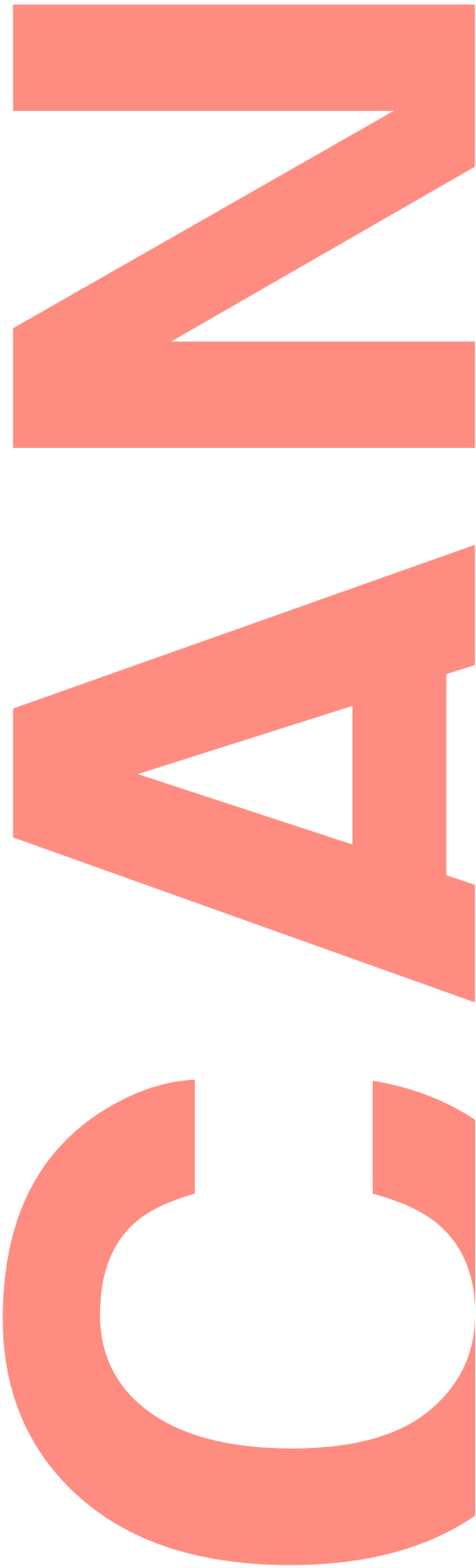
CAN Canadian Accessibility Network

Annual **Report** 2023



CAN

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Acknowledgments

We acknowledge and respect the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people within whose unceded, unsurrendered territory the CAN National Office and the Carleton University campus is located.

This acknowledgment is important to us. It is a reminder of the significance of this location, and it is our pledge for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Message from the Chair of the CAN Governing Council

The Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) started as an idea among a group of dedicated accessibility champions and advocates at Carleton University. With advice and support from our external allies and communities, and under the leadership of the Accessibility Institute (formerly the Research, Education, Accessibility and Design Initiative), CAN was launched in December 2019 and has continued to develop as an independent, autonomous community with its own vision and identity. Due to its location in Canada's capital, CAN is uniquely positioned to connect organizations and individuals who want to bridge the gaps between research and application, government and industry, and policy and action.

CAN has continued to grow a community across Canada and as of April 2023, it has brought together 76 organizations and over 150 individuals from not-for-profits, service providers, educational institutions, government organizations, crown corporations and other sectors representing eight provinces. The Network benefits from having a diverse membership that includes accessibility experts, passionate stakeholders, advocates, and people with lived experience of disability. In addition, we have made connections and shared information with hundreds of individuals interested in the Network's activities and events.

Over the past year, the Network has experienced notable growth and evolution. We have implemented changes to encourage more engagement among CAN members and offer a more flexible and inclusive structure that focuses on partnership building and knowledge mobilization. This structure also provides a better framework for identifying priorities and opportunities to take action together.

I am pleased to report that CAN has completed several projects this year and taken significant steps towards implementing its strategic priorities, which will continue in the next year. This is a major milestone for the Network and a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved. It is also an important time for the Network in its efforts to establish its presence in Canada as an action-oriented community working towards advancing accessibility.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude tov the CAN Members who

have participated in the CAN Governing Council, Advisory Council, Communities of Practice, and various working group meetings. Their invaluable contributions, which reflect their extensive expertise and diverse lived experiences, have been instrumental in advancing the Network's goals. I would also like to thank the CAN National Office Team at the Accessibility Institute for their ongoing commitment and support provided to the Network.

