Subdivision By-law:

- Promoting an octagonal grid of streets to facilitate identification, reduce distances and align pedestrian routes at intersections.
- Requiring a sufficiently wide street footprint to allow for high-quality active mobility amenities (sidewalks, bike lanes, planted curbs).
- Providing easements for pedestrian crossings to shorten routes.

In the Construction By-law:

- Adopting universal accessibility requirements for buildings not covered by the Québec Construction Code.
- Adopting universal accessibility requirements for housing units and seniors' residences.
- Increasing the size of the manoeuvring area for the use of mobility aids.
- Increasing the size and number of reserved parking spaces in parking areas.

In the Special Planning Program and the Comprehensive Development Plan By-law:

- Promoting compactness of the built environment and an urban framework.
- Developing efficient pedestrian and cycling routes based on the location of activity hubs and public transit routes.
- Funding the accessibility of existing shops and services.
- Integrating the main principles of inclusive development into the desired characteristics and evaluation criteria of a development project to foster social interaction.

In the Site Planning and Architectural Integration By-law:

- Promoting facades that reduce the impact of ground-level development in an area where building entrances are generally above ground level.
- Encouraging the expansion of a heritage building to accommodate a new ground-level entrance rather than maintaining inaccessibility or adding a large access ramp on the facade.
- Prohibiting parking directly in front of commercial and institutional buildings.

In the By-law concerning specific construction, alteration or occupancy proposals for an immovable:

- Providing space for local shops and services in areas that require it.
- Building on ground level.
- Reducing front setbacks.
- Moving/removing driveways from street corners.
- Making all dwellings universally accessible, or failing that, a significant proportion of them.

Available resources

Training

- [*Conception sans obstacle, vos projets sont-ils vraiment conformes?*](#) [Barrier-free design, are your projects truly compliant?], Ordre des architectes du Québec.
- [*Aménagements piétonniers, parcs, places publiques, sécurisation aux abords des chantiers, urbanisme, design universel*](#) [Pedestrian, park, and public space development, safety around construction sites, urban planning, universal design], Société Logique.
- [Training | ideaux.ca](#), Idéaux.

Subsidies

- **Federal:**
 - [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#): financial assistance for large and small development projects, Government of Canada.
- **Provincial:**
 - [Petits établissements accessibles](#) [Small accessible establishments program]: financial assistance to owners and tenants of commercial, business or community buildings that are not subject to a legal obligation in terms of accessibility so they can perform the

work to comply with the Construction Code's accessibility requirements, Société d'habitation du Québec.

- [Programme d'accessibilité des établissements touristiques](#) [Tourism establishment accessibility program]: financial assistance for improving accessibility of tourist establishments, Ministère du Tourisme.

- **Municipal:**

Check the types of universal accessibility subsidies available in your municipality.

- **Montréal**

- [Subsidy for universal access to businesses](#): financial assistance for making existing small businesses accessible, Ville de Montréal.

- **Ville de Québec**

- [Programme Petits établissements accessibles](#) [Small accessible establishments program]: program to improve accessibility in small establishments for persons with disabilities or with reduced mobility.

- **Victoriaville**

- [Victoriaville ville inclusive](#) [Inclusive city]: financial assistance program for residential, commercial and service building accessibility in Victoriaville.

- **Trois-Rivières**

- [Accessibilité universelle aux établissements commerciaux et de services](#) [Universal accessibility in commercial and service establishments]: a program promoting barrier-free

and safe infrastructure in all in commercial establishments in certain areas.

Documents

- Universal design and municipal planning: Guide for cities wishing to introduce universal accessibility into their planning by-laws. This guide presents examples in Québec that have a positive impact on universal design, Société Logique.
- [*Guide d'interprétation des dispositions relatives à l'accessibilité universelle dans le Schéma d'aménagement et de développement de l'agglomération de Montréal*](#), [Guide to understanding the universal accessibility provisions in the land use planning and development concept of the agglomeration of Montréal], Ville de Montréal.

Related fact sheets in this guide

To ensure inclusion in urban planning, also consult the following fact sheets:

[9. Built environment](#)

[13. Housing](#)

[14. Recreation, sports and tourism](#)

[16. Emergency measures and public safety](#)

[17. Parks and green spaces](#)

[25 and 26. Paratransit and accessible transit](#)

[27. Air and train travel](#)



Idéaux (inclusive and universal accessibility design consulting firm), and DéPhy Montréal.

