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Public Services and Procurement Canada

Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative Evaluation

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Overview of the evaluation

The evaluation of the Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative (AGBEI) was conducted by Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) Evaluation Services Directorate (ESD) between August 2022 and September 2023. This mandatory evaluation fulfills PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s commitment to report on the results of the

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) to the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) by March 31, 2024. This commitment was reflected in the Departmental Evaluation Plan fiscal year 2022 to 2023 to fiscal year 2027 to 2028.

The evaluation examined AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) over fiscal year 2019 to 2020 to fiscal year 2022 to 2023, in compliance with the requirements of the Treasury Board (TB) Policy on Results, and in response to senior management information needs, the evaluation examined the relevance, the effectiveness and the efficiency of AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) over fiscal year 2019 to 2020 to fiscal year 2022 to 2023.

Objective of the evaluation

Assess the progress on the completion of technical accessibility assessments and their results while also assessing the relevance and the performance (effectiveness and efficiency) of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative).

Stakeholders

This evaluation was conducted with contributions from a wide variety of stakeholders including those internal to PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada), external to PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) but within the Government of Canada (GC), and stakeholders external to the GC (Government of Canada):

Within the Government of Canada

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) stakeholders:

- Real Property Services (RPS)
- Science and Parliamentary Infrastructure Branch (SPIB)
- Policy, Planning and Communications Branch (PPCB)
- Human Resources Branch (HRB)
- Persons with Disabilities Network (PWD)

GC (Government of Canada) stakeholders: Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS)

External to the Government of Canada

Stakeholders:

- Canadian Association of the Deaf
- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions (BGIS) Integrated Facilities Management

Methodology and limitations

An overview of the evaluation methodology and limitations is presented in [Annex B: Evaluation Methodology, Limitations and Mitigations](#).

Accessibility in the Government of Canada

As Canada's largest employer, the GC (Government of Canada) is committed to building an agile, more inclusive, better equipped and more resilient federal public service. The 4 key elements to ensuring this commitment are:

- diversity
- inclusion
- health
- accessibility

Accessible Canada Act

The [Accessible Canada Act \(2019\)](#) aims to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction in a number of areas including the built environment. The built environment priority area aims to ensure greater opportunities for persons with disabilities by proactively eliminating and preventing barriers to allow for free movement throughout and around buildings and public spaces.

Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada (2020)

To meet the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act*, TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat) developed and launched [Nothing without us: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) with the stated vision of creating the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world. The Strategy identifies 5 goals key to realizing this vision, including goal 2 that aims to enhance the accessibility of the built environment. PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) is aligned with enhancing the accessibility of the built environment by providing clients and employees of the GC (Government of Canada) barrier-free access to and use of the federally owned and lease-purchase built environment.

Accessibility at Public Services and Procurement Canada

As the GC (Government of Canada)'s central real property manager, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) provides government organizations and parliamentarians with federal property and accommodation services while ensuring that federal infrastructure

spending supports Canada's social, economic and environmental priorities. PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) conducts accessibility assessments of its crown-owned and lease-purchase portfolio, determines the feasibility of accessible built environment adaptations, establishes the cost of improvements, prioritizes actions, and improvement initiatives in consultation with persons with disabilities to improve accessibility. The department also reviews policies and services to improve the accessibility of federal property for all Canadians. In addition, it manages federal property construction and maintenance projects necessary to enhance the accessibility of the built environment.

Within PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) there are currently 2 groups dedicated to accessibility and inclusion:

- PPCB (Policy, Planning and Communications Branch) Accessibility Office, which oversees the department's efforts to strengthen accessibility and inclusion
- RPS (Real Property Services) Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment (AIBE) (formerly known as the Office of Accessibility in the Built Environment) which assesses the current state of the built environment and identify enhancements to improve accessibility through the implementation and coordination of AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)

The Accessibility Office is separate from the AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) and not within the scope of this evaluation.