As we move forward into the next year, I am confident that we will continue to build on our successes and make even greater strides in driving change for a more accessible and inclusive society.

Suzanne Blanchard
Chair, CAN Governing Council
Vice-President (Students and Enrolment), Carleton University

Message from the Chair of the CAN Advisory Council

As the Chair of the Advisory Council, I am thrilled to be a part of CAN, a network that truly believes we are stronger together and is able to build collaboration across boundaries. I am filled with gratitude when I see the expertise, the desire for lasting change, the participation, the authenticity, and the diversity of views during our meetings.

The Network has continued to grow over the past year, bringing more viewpoints to the table. As of April 2023, CAN has attracted 76 Collaborator Organizations and 150 individuals from public, private, non-profit, government, and academic sectors from coast to coast. Each CAN Collaborator brings a wealth of knowledge and experience about different aspects of accessibility to the virtual table. The Network provides an opportunity for us to learn from each other, finding our commonalities and working towards action-oriented priorities.

We have listened to feedback and worked on adapting our structures and practices based on the Network's needs, to encourage greater engagement of CAN Members. Moving forward, let's all build on the success and spread the word about CAN, its vision, mission, and objectives, and invite others to participate and join forces with current CAN Collaborators who are already making great strides towards a more accessible and inclusive society and economy in Canada.

In the past year I was delighted to experience all the new ways CAN Members have been sharing knowledge and making connections. Our events, CAN Connect Forums, have provided an excellent opportunity for CAN Members to learn from each other's experiences and expertise and discus a great variety of topics related to accessibility. These events, such as the Deafblind Panel or the Conversation with Yazmine Laroche, brought together tens and hundreds of attendees and helped promote the Network across Canada.

We can all be proud of the Network's growth and the work we have done

together this year. In the time to come, we will continue to reflect and take action to make a difference and accelerate the pace of changes in policies, employment, education & training, and research, design & innovation towards universal accessibility for all Canadians.

Tony Labillois
Chair, CAN Advisory Council
Director General, Justice, Diversity and Population Statistics Branch, Statistics Canada

About CAN

CAN's Vision

To be Canada's cross-sectoral, national platform to empower persons with disabilities; improving socio-economic and health outcomes; and changing mindsets and behaviours for a more accessible and inclusive Canada.

CAN's Mission

The mission of the Canadian Accessibility Network is to:

- Advance accessibility for persons with disabilities through research, design, technology and innovation; education and training; policy; employment; and community engagement;
- Mobilize strategic partnerships among individuals and institutions dedicated to advancing accessibility to encourage innovative and action-oriented leadership; and
- Leverage Canada's accessibility assets across sectors and disciplines to encourage system-level changes and cultural shifts in equity, mindsets and behaviours regarding persons with disabilities.

Cross-Sectoral Value Proposition

The creation of the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) provides an unparalleled opportunity for academic institutions, non-profit organizations, governments, and businesses to combine and leverage their respective assets to advance accessibility and bring about timely, real and lasting change for persons with disabilities. By joining efforts in a sustained way, these partners can:

- Learn continuously from one another to enhance the quality, availability and accessibility of their respective facilities, programs and services and the support they offer to persons with disabilities;
- Provide a more comprehensive and integrated evidence base for public policy development, program decision-making and advocacy regarding accessibility;

- Create a more complementary and integrated inventory of offerings for education, training, employment, engagement and inclusion of persons with disabilities; and
- Reinforce each other's commitments to raise public awareness about accessibility and promote efforts to optimize the contributions of persons with disabilities.

Guiding Principles

- **Accessibility** – The Network will facilitate equitable and timely access for individuals and organizations to the knowledge, programs, services and community engagement efforts of the Network.
- **Inclusion** – The Network will embody "nothing about us, without us" by promoting inclusiveness and equity in determining its strategic directions, in its day-to-day operations, and in the engagement of partners and stakeholders.
- **Intersectionality** – In alignment with the Accessible Canada Act and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Network acknowledges intersectionality and human rights as an organizing framework for all of its work. We recognize the diversity of identities and lived experiences in our society and the reality of multiple inequalities faced by people with disabilities. The Network will apply this intersectional lens to all of its decision-making processes.
- **Collaboration** – The Network will collaborate effectively with disability communities and partners in the public, non-profit and private sectors to maximize the relevance, application and impact of its knowledge and offerings.
- **Excellence** – The Network will enable research, education, training, policy development and knowledge mobilization regarding accessibility of the highest international standard and best practices.
- **Innovation** – The Network will initiate and catalyze new approaches to understanding accessibility and new means to address Canadians' accessibility challenges and opportunities.
- **Sustainability** – The Network will pursue its mission in a manner that promotes the sustainability of its partners and enables it to attract the resources required to grow the capacity and contributions of the Network.