30. Violence and safety

Issues, barriers and solutions for organizations

How can we build safe and equitable communities?

According to recent results from the Canadian Survey on Disability released in December 2023,⁴⁵ 8 million people, or 27% of the Canadian population, live with at least one disability. More than half of them are girls and women over the age of 15.

L'INÉÉI-PSH uses an approach based on Gender-based analysis (GBA, GBA+), considering multiple disabilities. This perspective aligns with the definition of disability established by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDPH) and is in perfect harmony with the HDM-DCP approach.

Right not to be subjected to exploitation, violence and abuse

Safety and the elimination of violence are the responsibility of society as a whole, not just of victims or survivors. In accordance with section 16 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), every individual has the right to live in safety.

Overview of the situation

The risk of victimization of persons with disabilities is among the highest in society. Women, in particular, are twice as likely to face this risk than men without limitations. This risk is even greater for women immigrants with disabilities.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Statistics Canada. New data on disability in Canada, 2022. Government of Canada

⁴⁶ Women and adequate housing: Study by the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, Miloon Kothari, E/CN.4/2005/43, paragraph 64.

Vulnerability factors:

- Age
- Socio-economic status
- Ethnocultural background
- Family situation
- Financial position
- Sexual orientation
- Degree of dependence (lack of autonomy)
-

Some specific examples

The financial and social dependence on their spouses makes women with disabilities particularly vulnerable to domestic violence. Access to adequate resources and support is essential for their well-being and integration.⁴⁷

According to a 2018 Statistics Canada study, more than half of women with disabilities experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. They are also four times more likely to have been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner.

Furthermore, newcomer women often experience situations of violence related to their precarious migration journey. For example, they may face threats related to

⁴⁷ Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (2010). Assessment of the adaptation needs of women with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence. Drummondville: Service de l'évaluation de l'intégration sociale et de la recherche, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.

their sponsorship. Similarly, women in homosexual relationships may be victims of blackmail, with threats made to reveal their sexual orientation.⁴⁸

Results from the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization show that among the persons with disabilities who experienced spousal violence in the year prior to the survey, women were:

- More likely than men to have experienced the most severe forms of domestic violence (39% vs. 16%)
- More likely to have suffered physical injuries as a result of the violent incident (46% vs. 29%)
- More likely to have feared for their life (38% vs. 14%)

Different forms of violence:

- Psychological and verbal
- Marital and post-separation
- Institutional or systemic
- Obstetric
- Destruction of mobility aids
- Deprivation of pets or emotional support animals
- Financial
- Sexual

⁴⁸ Institut national de santé publique du Québec. Media kit on domestic violence: Statistics. Government of Québec

- Physical
- Racism and ableism (discrimination based on abilities)
- Homophobia
- Opportunistic
- Societal
- Barriers to the legal system

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is often manifested by:

- Denial of their rights, in particular the right to autonomy and free and informed choice
- Restriction of their sexuality, parenthood, and access to education, work, recreation and basic services
- Their social exclusion due to their dependency

Some barriers to address:

Widespread ignorance of the specific needs of persons with disabilities, particularly women and children, persists. This lack of knowledge creates fear and resistance, making communication with them difficult.

Persons with disabilities report recurring barriers in the following areas:

- **Accessibility:** Public, private and community services are not always adapted.
- **Stakeholder training and awareness:** These gaps hinder the recognition of various forms of discrimination.

- **Lack of adequate support:** Persons with disabilities report that essential resources remain inaccessible.

Specific barriers to accessing support resources include:

- Police, family, counsellors, shelter workers, lawyers, nurses, social workers or co-workers do not believe them.
- A lack of knowledge about forms of abuse, making it difficult to identify them.
- Lack of information on available services.
- Migration status is often precarious.
- Hidden homelessness, rarely taken into account by decision-making bodies.
- Persistent inaccessibility of resources, even when they are identified.
- Stubborn prejudices, which aggravate exclusion and stigma.

Standards and obligations

According to Article 17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁴⁹ “every person with disabilities has a right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity on an equal basis with others.”