Public Services and Procurement Canada's Accessibility Plan 2023 to 2025

As mandated under the *Accessible Canada Act*, federal departments and agencies must publish accessibility plans every 3 years. The PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Accessibility Plan 2023 to 2025 fulfills this requirement. The AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) is aligned with the built environment priority area detailed in PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s plan, which focuses on the activities of:

- consultations with persons with disabilities and subject matter experts to learn about best practices to improve accessibility in the environment
- updating policies to support a barrier-free workplace and make accessibility improvements based on input from persons with disabilities

Overview of the Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative

The objective of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) is to conduct accessibility assessments to identify improvements in PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings. These assessments, known as technical accessibility assessments (TAA), evaluate PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings against the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-2018 Standard for the Accessible Design of the Built Environment to determine their current accessibility compliance levels and cost estimates for implementing accessibility improvements. Additionally, the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) includes an engagement component to ensure the contribution of disability communities, including PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Persons with Disabilities Network, to identify accessibility barriers in the workplace. The following section explains what is in scope and out of scope of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative).

Scope of the Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative

Building types that are in scope of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative):

- PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Crown-owned office buildings
- PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) lease-purchase office buildings

Building types that are out of scope of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative):

- PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) leased buildings or marked for disposal
 - rationale for exclusion: as part of the planned transition to a hybrid workplace PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) expects that approximately 60% of leases will not be renewed.
- recently renovated or scheduled for major renovation buildings
 - rationale for exclusion: expected to be at or to be brought up to current accessibility standards
- Parliamentary Precinct buildings
 - rationale for exclusion: subjected to a separate accessibility assessment
- special purpose facilities (engineering assets, warehouses, laboratories)
 - rationale for exclusion: space requiring different levels of accessibility
- buildings owned by other custodians

- rationale for exclusion: not part of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s portfolio

Technical accessibility assessments

The assessments are conducted using PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s checklists as a tool to identify the level of compliance, and to comment on the feasibility of closing the gap between existing conditions and the 2018 CSA (Canadian Standards Association) B651 accessibility standard, the National Building Code and applicable provincial building codes. The results of the completed checklists are compiled into an assessment report which includes a cost estimate to implement accessibility improvements and an accessibility compliance score determined by assessing the various components of the built environment that includes:

- vehicular parking
- passenger pick-up areas
- curb ramps
- accessible routes
- ramps and platform lifts
- entrances
- doors
- elevators
- stairs
- washrooms
- all access washrooms
- bathing facilities
- tactile signage and signage
- drinking fountains
- public telephones
- other employee and public areas
- secure areas
- tactile walking and attention indicator surfaces

The assessments are conducted through 1 of 3 resource streams:

1. in-house by PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) employees
2. assigned to facilities management provider BGIS (Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions)
3. contracted out to other third-party contractor

The information from the assessment reports form a benchmark of accessibility compliance level and costs. This benchmark will support the prioritization and other decision-making activities to remove barriers to accessibility in the built environment.

Above and Beyond

To review the built environment and identify enhancements that would allow its real property assets to not only meet but to exceed the 2018 accessibility standards, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) integrated Above and Beyond elements in addition to the various components of the assessment listed above. The Above and Beyond assessment checklist includes incremental improvements for each component assessed based on early pilot assessments, engagements, and pilot projects.

Improvement costing

The assessments include cost estimates based on a comprehensive list of requirements and assumptions, including a full description of the preferred schematic design option, construction/design experience and market conditions (class C).

Engagement

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the barriers public servants in disability communities face, AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has the responsibility to conduct meaningful and sustained engagement with:

- members from communities with disabilities, clients, tenants, and Disability Networks throughout the technical assessment and improvement projects on accessibility
- third-party organizations that represent disability communities to identify any additional elements that should be considered alongside the accessibility requirements

Accessibility improvement implementation

Despite not being mandated to implement accessibility improvements, the AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment), through AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative), oversaw the implementation of improvements across the real property portfolio. PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) was able to implement select innovative accessibility improvements while assessments were being conducted. Improvements were funded through existing operational and maintenance budgets.