- **Accountability** – The Network will govern and manage its operations with integrity to ensure strong stewardship of the resources entrusted to it, be accountable to its partners, and maintain the trust and confidence of the people whom it seeks to serve and engage.

CAN Governance

Governing Council

The primary role of the CAN Governing Council is to provide stewardship for the Network on behalf of its partner organizations who will benefit from the activities and impacts of the Network. The Council is made up of 18 individuals reflecting multi-sectoral representation from various organizations and sectors from across Canada, with an interest in accessibility and inclusion. The Council will oversee the conduct of the Network's business in collaboration with the CAN National Office, which is responsible for the day-to-day realization of the Network's mission.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is comprised of the appointed representatives from each of our 76 Collaborator Organizations. The role of the Advisory Council is to bring a pan-Canadian voice to the Network, on behalf of their respective regions, as it relates to advancing accessibility for people with disabilities.

The Advisory Council offers a cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary, and cross-country sounding board for the Governing Council and the Communities of Practice and provides a mechanism that ensures the Governing Council and the Communities of Practice benefit from the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and their support teams.

Communities of Practice

In 2022-2023, based on feedback from membership, CAN Domain Area Committees (DACs) were transitioned to Communities of Practice (CoPs). The purpose of this change was to encourage more engagement among CAN members and offer a more flexible and inclusive structure that focuses on relationship/partnership building and knowledge mobilization, while still identifying opportunities to take action together. The four CAN Communities of Practice held their first meetings in winter 2023 and focus their work in the following areas: Education and Training; Employment; Policy; and Research, Design & Innovation.

At the end of the operating year, the four CAN Communities of Practice identified the following initiatives to begin in the 2023-2024 operating year:

- Raise awareness about ableism.
- Identify best practices in digital accessibility/virtual event accessibility.
- Conduct a national accessibility legislation/policy scan and identify gaps.
- Advise on the implementation & review of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Develop an inclusive governance guide.
- Facilitate accessibility-related research, design & innovation knowledge and information sharing.
- Develop a guide on accessible research practices.
- Develop a broad definition of employment which will serve as a framework for other actions.
- Share best practices related to inclusive workplace culture.

Growing CAN's National Influence

Meetings with Canada's Chief Accessibility Officer

In September 2022, Chief Accessibility Officer Stephanie Cadieux visited Carleton University's campus to meet with members of the CAN National Office Team. Ms. Cadieux was interested in learning more about the Canadian Accessibility Network and other work within the Accessibility Institute. Ms. Cadieux shared her observations and thoughts regarding the state of accessibility across the nation and highlighted opportunities for Canada to learn from other countries' initiatives and actions.

In March 2023, members of the CAN National Office team had a follow-up meeting with Stephanie Cadieux to learn more about her work and to explore opportunities for future collaboration with her office.

Government Relations Strategy

In 2022-2023, the CAN National Office worked with the Director of Government Relations at Carleton University to develop a CAN Government Relations Strategy that will support the Network's collective efforts in identifying and perusing opportunities to take collective action and influence large-scale government initiatives related to accessibility.

Taking Collaborative Action

The Network completed the following projects in 2022-2023:

CAN Language Guide

The CAN Language Guide has been created to establish the use of consistent, inclusive language for all CAN communications and to set a standard for CAN that both acknowledges the context of the language we use and honours the diverse and intersectional identities of all people. The Guide is a living document and it will be regularly updated to reflect how language is constantly evolving.

CAN Disability Confidence Resource

The Disability Confidence Resource has been created to help employers in Canada become informed on what it means to be disability confident. Disability confident employers know the value of employing people with disabilities, are aware of the barriers that individuals with disabilities face and use inclusive practices throughout the entire employment process. Disability Confidence refers to both knowledge and inclusion of people with disabilities. This resource has compiled various toolkits, guides, training sessions and workshops employers can utilize to increase their disability confidence.

