

Accessibility plan

Year one progress report

Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

May 31, 2024



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1. Message from the president and chief executive officer

In 2023 we launched a new accessibility plan for the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. This plan outlines the steps we are taking to remove barriers in our workplace and make our services accessible to all. Guided by this plan, we have taken important steps toward building a fully accessible, barrier-free workplace. Some notable highlights include the production of a video highlighting employees with disabilities to build awareness of their experiences and challenges in the workplace, the opening of a low-sensory space for employees called the Den, and our continued participation in the Accessible Employers Community of Practice and the annual Pledge to Measure to create transparency. You can read more about these and other initiatives in this progress report, which captures our work up to March 2024.

2. Introduction

This year one progress report on our Accessibility Plan presents work to improve accessibility across the organization over the past year. We recognize there are barriers that people with disabilities continue to face in their everyday lives. In alignment with the *Accessible Canada Act*, which aims to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040, we are committed to helping remove these barriers by ensuring our workplace and services are accessible for all.

This report highlights work which has taken place at the port authority over the past year to improve accessibility under each of the 7 priority areas of the *Accessible Canada Act*. These 7 priorities are:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication (other than ICT)
- procurement of goods, services and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

To develop this progress report, we followed the principle of “nothing about us without us.” This meant consulting with employees living and working with disabilities, the union executive representing approximately 70% of our workforce, the employment equity committee, and external organizations serving people with disabilities to help us identify barriers both in our workplace and in the delivery of our services. The input and suggestions we gathered during this process are reflected in the consultation sections under each priority area.

3. General

Feedback

The port authority's goal is to provide the highest standard of accessibility. We value your feedback and lived experience. If you have questions or suggestions about our accessibility plan or your ability to access our services, please send us your feedback.

Person identified to receive feedback

The director, human resources operations is responsible for receiving feedback from the public and employees on the accessibility plan or any issue related to accessibility.

A. How to submit feedback

Email:	accessibility@portvancouver.com
Telephone:	604.665.9000
Mail	Accessibility plan feedback Human Resources Vancouver Fraser Port Authority 100 The Pointe, 999 Canada Place Vancouver, B.C. V6C 3T4

We will acknowledge all accessibility feedback we receive in the same means by which it is received within **two (2) business days**, except for feedback shared anonymously.

We value your feedback and the time you have taken to provide it. If you prefer to submit your feedback anonymously, there are several options.

Anonymous feedback

For the public

You do not have to include your name when submitting your feedback. We will share your feedback only with those employees directly involved in improving accessibility at the port authority.

For employees

If you want to submit anonymous feedback, please submit your feedback through the [ConfidenceLine](#).

Please remember that if you provide your feedback anonymously, we may be unable to acknowledge or reply to your feedback.

B. Alternative formats

If you wish to receive this report in an alternative format, please contact Human Resources at the contact information above. You can expect to receive an alternative format within the following timeline:

- For print, large print, and electronic formats compatible with adaptive technology that is intended to assist persons with disabilities: within 15 days after receiving the request
- For Braille or audio formats: within 45 days after receiving the request

4. Consultations: Process

Consultations have informed progress made in addressing barriers identified in the plan since June 1, 2023. The following consultations have taken place:

Employee consultations

Employees were invited to participate in one-on-one confidential interviews with the same diversity consulting firm that assisted with the preparation of the accessibility plan. Employees were invited to contact the external consultant directly to request an interview between April 2 – 12, 2024. Phone interviews were arranged, and confidential input was gathered on progress made in addressing barriers to accessibility.

In addition, employees with disabilities who had indicated their willingness to be contacted on their self-identification survey were invited to participate in a confidential phone interview with the external consultant during the same time period.

Consultations with key partners

In March and April 2024, virtual interviews took place with several key partners and the external consultant, including:

- The union president and vice president
- Employment equity committee members
- The port authority's HR Business Partner¹ responsible for inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility
- Disability-serving organizations

Department directors, managers, and human resources (HR) leaders also provided information about progress on all actions underway and completed by March 31, 2024.

¹ The Human Resources Business Partner model was implemented at the port authority in 2022. HR Business Partners are assigned to each division at the port authority to ensure that our people strategies, including inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, are aligned to the organization's business strategy.