The Government of Canada has confirmed these rights by stating, through the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse, that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights and freedoms as all other persons,⁵⁰ including:

- The right to equality
- The right to protection against exploitation
- Fundamental freedoms and rights

In addition, section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person.” This includes protecting the physical and mental integrity of each individual.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Human Rights Commission. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, OHCHR.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Commission. Persons with disabilities.

⁵¹ Government of Canada (2023). Section 7 – Right to life, liberty and security of the person.

In Québec, the policy *À part entière : pour un réel exercice du droit à l'égalité pour les personnes handicapées*, adopted in 2007, establishes two priority areas:

1. Acting against prejudice, discrimination and all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse
2. Designing barrier-free laws, policies and services ... and providing accessible environments

Good practices to strengthen the employment component of your action plan

Health services have an obligation to adapt their benefits to the specific needs of individuals. These accommodations are designed to restore equality between individuals and to prevent or put an end to any situation of discrimination.⁵²

Using an intersectional gender-based analysis+ (GBA+) framework:

- Understanding how various forces (barriers, inequalities, etc.) intersect and interact, exacerbating situations of social exclusion, inequality and insecurity for persons with disabilities, particularly women and children.
- Recognizing the specificities of different population groups in order to identify their needs, concerns and priorities.
- Implementing equity measures to achieve true equality and inclusion.
- Developing policies, programs and services adapted to the real needs of each group, while removing systemic barriers to support their economic inclusion and social participation.
- Encouraging active participation in the workplace, decision-making bodies and governance processes.

Concrete measures to be implemented

1. Strengthen detection and support

⁵² Human Rights Commission. Reasonable accommodation.

- Increase screening of domestic violence on the front lines.
- Provide support and a referral service to address the specific needs of women with disabilities.
- Analyze the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

2. Promote awareness and prevention

- Offer awareness and prevention programs for persons with disabilities, their families and workers from community organizations, as well as any professionals who have direct or indirect contact with them:
 - Work on stereotypes and prejudices against persons with disabilities.
 - Welcome individuals while accommodating their functional limitations (e.g., providing an interpreter).
 - Provide training to stakeholders to encourage a change in attitude and combat prejudice.

3. Create a more inclusive environment

- Improve the accessibility of environments (e.g., shops, venues, recreational areas, construction sites).
- Adapt housing networks for women who are victims of domestic violence to ensure universal accessibility.

4. Strengthen financial support

- Increase health insurance benefits.
- Review health care management.
- Review disability pensions.
- Offer financial benefits that are not dependent on the spouse to prevent financial dependence.

5. Improve transportation services

- Make public transit more accessible.
- Optimize paratransit services.
- Review paratransit procedures to better meet emergency needs.

Available resources

Community resources and crisis lines

- [Association québécoise de prévention du suicide.](#)
- [Crime Victims Assistance Centres](#) (CAVAC).
- [Women's Centre of Montréal.](#)
- [Centre des femmes de Saint-Laurent.](#)
- [Youth centres – DYP.](#)

- [Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes.](#)
- [Femmes du monde Côte-des-Neiges.](#)
- [Sexual Violence Helpline.](#)
- [Info-Social – 811.](#)
- [InterAidance – INÉÉI-PSH.](#)
- [Interligne.](#)
- [Shield of Athena.](#)
- [The Mistreatment Helpline.](#)
- [Maison des femmes sourdes de Montréal.](#)
- [Regroupement des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes victimes de violences conjugales.](#)
- [Regroupement des services d'intervention de crise du Québec.](#)
- [RQCALACS.](#)
- [SOS Violence conjugale.](#)
- [Violence Info.](#)
- [REZO.](#)
- [Women's Y – Montréal.](#)

Training

- [INÉÉI-PSH.](#)
- [Educaloi.](#)
- [Institut de formation en matière de violence faite aux femmes.](#)
- [Juripop – Domestic and Sexual Violence.](#)

- [Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale.](#)
- [Table de concertation en violence conjugale de Montréal.](#)

Fact sheet prepared in collaboration with Selma Kouidri, General Manager, with feedback from Hélène Rapanakis, Awareness and Prevention Officer, and Sarah Butshinke Kazadi, Social Work Intern at INÉÉI-PSH.