Sharing Knowledge and Best Practices

CAN Connect Forums

CAN Connect Forums are events which provide CAN members opportunities to network with one another, to learn about each other's work, to share best practices, and connect across locations and sectors. Seven CAN Connect Forums were held in 2022-2023, all of which were well attended (a total of 1412 attendees registered) and received positive feedback.

- **May 17, 2022 – Post-Pandemic Employment of Persons with Disabilities**

This CAN Connect Forum provided the opportunity for attendees to interact in an informal, open environment, sharing what we've learned during the pandemic about employment of persons with disabilities and considering how we can identify and create more meaningful employment opportunities for persons with disabilities post pandemic.

- **September 27, 2022 - Accessibility Planning Tips and Best Practices**

Accessibility plans are an important step towards enacting change within an organization. But creating an accessibility plan and implementing it can be challenging, especially for organizations that are developing plans for the first time. At this CAN Connect Forum, panelists with many years of accessibility planning experience shared their expertise, best practices, and tips for organizations of all sizes.

- **October 25, 2022 - Increasing Accessibility with Assistive Technology**

The "Increasing Accessibility with Assistive Technology" session provided an engaging, collaborative discussion about how to make workplaces increasingly accessible and best suited for the transition from education into work.

- **November 8, 2022 - Accessibility in the Built Environment**

The “Accessibility in the Built Environment” session was an engaging presentation that helped attendees learn how to identify barriers to meaningful access for people who have vision, hearing, and mobility disabilities.

- **December 5, 2022 - Insights into the Deafblind Community**

To mark the 2022 International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) and Statistics Canada co-hosted a panel to provide insights into the Deafblind community, share inclusive practices, and address misconceptions.

- **February 21, 2023 - Accessibility in Engineering Design**

In this session we learned about the work of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering’s Task Force on Accessibility, which aims to accelerate accessibility and integrate Universal Design principles in engineering practice and education across Canada.

- **March 21, 2023 - Reflections on Accessibility: A Conversation with Yazmine Laroche**

In March CAN hosted an intimate 90-minute conversation with former Deputy Minister, Yazmine Laroche, as she reflected on her life and career in the public service and the importance of removing barriers to ensure full participation of persons with disabilities in society. The dialogue also offered perspectives on what has been achieved and what we can do to continue making progress in advancing accessibility.

The Forums are open to the public and CAN Members are highly encouraged to attend. For more information on CAN Connect Forums, to access recordings of past sessions, and to learn more about our upcoming schedule, visit CAN Events.

Building Connections and Coordinating Efforts

CAN Newsletter

The CAN E-Newsletter has been released bi-monthly since May 2022. There were 6 CAN Newsletters issued in 2022-2023, which included information about upcoming events, activities, news, learning and consultation opportunities related to accessibility across Canada. The newsletter is currently distributed to 541 subscribers.

CAN Recruitment & Engagement Strategy

The CAN Recruitment & Engagement Strategy Subcommittee was tasked with reviewing and clarifying current recruitment, outreach & engagement practices, identifying gaps in current membership, and creating a plan for pursuing a more diverse and representative membership and engagement. The Strategy was finalized this year and its implementation will begin in 2023-2024.

CAN By the Numbers

2022-2023 Highlights

- 26 new CAN Collaborators (21 organizations and 5 individuals)
- 14 CAN Meetings (Advisory Council, Governing Council, Communities of Practice)
- 7 CAN Connect Forums
- 1412 CAN Connect Forum Registrations
- 541 CAN Newsletter Subscribers

Membership

- 76 CAN Collaborator Organizations
- 16 CAN Collaborator Individuals
- 155 Members
- 30% self-identify as having lived experience of a visible or non-visible disability

Location

- Eight provinces represented
- Number of CAN Collaborators in each province:
  - 39 Ontario
  - 8 British Columbia
  - 7 Nova Scotia
  - 2 Alberta
  - 2 Manitoba

- 2 Quebec
- 1 New Brunswick
- 1 Saskatchewan

Top 5 Sectors

- Services
- Not-For-Profit/NGO
- Post-Secondary Education
- Technology
- Federal Government

CAN Leadership

Key CAN members in leadership roles:

- Suzanne Blanchard, Chair of the CAN Governing Council
- Tony Labillois, Chair of the CAN Advisory Council and Vice-Chair of the CAN Governing Council
- Pina D'Intino, Co-Lead of the Education & Training Community of Practice
- Maureen Wideman, Co-Lead of the Education & Training Community of Practice
- Bianca Go, Co-Lead of the Employment Community of Practice
- Richard Plummer, Co-Lead of the Employment Community of Practice
- Lucille Berlinguette-Saumure, Lead of the Policy Community of Practice
- Amber Knabl, Co-Lead of the Research, Design & Innovation Community of Practice
- Claire Davies, Co-Lead of the Research, Design & Innovation Community of Practice