As a first step, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) undertook a number of pilot projects in select locations so as to test new accessibility products and technologies prior to launching on a larger scale. As a second step, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) implemented 22

features across its portfolio which delivered low-cost, high-impact, short term accessibility improvements through the Lean Forward Initiative. Some of the key accessibility features implemented within the portfolio include:

- GoHere electronic application which enables location of public washrooms
- motion sensor door actuators and touchless washroom elements
- multimedia signage
- building maps in accessible formats and wayfinding application
- washroom grab bars

Evaluation findings

The evaluation findings below have been organized according to their conclusions on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative). Recommendations have been made under each category.

Relevance conclusion 1

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) plays a key role in supporting PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s response to accessibility needs in the built environment of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Crown-owned and lease-purchase real property portfolio. There is an opportunity to continue and expand the scope of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) in light of:

- the importance of better supporting diversity and inclusion
- the significant proportion of leased buildings
- the move towards hybrid work environments
- the impact of the evolving accessibility standards on the built environment

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada), through AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) contributes to the advancement of the accessibility priorities of GC (Government of Canada)'s Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada and PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Accessibility Plan 2023 to 2025 by providing a benchmark for accessibility conditions based on accessibility assessments and cost estimates to inform future improvements required to meet and where feasible surpass latest accessibility standards.

In the latest Update on Implementation of "Nothing Without Us": Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada (2020), the GC (Government of Canada) has noted that there is still more work ahead to remove barriers encountered by employees with disabilities and by members of other equity-seeking groups. Several interviewees from

program management, accessibility advisory groups, and building users, including persons with disabilities echoed the need for increased diversity and inclusion in the built environment. The term “accessibility” in the past has been in relation to persons with a visible need for accommodation. More recently, this term has been expanded to include visible and non-visible disabilities. As such, there is an opportunity to further expand the scope of the assessments to include elements of the built environment that may present barriers to diversity and inclusion as well as implementing items such as gender-inclusive washrooms and prayer rooms. As part of its Integrated Business Plan 2023 to 2026, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) plans to deliver accessibility and inclusivity in the Built Environment Action Plan laying out a prioritized implementation strategy for PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Crown-owned and lease-purchase assets.

The evaluation noted that leased buildings have been perceived as less accessible by some program staff: regional senior management indicated they regularly need to sign off on exceptions to meeting accessibility standards for leased spaces when faced with a lack of resources, limited options for space, or in some cases make arrangements with landlords to fund improvements. This highlights the potential risk that, as Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings accessibility improvements are implemented in the coming years, leased buildings may fall behind the accessibility benchmark established by AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative). The impact of this risk may be mitigated by plans to not renew the majority of leases in light of the recent adoption of the hybrid work model.

Table 1: Public Services and Procurement Canada’s portfolio (buildings and rentable ¹ square meters) as of March 31, 2023

Asset type	Number of buildings	Rentable square meters
Crown-owned and lease-purchase	337	3,244,983
Lease	1,154	2,970,991

Accessibility conditions of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Crown-owned and lease-purchase real property portfolio span the entire country working across all regions with varying provincial, territorial, and municipal standards and building codes. New accessibility standards are released every few years, as evidenced by the recent release of the CSA (Canadian Standards Association) group’s B651-2023, which is an update to the B651-2018. Additionally, Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) and the CSA (Canadian Standards Association) are collaborating to develop new accessibility standards which includes the built environment. To reflect the constant evolution of workplace needs and accessibility standards, there is a need for AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) to

conduct accessibility assessments on a cyclical basis in order to support PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Accessibility Plan 2023 to 2025 in its commitment to enabling a well-functioning, diverse, inclusive hybrid workplace of the future.

The evaluation found that, while there has been a release of a new standard (2023), buildings are still being assessed against the 2018 standard through the current technical accessibility assessment checklist in order to set a benchmark of accessibility conditions to maintain consistency and comparability across assessments. A sentiment of confusion on the part of assessors, building users and building owners/management and those implementing accessibility improvements was noted by both program staff and management around which standard (2018 or 2023) would be best to use. Some accessibility advisory stakeholders and building users identified the ever-evolving standards as a positive factor that pushes building owners and building management to implement accessibility improvements that go above and beyond the current standard or the last standard the building was assessed against. There is a potential risk that the continued use of the 2018 standard to assess accessibility may result in PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) buildings not being fully assessed against the current 2023 standard.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) continues the accessibility assessment process while ensuring appropriate, ongoing consideration of the evolving environment (diversity and inclusion, standard updates, leased buildings within the hybrid work environment context) in order to provide timely, complete and accurate information available to support decision-making related to the built environment.