12. Conclusion

Everyone who helped create this guide strived to make it a reference document that will help improve the lives of persons with disabilities and of their family members, while guiding and informing the government departments, organizations, large companies and all persons concerned by the creation of an accessibility plan.

Numerous stakeholders are involved in the field of universal accessibility, helping make a tangible impact on the lives of many people. This is an ever-changing field, making it essential to approach this guide with an open mind and flexibility and a willingness to focus on the practices we can incorporate into our professional activities. Let us experiment, challenge the concepts presented here and adjust our interventions as needed.

Ultimately, the purpose of this guide is to provide stakeholders and decision-makers with the tools they need to promote and improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society.

13. Guides and resource directories

There are a multitude of guides and resource directories on accessibility, adaptation and universal accessibility. It would be impossible to list them all here. However, the documents presented below illustrate the diversity of documents available, covering various topics such as architecture, urban planning, transportation, employment, communications, recreation, among many others. These guides concern all levels of government, as well as international and institutional bodies.

Here are the main guides available:

Government of Québec

- [*Guides pour les ministères, les organismes publics et les municipalités*](#)

Communication

- [*Élaborer et produire des documents accessibles : un guide de bonnes pratiques*](#)
- [*Fiches sur les moyens de communication adaptés*](#)

Annual action plans for persons with disabilities

- [*Guide d'application de la clause d'impact sur les personnes handicapées. 2e édition*](#)
- [*Guide pour l'élaboration du plan d'action annuel à l'égard des personnes handicapées : Volet municipalités*](#)
- [*Guide pour l'élaboration du plan d'action annuel à l'égard des personnes handicapées : Volet ministères et organismes publics*](#)
- [*L'approvisionnement en biens et services accessibles aux personnes handicapées – Guide d'accompagnement mobilier urbain*](#)
- [*L'approvisionnement en biens et services accessibles aux personnes handicapées : Guide d'accompagnement – Volet équipements de bureau - 2e édition*](#)

- [Recueil de bonnes pratiques : Volet ministères et organismes publics](#)
- [Recueil de bonnes pratiques : Volet municipalités](#)
- [Recueil de bonnes pratiques : Volet établissements du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux](#)
- [Répertoire des programmes et des mesures pouvant soutenir les municipalités et leurs partenaires dans la réduction des obstacles à la participation sociale des personnes handicapées](#)

Transportation

- [Stationnement réservé aux personnes handicapées : Guide pratique à l'intention des municipalités](#)

Architecture and urban planning

- [Projets d'aménagement d'espaces publics extérieurs accessibles](#)
- [Vers des parcours sans obstacles](#)

AlterGo – Resource guide and references

[Consult the full guide here](#)

By clicking on the link above, you will access an extensive list of accessibility resources and guides. These documents cover various areas and levels of application, such as architecture, urban planning, recreation, communications and public policy.

General resources

International

- International Network on the Disability Creation Process (DCP).

Federal

- Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario.
- A contract worth more than a billion dollars: Study on the behaviours and attitudes of people with a physical disability with respect to tourism, culture and transportation in Québec, Kéroul.

Provincial

- *À part entière : pour un véritable exercice du droit à l'égalité*, Government of Québec.
- Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, Government of Québec.
- *Enquête québécoise sur les limitations d'activités, les maladies chroniques et le vieillissement 2010-2011*, Institut de la statistique du Québec.
- *Guide pour la production du plan d'action annuel à l'égard des personnes handicapées*, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.
- *L'accès aux loisirs municipaux pour les personnes handicapées*, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.
- *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*.
- *Obligations des camps de jour à l'égard des enfants en situation de handicap*, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.
- *Vers une intégration réussie des jeunes ayant des besoins particuliers*, Association des camps du Québec.