CAN National Office

Key members of the CAN National Office team:

- Boris Vukovic, Director, Accessibility Institute and the CAN National Office
- Julie Caldwell, Assistant Director of Program Operations, Accessibility Institute and the CAN National Office
- Jana Mareckova, CAN Program Manager
- Mikaela Stevenson, Communications and Events Coordinator, Accessibility Institute and the CAN National Office
- Jessica Dumelie, Project Coordinator, Accessibility Institute and the CAN National Office
- Sarah Vanderheyden, CAN National Office Operations Support
- Aidan Donnelly, Communications, Events, and Marketing Assistant, Accessibility Institute and the CAN National Office

CAN Collaborators

Visit the CAN website and click on "Collaborators" to learn more.

CAN Collaborator Organizations

1. Abilities Centre Whitby – Ottawa
2. Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board
3. Accessibil-IT Inc.
4. Accessibrand
5. Adaptability Canada Corporation
6. Ai-Media
7. Algonquin College
8. Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians Toronto Chapter (AEBC)
9. Allied Therapy
10. Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured (ARBI)
11. Autism Alliance of Canada
12. BDO Canada LLP / BDO Consulting
13. Bow Valley College
14. Branching Out Support Services
15. Bruyere Research Institute
16. Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER)
17. Canadian Assistive Technology
18. Canadian Chamber of Commerce
19. Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)
20. Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association
21. Carleton University
22. Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)
23. City of Ottawa
24. CNIB Foundation
25. Community Futures Manitoba
26. D2L Desire2Learn
27. Disability Alliance BC
28. Disability Foundation
29. Distinctability Ltd.
30. Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN)
31. Eviance (Canadian Centre on Disability Studies Inc.)

32. EY Canada
33. Fable
34. Fair Chance Learning
35. Halifax Regional Municipality
36. Hidden Mobility Disabilities Alliance
37. Home Sharing Support Society BC
38. Inclusion Nova Scotia
39. Inclusive Society
40. Inclusive Workplace and Supply Council of Canada (IWSCC)
41. Independent Living Canada
42. Ingenium
43. La Cité
44. Make a Difference Through Inclusion (MADTI)
45. Manitoba Possible
46. McGill University
47. National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)
48. Neil Squire Society
49. Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate
50. Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO)
51. Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)
52. Ontario Tech University
53. Propeller Dance
54. Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)
55. Queen's University
56. Queen's University – Canadian Disability Policy Alliance
57. Recreational Respite
58. Rick Hansen Foundation
59. Saint Mary's University
60. Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC)
61. Specialisterne
62. Spinal Cord Injury Canada
63. St. Francis Xavier University
64. Statistics Canada
65. Thompson Rivers University
66. Transport Canada
67. University of the Fraser Valley
68. University of Manitoba
69. University of New Brunswick
70. University of Ottawa

71. University of Toronto
72. University of Victoria – CanAssist
73. University of Waterloo
74. Via Rail Canada
75. Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)
76. York University

CAN Collaborator Individuals

77. AnaLori Smith – Accessibility Subject-Matter Expert, Canada School of Public Service
78. Andrew McIntyre – Lawyer and Senior Policy Advisor, OPS Accessibility Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
79. Cynthia Bruce - Assistant Professor, Music Therapy, Concordia University
80. Danielle Lorenz – Associate Editor, Canadian Journal of Disability Studies
81. Daniel Patterson
82. Dulcie McCallum – Former member of Canada's Delegation to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
83. Matthew Gallina – National ISET Coordinator, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
84. Matthew Raniowski – Electronics Technician, Canadian Forces/National Defence
85. Melissa Egan – National Lead, Episodic Disabilities, Realize
86. Ian MacVicar – Ian MacVicar Yoga and Mindful Resilience Coaching
87. Jaime Winkler – Network Coordinator, Cerebral Palsy Canada Network
88. Richard Plummer – Director, Business Development & Operations, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
89. Rosalie McGrath – Senior Advisor, Accessibility Office, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
90. Scott Allardyce – Senior Policy Advisor, OPS Accessibility Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
91. Sowmya Bhaskar – Human Resources Professional
92. Steve Estey – Independent Consultant, CRPD and International Disability Rights