5. Priority areas

A. Employment

Actions under the **employment** section will improve the attraction, recruitment, promotion, and retention of persons with disabilities.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Equity and accessibility

- 1.1. We communicated our commitment to accessibility both internally and externally by:
 - Creating and promoting a video highlighting stories of employees with disabilities
 - Working with Internal Communications team to create more accessible information on the landing page for employees with disabilities
 - Participating in the Accessible Employers Community of Practice and the annual Pledge to Measure, measuring and sharing disability metrics

Job postings

- 2.1 We included in external job postings – at all levels – a welcoming invitation to apply and how to request an accommodation.
- 2.2 We reviewed how to navigate to job postings on our website. Initial accessibility issues were identified by the Talent Acquisition team and communicated to the External Communications team. Increased visibility and ease of navigation is the focus of the new website redevelopment project.
- 2.3 We enhanced our commitment to accessibility on our careers page by encouraging applicants to contact human resources if they require an accommodation.
- 2.4 We are in the process of reviewing job postings and job descriptions for accessible and inclusive language. The Talent Acquisition team is reviewing the postings and job description to identify systemic barriers.

Outreach recruitment

- 3.1 We created a process to share job opportunities on a monthly basis with agencies that work with persons with disabilities seeking employment.
- 3.2 We send job postings to CAN WIN, who share our job postings with disability-serving organizations, as well as to CNIB, WorkBC, YWCA, and local First Nations.

Consultations: What we heard

External postings include a welcoming invitation to apply and how to request an accommodation during the hiring process. Internal postings do not include information on how to apply for accommodations. Current job postings are long and do not include plain language.

Partnerships are being developed with agencies that work with persons with disabilities seeking employment. The port authority has increased its effort to reach out and share job postings so disability-serving community organizations who can forward them to potential candidates.

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Adding a separate header highlighting accommodation on the posting so that it stands out and is easier to find
- Adding how to request an accommodation to internal job postings
- Identifying what information will be required to request an accommodation and providing applicants with reassurance that they do not need to disclose their disability
- Because many equity-seeking applicants will only apply if they have 100% of the qualifications, insert a comment, “If you meet most of the qualifications and experience required, please apply”. Consider identifying requirements that are “must-haves”
- Shortening and simplifying language in job postings; checking that font size is accessible

B. Built environment

The built environment refers to all port buildings, including how employees with disabilities use physical workspaces and how the public access these buildings.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Accessibility assessment

- 1.1 We confirmed that the Rick Hansen Foundation accessibility criteria will be compliant with the future requirements of Accessible Canada.
- 1.2 We completed our reassessment of Canada Place with the Rick Hansen Foundation and have identified actions needed to achieve Gold Certification.
- 1.3 With a rating 80.3%, the Oceanic Plaza has technically achieved the Rick Hansen Foundation’s Gold Certification. The building landlord is currently working on additional improvements.

- 1.4 We designated a quiet room for employees with sensitive, mental health, or cognitive requirements. The quiet room, called the Den, opened in January 2024.
- 1.5 We installed a hearing loop in the main boardroom and our reception area for employees and visitors with audio requirements.

Emergency planning

- 2.1 We are working on updating the office evacuation plans to meet accessibility requirements for employees with disabilities.

Consultations: What we heard

Staff appreciate having access to the “The Den” a multi-purpose quiet room available for staff to book ahead.

Staff appreciate having places to rest while getting from one place to another (there is a lot of walking between places at work).

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Asking for feedback from staff about what’s working and what’s not working with “The Den”
- Improving sound proofing of “The Den” by adding sound-absorbing panels on the walls outside of the room and a sound-proof sealing strip at the bottom of the door
- Providing an opportunity to indicate in the online booking system whether a space is enclosed or quieter than other workstations

The following suggestions gathered relate to actions in the plan that are scheduled for completion at later dates:

- Designating parking space for employees or visitors with disabilities
- Installing automatic door openers to and from employee parking and Canada Place
- Installing an automatic door opener for the accessible washroom at Oceanic Plaza

C. Communication, other than ICT

Actions included under **communication, other than ICT** targeted to address barriers related to inclusive and accessible communications provided to employees, clients, and the public.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Inclusive and accessible communications

- 1.1 We have updated our style guide to reflect the Government of Canada’s Guidelines for Inclusive Writing and accessibility requirements based on the

Accessible Canada Annex Template. The new style guide is expected to be published in June 2024.

- 1.2 We have added links to inclusive writing resources on the internal communications home page.
- 1.3 We have created and published a new accessibility page on our external website that hosts the accessibility plan, highlights our accessibility commitment, and informs the public how to provide feedback on accessibility.
- 1.4 We have provided descriptive image captions and alternative text (“alt text”) to images in all social media posts where the platform accommodates it (X, Facebook, LinkedIn).
- 1.5 We have created a tip sheet for all departments outlining accessibility requirements when creating and sharing port authority video assets. The new tip sheet is pending final review and publishing.
- 1.6 We created a video to raise awareness of disabilities in the workplace which featured a number of employees with both visible and non-visible disabilities. Plans are in place to ask employees with disabilities if they wish to be included in promotional materials.