Regional and municipal

- *Cahier des bons coups 2010 – Municipalités accessibles.*
- *Répertoire des trouvailles en approvisionnement accessible, Municipalités accessibles.*

Reference guides

Regional and municipal

- *Guide à l'attention de l'organisateur d'événement, AlterGo Training*
- *Guide à l'attention des agents de communication, AlterGo Training*
- *Guide à l'attention du gestionnaire de plage, AlterGo Training*
- *Guide à l'attention du responsable aquatique, AlterGo Training*
- *Guide à l'attention du responsable de parc, AlterGo Training*
- *Guide à l'attention du responsable en bibliothèque, AlterGo Training*
- *Guide à l'attention du parent, AlterGo*
- *Guide à l'intention des commerçants : Des commerces accessibles à tous, c'est possible et rentable! – Table de concertation des associations de personnes handicapées du Haut-Richelieu, in collaboration with the Ville de Saint-Jean-sur Richelieu*
- *Guide pratique : une politique pour l'inclusion sociale... pourquoi pas? – Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé*

Focus area 1 – Architecture and urban planning

International

- *Bandes de guidage au sol : Guide de recommandations.*

- Batimedia, a free information and documentation website for building specifiers.
- *Guide d'aide à la conception d'un bâtiment accessible*, Collectif accessibilité Wallonie Bruxelles.
- Standard ISO 21542:2011, Building construction: Accessibility and usability of the built environment.
- *Un espace public pour tous : Guide pour une planification cohérente*.

Federal

- CSA B651-12: Accessible Design for the Built Environment.

Sledge Hockey Accessibility: Design Guideline for Arenas, recognized by Hockey Canada.

Provincial

- *Guide en matière de stationnement pour personnes handicapées à l'intention des municipalités*, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).
- Design of Public Spaces Standard module, Government of Ontario.
- Barrier-free design standards, Québec Construction Code.

Regional and municipal

- *Centre communautaire Lebourgneuf : un modèle d'accessibilité!* – Ville de Québec.
- *Critères d'accessibilité universelle : déficience visuelle – Aménagements extérieurs*, Institut Nazareth, Louis-Braille and Société Logique (2014).
- *Critères d'accessibilité répondant aux besoins des personnes ayant une déficience visuelle*, Institut Nazareth, Louis-Braille and Société Logique (2003).

- Tip sheet: Universal accessibility of performance venues, Ville de Gatineau.
- Technical data sheet on parking lots, Société Logique.
- *Guide pratique d'accessibilité des salles de spectacles*, Institut de réadaptation en déficience physique de Québec.
- *Guide pratique d'accessibilité universelle*, Ville de Québec (2010).
- *Un regard sur l'accessibilité*, BAIL-Mauricie.

Focus area 2 – Programs, services and employment

International

- Inclusive libraries in France

Federal

- Enabling Accessibility Fund, Government of Canada.

Provincial

- *Programme d'assistance financière à l'accessibilité aux camps de vacances* (PAFACV).
- *Programme d'assistance financière au loisir des personnes handicapées* (PAFLPH).
- Relay service for people with hearing or speech/language disabilities.
- Tourism and Leisure Companion Sticker (VATL)
- Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées.

Regional and municipal

- Equal Access to Employment, Ville de Montréal (2010).

- *L'accessibilité au service des commerçants, CAPVISH.*
- *Participation dans une installation aquatique destinée aux organisations, AlterGo.*
- *Organization Recognition and Support Policy, Ville de Saint-Lambert.*
- *Suivez le guide : Guide de loisirs montréalais pour les personnes ayant une limitation fonctionnelle, AlterGo.*
- *Suivez le guide! Pour les organismes, AlterGo.*

Focus area 3 – Communications

International

- *Pour une signalétique accessible à tous, Saint-Étienne Métropole, Saint-Étienne and the Établissement Public d'Aménagement de Saint-Étienne.*

Provincial

- *Standard sur l'accessibilité du Web, Government of Québec*

Site Web municipal : Guide pratique, Centre francophone d'informatisation des organisations.

Regional and municipal

- *Guide pratique pour vos documents imprimés, Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille.*
- *Les bons pictogrammes à utiliser.*

Focus area 4 – Training and awareness

Provincial

- Various training sessions on universal accessibility and welcoming and accompanying persons with functional limitations, AlterGo Training.

Reception

- Welcoming persons with disabilities.

Accompaniment

- Recreational accompaniment for persons with functional limitations.
- Recreational accompaniment for people with intellectual disabilities (ID), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD).

Universal accessibility

General

- Events.
- *Je veux accueillir et servir tout le monde*, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.
- *Parle-moi de toi! : Activité de sensibilisation destinée aux écoles, aux entreprises privées et aux organismes communautaires.*

Assessment, certification and training services to make tourism and culture accessible to people with limited physical capacity, Kérout.