Relevance conclusion 2

The *Accessible Canada Act* has led to the implementation of many programs and initiatives targeting barriers to accessibility both across the GC (Government of Canada) and within each department. Having a better understanding of accessibility initiatives, especially those targeting the built environment, across the GC (Government of Canada) would allow AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) to better understand and communicate with the other programs and initiatives while also clarifying its own objectives and results.

Since the introduction of the *Accessible Canada Act*, the GC (Government of Canada) has implemented various programs and initiatives to remove barriers to accessibility in the built environment both across the GC (Government of Canada) and within each department. The majority of

departmental accessibility plans, which were required by the Act to be published, include accessible built environment outcomes and activities. As per the recently approved TB (Treasury Board) *Policy on the Planning and Management of Investments*, deputy heads are required to consider opportunities to advance accessibility objectives. As a result, other custodian departments and agencies which own real property may be individually undertaking their own accessibility-related activities in addition to those of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada). AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) program staff and management noted a lack of linkages and synergies between activities across the GC (Government of Canada) aimed at removing barriers related to accessibility.

Additionally, interviews conducted as part of the evaluation with senior PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) management, accessibility advisory stakeholders and building users, including persons with disabilities, indicated there is a need for AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) to share more information about the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) and its progress, especially with senior management and building users. Interviewees noted that there is a common misconception amongst stakeholders such as persons with disabilities, and other accessibility advisory stakeholders, that implementing accessibility improvements is within AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)'s scope. Better coordination and clearer communication shared by AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) are necessary to ensure a common understanding of what can be accomplished through the program, what accessibility entails, and what comprises the scope of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative).

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) enhance interactions with stakeholders including the other departments and building users to ensure common understanding of AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)'s purpose and scope and appropriate information sharing amongst the stakeholders.

Effectiveness conclusion 1

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has been essential to increasing the availability of information and awareness on what is needed to enable improved accessibility of the built environment. This includes an increased knowledge of:

- current accessibility conditions of the PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) portfolio

- what improvements would be needed to bring the portfolio up to and beyond standards
- costs to implement these improvements
- the feasibility of introducing specific new technologies

There are, however, opportunities to further improve AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) data such as coverage, comparability and accuracy to better support the reliability of cost estimates.

The primary source of information on accessibility conditions of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)’s real property portfolio has been the Technical Accessibility Assessments. Through these assessments, each building is awarded an accessibility compliance score. There was a consensus amongst interviewees that the compliance score is crucial for comparing accessibility conditions from building to building and providing information essential for managing accessibility in the built environment. Additionally, the compliance score can be used in conjunction with other information provided by the assessments to support senior management decision-making and prioritization, including decisions related to the disposal of buildings and prioritizing the implementation of improvements. It is worth noting that the scoring does not always relate directly to implementation costs, due to various factors such as building age, heritage status, building size, regional factors, and jurisdictional building codes.

Table 2: Technical accessibility assessment completion

Technical Accessibility Assessments	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Target	17%	33%	50%	80%	100%
Completion	18%	30%	44%	73%	100% (planned)

As of March 2023, AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has conducted assessments on 73% of Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings that were deemed within the scope of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) with the remaining 27% of buildings that require assessments planned for fiscal year 2023 to 2024 in order for AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) to meet its target of 100% completion by the end of fiscal year 2023 to 2024. The work as of March 2023 is short of the target of 80% completion included in AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)’s performance measurement plan. However, the work completed to date has been able to provide useful information to support forecasting. Forecasting from the information available from assessments completed to date by AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) (73%),

the evaluation estimates that the total cost may be between \$221 million to \$325 million (2023 dollars) in order bring all (100%) of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings up to the 2018 standard.