Website accessibility

- 2.1 We have confirmed accessibility needs for the design, development, and drafting of new content for our new Portvancouver.com and canadaplace.ca websites, in alignment with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, and the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)* international standard. The new websites are expected to launch in Q3 2024.

Emergency procedures

- 3.1 We have confirmed the accessibility requirements for the emergency communications plan.

Consultations: What we heard

There was conflicting feedback about whether image captions and “alt text” is provided for images in social media posts. The port authority’s intranet does not have any image captions or alternative text. Staff commented positively on the internal video featuring several staff with different disabilities that was circulated to employees through the port authority’s intranet last fall/winter. Staff were not aware that any action had been taken to include representation of people with disabilities in visual assets, such as promotional materials. Staff were aware that plans are underway to improve the accessibility of both the port authority and Canada Place websites.

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Adding subtitles to employee orientation videos

- Providing communications in Braille and audio

D. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Actions in the **information and communication technologies (ICT)** section aim to create a barrier-free digital environment, accessible and useable by employees, clients, and the public.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Information and communications technologies

- 1.1 We have identified appropriate assistive technologies and equipment for employees with disabilities, in consultation with Procurement.
- 1.2 We are in the process of developing language regarding accessibility to include in our request for proposal template.

Consultations: What we heard

Employees commented about the need for confidentiality in the procurement of assistive technologies. Employees were not aware of whether web and computer applications are reviewed annually to ensure accessibility. Employees with hearing difficulties can contact the Safety Department regarding ear protection.

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Requesting that employees applying for assistive technology not be identified and that, if identification is necessary, the identifying information should be provided on a confidential and need-to-know basis only.
- Finding ways to simplify the authentication steps to access VPN when working remotely from home as this can be difficult to navigate for those with cognitive disabilities

E. Procurement of goods, services and facilities

The **procurement of goods, services, and facilities** refers to how the port authority acquires and purchases goods, services, and facilities that may be used or accessed by employees, clients, and the public.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Supplier outreach

- 1.1 Our procurement and infrastructure team members attended an accredited supplier diversity conference. We are building internal knowledge and awareness about how to create equitable opportunities for people with disabilities.

Consultations: What we heard

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Using an online resource, [Disability: In Procure Access](#), for accessible procurement
- Providing accessibility training for staff and managers, including the procurement team
- Consulting with the union, employment equity committee and staff with disabilities about the accessibility of a good, service, or facility

F. Design and delivery of programs and services

Actions in the **design and delivery of programs and services** section aim to create accessible programs and services, whether internal or external.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Community events

- 1.1 We are preparing communications about our commitment to accessibility to the public, including how to request an accommodation, and plan to include this content on the updated Canada Together 2024 page of the canadaplace.ca website.

Programs

- 2.1 We are collecting information from other organizations about their accessibility guidelines and best practices. This information will form the basis of the port authority's accessibility guidelines for both external and internal events.
- 2.2 In partnership with the learning and development team, we are identifying accessibility awareness training providers to deliver training to our program team members.

Consultations: What we heard

Suggestion gathered in consultations include:

- Providing mandatory, regular accessibility awareness training for staff, managers and department heads that includes a component on cognitive disabilities

G. Transportation

Actions in the **transportation** section aim to address barriers related to accessing the port authority's facilities.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024. Because the target dates for these actions are

after March 31, 2024, the three actions in this section are currently pending. No information was shared about transportation during the consultations.

6. Inclusive culture and accessibility

Creating inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities has been an organizational priority for the port authority for many years. We have put in place internal processes and built external partnerships with disability-serving agencies with the goal of supporting persons with disabilities by recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities, creating accessible workplaces and by providing barrier-free services for its customers and the public.

The port authority is committed to:

- Creating a workforce that is educated and aware of the rights of people with disabilities
- Embedding accessibility in organizational systems
- Continuing to collaborate with people with disabilities to prevent or eliminate barriers and guide the accessibility plan

Consultations with people with disabilities provided information about the need to foster an inclusive culture and continue to remove accessibility barriers.

This section includes updates on actions completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Resources for accessibility

- 1.1 We requested and received approval for an accessibility budget (\$115K) to fund operational and capital expenditures.

Training on accommodation

- 2.1 We are sourcing training for hiring managers and talent acquisition advisors on how to encourage and support employees with visible and invisible disabilities to meet their accommodation requirements, both in the recruitment cycle and the employee cycle. We have hosted two sessions on accessibility and neurodiversity in the workplace, and are currently exploring hosting additional sessions on a quarterly basis.