- *Vers une intégration réussie des jeunes ayant des besoins particuliers*, Association des camps du Québec.

Regional and municipal

- Accessible Customer Service Standard module, Government of Ontario.

AlterGo – Multiple guides

[Access AlterGo guides](#)

By clicking on the hyperlink above, you can download various guides in PDF or Word formats, grouped by themes:

Universal accessibility

- 2017 municipal election platform
- *Ma municipalité accessible* guide
- Universal accessibility resource and reference guide

Programs and services

Recreation

- *Suivez le guide*
- *Suivez le guide* for organizations
- *Accueil des personnes âgées ayant une limitation fonctionnelle*
- *Accompagnement en loisir d'une personne ayant une limitation fonctionnelle : évaluation des besoins du participant.*

Events

- *Accessibilité universelle des événements*

Swimming pools

- *Catalogue – Matériel spécialisé pour améliorer l'accessibilité des piscines.*
- *Guide de procédure de participation dans une installation aquatique.*

- *Guide à l'attention du responsable aquatique.*

Beaches

- *Ressources et références pour améliorer l'accessibilité universelle des plages.*

Parks

- *Ressources et références pour améliorer l'accessibilité universelle des parcs.*

Libraries

- *Guide de préparation à une visite d'un groupe dans les bibliothèques de Montréal.*
- *Catalogue d'objets permettant de faciliter l'accès aux bibliothèques.*
- *Guide répertoriant le matériel disponible pour les bibliothèques.*
- *Document explicatif des services destinés aux organismes membres d'AlterGo en bibliothèque.*
- *Ressources et références pour améliorer l'accessibilité universelle des bibliothèques.*

Sports

- *Guides to help youth with functional limitations participate in physical and sports activities.*
- *Accessibilité universelle des plateaux sportifs extérieurs.*
- *Sans Oublier de Bouger!*

Quiz

- GoQuiz: A guessing game developed by AlterGo to raise awareness of universal accessibility and explore its multiple facets. Download it!

Pictograms

- Pictograms and their different meanings.

Communication

- Resources and references for developing universally accessible communication tools.

International

Communications

- [Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines \(UN 2022\)](#).

Government of Canada

- [Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan](#).

Employment

- [Disability Inclusion Business Council](#).
- Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network.

Communications

- [Canada.ca Content Style Guide](#).

Government of Québec

Architecture and urban planning

- [Guide accessibilité bâtiments](#).
- [Other accessibility resources](#).
- [INSPQ guide: Designing accessible environments](#).

Municipalities

Ville de Québec

- **Architecture and urban planning**
 - [Accessibility guide with fact sheets: Public buildings](#) (2010).

Institutions

UQAM

- [List of resources on inclusion](#).

Good practices and tools

Below are examples of good practices related to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), as well as tools for reflecting on your current practices. These resources are grouped into broad themes for easier consultation. Specific documents for researchers are also available on the [Pour aller plus loin](#) web page.

Accessibility

- Accessibility to education: research on student parent needs
- Universal accessibility
- Accessibility of communication
- Accessibility of events

Practical resources on universal accessibility of events:

1. [Accessibilité universelle des événements](#) [Universal accessibility of events] (produced by AlterGo).
2. [Guide for Events – Best Accessibility and Anti-Ableism Practices](#) (produced by the Conseil des arts de Montréal).
3. [Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings](#) (produced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, also available in PDF format).

Unconscious bias

- Workshop on the impact of bias in decision making.

Ableism and disability

- Podcasts: *Réfléchir l'inclusion* (CRISPESH).
- Good practices for promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Video: *Pourquoi est-ce important de parler du handicap?*
- Videos to help deconstruct the notion of ableism.
- Tools for welcoming students with disabilities.

Sexual diversity and gender plurality

- Good practices for promoting the inclusion of trans and non-binary individuals.
- Conference on managing sexual diversity in the workplace.
- Studies and references on youth who are trans, non-binary or questioning their gender identity.
- Timeline of LGBTQ+ rights and struggles in Québec.

Racism

- Reflection paper on the notion of systemic racism.
- A guide to anti-racist organizational changes in an academic context.

Indigenous realities

- Podcasts, films and other cultural content to learn about the history of the First Peoples.
- Indigenous communities in Québec.
- Deconstructing myths about Indigenous peoples.
- 2021 National Building Reconciliation Forum.
- Fact sheet on territorial recognition in a Québec university context (RIQEDI).
- Tools to better understand Indigenous communities.
- Tools to end bias and discrimination.