A review of program tracking data and collected interview responses show that AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) faced a significant slowdown in progress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns caused by the pandemic impacted the assessors' ability to gain access to space and delayed the conduct of planned assessments. Several program staff interviewed pointed out that although the pandemic stalled the progress on assessments, the program used that time to revise assessment tools and explore avenues for conducting assessments. As such, AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) leveraged the on-site presence and expertise of BGIS (Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions) to conduct accessibility assessments mainly in buildings where they provide facility management services. There is a potential risk that the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) does not complete all of its accessibility assessments as planned by the close of fiscal year 2023 to 2024. This could have downstream impacts delaying future accessibility assessments across the property portfolio, and possibly delaying implementation of accessibility improvements already identified.

The evaluation conducted an analysis of completed assessments to date and noted data quality issues resulting from factors affecting the ability to deliver accurate and consistent cost estimates for improvement implementation. The lack of an official cost estimate guideline resulted in a variation of costing elements considered in the final costing estimation. For example, factors such as allowances for contingencies, estimates on design, regional adjustments, and profit were not consistently included or excluded in final estimates. Moreover, there were inconsistencies in the percentages allocated for these elements. In addition, some program staff noted they experienced difficulty estimating construction costs, especially since the pandemic, due to its impact on supply lines. Program staff also reported that they usually fall short between 20 and 30% when comparing estimates to actual construction costs. Given that AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) spans a 5-year period, there is a potential risk that total cost estimates for improving the accessibility of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) buildings may not be reliable due to inconsistencies in assessments which may result in budgeting challenges for future improvement activities.

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) staff as well as accessibility advisory stakeholders noted that there are improvements that can be made to enhance the efficiency of the assessment process and increase the quality of the information produced. These include:

- taking into consideration the varying security requirements of buildings when planning assessments
- providing clear instructions and up-to-date checklists to assessment teams to improve efficiency
- instituting both quality and cost-control functions for assessments to improve data quality
- promoting the use of updated digital tools and software to streamline the consolidation and documentation of information

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) develops a standardized methodology for estimating the costs of implementing accessibility improvements, which include provisions for contingencies, regional cost factors and other add-ons to the base cost estimate in order to improve the quality and reliability of its costing data.

Effectiveness conclusion 2

While not mandated to implement accessibility improvements, the AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) supported the implementation of accessibility improvements across the portfolio which were funded by RPS (Real Property Services) as part of custodian responsibilities for the PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) portfolio.

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) not only delivered information on accessibility conditions over the course of its implementation, it also put in place the select improvements described in the Accessibility Improvement Implementation section of this report. Through interviews with building users, including persons with disabilities, it was cautioned that the implementation of improvements through fit-ups, building renovations or accessibility improvements can inadvertently introduce accessibility barriers to other persons with disabilities. While the evaluation notes that accessibility is a constantly changing and evolving field, there is a potential risk to reduce the accessibility for some people with disabilities when implementing improvements to the built environment. AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) program management is aware of this potential risk. Management notes that it is mitigated through adherence to applicable acts, policies and guides relating to accessibility, including the *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service*, as well as working closely with stakeholders such as Human Resources to ensure guidance materials are available to support impacted management and employees.

Effectiveness conclusion 3

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has used a variety of approaches to engage with key stakeholders with the intent to improve accessibility of the built environment with limitations encountered in some areas. There is the potential to enhance stakeholder outreach by utilizing additional approaches to engagement as well as expanding engagements to reach a larger range of respondents.

As detailed in the [Overview of the AGBEI \(Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative\)](#) section, the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) is expected to engage stakeholders to understand building users' perception of accessibility conditions in the built environment and provide supplementary information to the assessments. Engagements undertaken by AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) included a GCworkplace Consultation Series on Accessibility, informal discussions with stakeholder groups in various contexts and surveying of building users.

The GCworkplace Consultation Series on Accessibility consisted of virtual workshops aimed at understanding the needs of persons with disabilities as they relate to the workplace through discussions of barriers faced in the workplace. These 25 workshops were delivered with 259 participants from 36 federal organizations. Feedback received is already shaping tools developed by PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) for fit-up projects, such as the [GCworkplace Design Guide \(PDF, 5,52MB\)](#) and [Technical Reference Manual \(PDF, 16,65MB\)](#).