Employees with Disabilities Resource Group

- 3.1 Employee resource groups are launching in June 2024, and will be employee-driven. We have received inquiries from employees about a group for employees with disabilities, so we anticipate a group forming in 2024.

Accessible services for the public

- 4.1 The main page of the external website includes a header on Accessibility under About us, which links directly to a page on our commitment and how to submit questions about or feedback on accessibility.

Accessible workplaces for employees with disabilities

- 5.1 We have communicated the accessibility plan to employees during four town halls, several Hub posts, and spotlight sessions. We have created and circulated a video to raise aware about employees with disabilities. One more video is pending.
- 5.2 We will prepare communications about the current accommodation policy and who to contact person in human resources for employees to receive assistance in requesting accommodations.

Ongoing feedback

- 6.1 In the accessibility plan, we have created a feedback mechanism for employees and the public to help the port authority identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. There are options to submit feedback anonymously, and via email, phone, or paper mail.

Consultations: What we heard

Accommodation Policy and Process

Requesting accessibility accommodations, during the hiring process and on the job, is challenging because of the need to disclose the disability and the administrative process of self-identification.

Employees shared concerns about where to find the accommodation policy and who to contact about an accommodation request. They were unclear about the process and concerned about how many staff may be involved due to confidentiality. Some employees felt that it was up to the employee to determine what they needed and didn't feel they received guidance. Some employees are aware that assistive technologies can be requested through "the Hub" (internal website).

For job applicants, there is a general email contact to request accommodations (careers@portvancouver.com), however, it's not stated who these requests go to and if the person is trained to assess accommodation requests.

Employees with disabilities were not consulted to ensure that accommodation requirements were identified and addressed when making organizational changes. Employment equity committee members and persons with disabilities were not consulted on organizational changes, which was perceived to create accessibility barriers.

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Providing the name and/or position title on external job postings for applicants to request accommodations
- Hiring a designated resource who is a subject matter expert in accommodations, including assistive technologies and equipment
- Providing human resources with regular training on accommodation and how to respond to requests
- Providing information on how to request accessible supports at meetings, such as ASL
- Communicating how to request assistive technologies on the intranet
- Sending out an annual message to staff to inquire about accommodation needs
- Consulting with employees with disabilities (consistent with the *Accessible Canada Act* and Accessibility Plan) should take place prior to making organizational changes

Accessibility plan

Many employees interviewed during consultations were not aware of where the accessibility plan is on the website and how to provide feedback.

Employees are unsure about where feedback on the accessibility plan goes or who is reviewing the feedback (although the director, human resources operations is named, the email address and phone number are general).

External agencies serving persons with disabilities indicate that their input has been welcomed and incorporated.

Suggestions gathered in consultations include:

- Moving the How to submit feedback section to the beginning of the accessibility plan
- Highlighting how give feedback on the accessibility plan on the intranet
- Ensuring the Employment Equity Committee meets to provide feedback on the accessibility plan and implementation

7. Provisions of Canadian Transportation Agency accessibility-related regulations

The port authority, as a terminal operator, is subject to the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities (ATPDR)* as it relates to Canada Place cruise terminal, a pre-existing terminal.

Under the ATPDR, the cruise terminal is subject to the following provisions:

- Part 1: Requirements Applicable to Transportation Service Providers
Sections 3(2), 5(1)(a)
- Part 4: Requirements Applicable to Terminal Operators
Sections 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 225(1), 225(2)(a), 225(2)(b), 226, 227, 229, 230, 231

This section includes updates on work completed between June 1, 2023 ([Accessibility Plan](#)) and March 31, 2024.

Pet relief stations

In July 2023, the port authority installed at the Canada Place cruise terminal two pet relief stations in the terminal for documented service animals travelling with cruise passengers to comply with Section 227.

8. Feedback received

The feedback process developed as part of the requirements under the *Accessibility Act* invited employees and members of the public to reach out via telephone, mail, or email where feedback could be provided anonymously. From June 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, two people submitted feedback by email. All feedback has been kept confidential.

The feedback included:

- A query about whether a building was reviewed in the development of the accessibility plan
- A suggestion to increase the accessibility and visibility of the external Careers page link which is important for those with sight loss (this improvement has been made as an interim solution until the new website is launched)
- Information about a resource available through CNIB's social enterprise, Access Labs, that can assist organizations with website accessibility

9. Conclusion

In our progress report, we have highlighted work from the past year to make the port authority more accessible and inclusive.

We are thankful to the employees and disability-serving organization representatives who shared their perspectives through participation in consultations. Their suggestions and the work done by the port authority over the past year will assist us in making progress on accessibility.