Inclusive recruitment and combating discrimination in employment

- Comic strips explaining discrimination.
- Guide on best practices in university recruitment.
- Tools for recruitment without discrimination.
- Testing results: measuring discrimination experienced by racialized minorities in the recruitment process.

Inclusive writing

- Video on feminist and inclusive writing (IREF).

Sexual violence

- Training sessions on preventing and combatting sexual violence.
- Awareness tools on sexual violence.
- Survey results on gender-based and sexual violence in higher education.

14. Annex

The project consists of three phases:

1. Data collection
2. Data processing and analysis
3. Writing and translation of the guide and a universally accessible website.

As part of phase 1, we invite you to answer this questionnaire containing approximately 15 questions about your experiences, interests, needs and expectations in terms of universal accessibility.

Depending on your type of limitation as well as your interests and needs, we would like your feedback on the aspects addressed in the attached fact sheets. This phase is very important because it will help us identify gaps between:

- Accessibility standards currently in force.
- Good practices in Canada and abroad.
- Your personal experiences with universal accessibility.

Please answer to the best of your knowledge. The information collected will be anonymous. Your contact details will only be used for follow-up when necessary.

Deadline to return questionnaire: Friday, May 17, 2024.

If you would prefer to respond verbally, schedule a meeting, or obtain more information, please contact:

Mathieu Noël

Case Manager, COPHAN

mathieu.noel@cophan.org

514-284-0155, ext. 103.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

Mathieu Noël

Case Manager

COPHAN

Questionnaire

COPHAN Universal Accessibility Guide

Terminology

Definition of “persons with functional limitations”

We refer to the Disability Creation Process model, which highlights the influence of external factors, such as physical barriers and attitudes, on the individual’s condition.

Under this model, disability results from disabling situations, i.e., circumstances where a need is not met. This definition focuses on the person’s situation rather than on their personal characteristics. It also stresses the importance of intervening in the physical and social environment to prevent such situations.

Our guide will cover five types of functional limitations:

1. Motor
2. Visual
3. Hearing
4. Language and speech
5. Neurodevelopmental disorders

What is universal accessibility?

Universal accessibility is defined as:

[TRANSLATION] “*The nature of a product, process, service, information or environment that, with equity in mind and as part of an inclusive approach,*

enables any person to perform activities on their own and to obtain equivalent results.”

In practice, it guarantees everyone, regardless of their abilities, independence in enjoying equal opportunities and a quality experience.

Based on the needs of people with functional limitations, universal accessibility aims to meet these expectations. We encourage you to share any relevant data that could help us in our efforts.

Questions

1. What type(s) of functional limitation(s) do you have?

(Check all that apply to you)

- ☐ Motor
- ☐ Visual
- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ Related to language and speech
- ☐ Neurodevelopmental disorders
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

2. Do you belong to one or more of the following groups?

(Check all that apply to you)

- ☐ Women
- ☐ Racialized individuals
- ☐ Persons in a visible minority group
- ☐ LGBTQQIP2SAA people
- ☐ Seniors
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Architecture, urban planning, housing

If applicable, what are your experiences, interests, needs or expectations regarding:

3. ... public buildings?

4. ... dwellings?

5. ... parks and green spaces?

Programs, services and employment

If applicable, what are your experiences, interests, needs or expectations regarding:

6. ... childcare centres?

7. ... educational services?

8. ... transportation services?

9. ... health and social services?

10. ... employment?

11. ... income?

Information and communication

If applicable, what are your experiences, interests, needs or expectations regarding:

12. ... the design of printed documents?

13. ... the design and use of images?

14. ... the design of websites and digital media?

15. ... oral communication?

Awareness and training

If applicable, what are your experiences, interests, needs or expectations regarding:

16. ... the way you are treated by public services?

Other

17. Have you had any other experiences, interests, needs or expectations that were not addressed in this questionnaire?

Acknowledgements

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire! Your collaboration is critical to the success of this project.

To return the completed questionnaire by Friday, May 17, 2024, or to schedule a meeting or obtain additional information, please contact:

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40 people from 31 different organizations.