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) established successful partnerships with Persons with Disabilities networks and wider accessibility communities through informal discussions, such as union quarterly meetings and engagements related to the implementation of pilot projects. However, these discussions were found by the evaluation to have primarily focused on the design and conduct of pilot projects, rather than on stakeholder perceptions of accessibility conditions.

Through a document review of all assessments completed by March 2023, the evaluation found the majority of assessments lacked engagement or consultation information relating to the buildings assessed. In part, this was due to assessors attempting to engage with building users electronically and receiving no feedback in response, however there were many examples of assessments which had no reference to any form of engagement conducted.

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) conducted 2 surveys targeting building users, 1 being a national survey and 1 specifically for the National Capital Area (NCA). While AGBEI (Accessible Government

Built Environment Initiative) noted that there were contextual factors which may have limited the level of engagement in the surveys (such as the pandemic, survey fatigue or hesitancy to self identify as a person with disability), the evaluation noted that the surveys' administration may have had a greater impact on the utility of their results. These surveys targeted 50 Crown-owned buildings scheduled for assessment and were initially intended for employees working in buildings that were being assessed. However, through a review of survey data, the evaluation found that surveys were sent widely and reached employees that were not working in the targeted buildings. In total almost 1,100 employees tried to complete the surveys with a final count of approximately 300 detailed responses received from the activity. The evaluation notes that nearly 75% of survey respondents were unable to provide feedback due to their building(s) not being listed in the survey building lists.

While AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has undertaken the above engagement activities, building users, including persons with disabilities, interviewed during the evaluation consistently remarked on the need for more regular connection points with the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative), having described recent engagements as sporadic. Many building users, including persons with disabilities, reported that they had not been informed on the results of engagements and their submitted feedback. Several respondents advocated for the implementation of a feedback mechanism whereby those who submitted feedback would be followed up with on the results of their input. Additionally, there was a general sense from persons with disabilities, accessibility stakeholders and external disability support organizations interviewed that not all accessibility stakeholder groups had been included and that there is a need for increased consideration of diversity in the accessibility domain. These stakeholders suggested expanding the engagements to include a broader range of respondents, including finding a way to reach all employees from lower-level to senior management while continuing engagement with external disability support organizations.

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) management is aware of and trying to address identified issues through seeking dedicated engagement resources and developing a more robust engagement strategy. Additionally, the AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) intends to launch accessibility consultations for buildings yet to be assessed as part of their future engagement strategy. Interviews with PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) senior management and AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) staff have described engagement as improving since the publication of *Accessible Canada Act* and the start of AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative). The majority of accessibility stakeholders who were interviewed, consisting of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) senior management, AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment

Initiative) staff, and building users including persons with disabilities, agreed that there has been an increased awareness and understanding of accessibility within the department, across government, and amongst the public over time.

While management is responding to the engagement issues raised by the evaluation, there is a potential risk of reduced stakeholder participation due to their past negative experiences with engagements. These experiences may limit the sharing and availability of important information to support the future direction of ~~PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)~~'s activities intended to improve the accessibility of the built environment.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that ~~PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)~~ implements more effective engagement approaches with all building users, including people with disabilities and disability support organizations (for example, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Rick Hansen Foundation; Canadian Association of the Deaf) to obtain more comprehensive views on the improvements made and needed as well as assessments of building user satisfaction.

Efficiency Conclusion 1

~~AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)~~ is on track to complete its activities within budget with total expenditures anticipated by the program to be less than the original budget as a result of changes to the scope of work over the course of its implementation. Total expenditures to conduct all assessments by fiscal year 2023 to 2024 are expected to total \$4.1 million.

~~AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)~~ total expenditures are estimated to be \$4.1 million by the close of fiscal year 2023 to 2024, considerably under the original budget of \$26.4 million allocated for building assessments. The low cost of total expenditures is mainly due to the exclusion of a large number of buildings from the scope of ~~AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)~~ such as leased properties; recently renovated; marked for disposal; and special purpose facilities (warehouses, laboratories, engineering assets). For a breakdown of expenditures by fiscal year, please see the list below.

Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative Evaluation expenditures by fiscal year

- 2019 to 2020: \$297,518
- 2020 to 2021: \$97,170
- 2021 to 2022: \$407,592

- 2022 to 2023: \$1,787,412
- 2023 to 2024: \$1,500,000 (estimate)
- Total: \$4,089,692 (estimate)

Over the course of the evaluation, some respondents, including AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) staff and Regional Accessibility Coordinators reported that they believed using BGIS (Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions) as a contractor was more efficient and cost-effective. However, there was no consensus among stakeholders on a preferred assessment resourcing option. There was consensus, however, that having the opportunity to select from multiple assessment resource streams provided coordinators the ability to match a given building with the assessment option which would be most efficient for completion given its circumstances. The evaluation notes that BGIS (Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions) was not used to assess buildings in all regions.

Final conclusions

In accordance with the GC (Government of Canada) goal to create the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world, there is an increasing need to address the accessibility conditions of the built environment of GC (Government of Canada)'s real property portfolio. Initiatives like AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) are essential for understanding existing conditions and paving the way for future improvements.

AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has shown itself to be an integral part of how PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) supports the priority of removing barriers to accessibility in the built environment of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Crown-owned and lease-purchase real property portfolio. Assessments being conducted on these buildings are contributing to a benchmark of accessibility conditions that will support senior management prioritization and decision-making. The evaluation notes benefits would be gained from the continuation of the assessments including through consideration of the accessibility of those leased buildings which may be renewed and to further the built environment needs of equity-seeking groups. The assessments would be enhanced by a refinement of costing tools available to assessors and program staff, and improvements to the communication and engagement strategies to implement more systematic sharing of program information and to incorporate more feedback from stakeholders. Developing processes for collaboration and coordination with other accessibility units, both internal and external to PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada), could support the advancement of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s and GC (Government of Canada)'s achievement of a more accessible and inclusive public service.

Annex A: Management Response and Action Plan

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicable
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Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicable
It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) continues the accessibility assessment process while ensuring appropriate, ongoing consideration of the evolving environment (diversity and inclusion, standard updates, leased buildings within the hybrid work environment context) in order to provide timely, complete and accurate information available to support decision-making related to the built environment.	Agree	1.1 The Technical Accessibility Assessment template will be updated as new standards come into force.	1.1 An updated Technical Accessibility Assessment template.	1.1 Summer 2024	Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) RPS (Real Property Services)	ADM (Assistant Deputy Minister) (Science and Parliamentary Infrastructure Branch)
		1.2 Complete regular Technical Accessibility Assessments of the Crown-owned portfolio will follow the Building Condition Report framework cycle, in other words, will be repeated every 5 years or when a major renovation occurs.	1.2 Update the Building Condition Report checklist to include the requirement of the completion of Technical Accessibility Assessments on a 5-year cycle.	1.2 Spring 2024		
		1.3 For the leased portfolio, existing accessibility audits are being expanded to include technical assessment criteria, where applicable.	1.3 A. Integrate the Technical Accessibility Assessment template into new lease and lease renewal processes.	1.3 A Fall 2024		
			1.3 B Finalize the accessibility exemption procedure for leased buildings.	1.3 B Spring 2024		

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
		1.4 Develop a plan to further incorporate accessibility and inclusivity measures in RPS (Real Property Services)'s portfolio.	1.4 Work with Portfolio and Asset Management/Real Estate Services on a plan to further incorporate accessibility and inclusivity measures.	1.4 Spring 2024		
		1.5 Develop a data collection and reporting strategy for accessibility in the built environment. Key performance indicators have been developed in the 2023-to-2025 PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Accessibility Plan with respect to the built environment.	1.5 Update the Built Environment Accessibility Procedure including developing reporting templates and dashboards.	1.5 Summer 2024		

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) enhance interactions with stakeholders including the other departments and building users to ensure common understanding of AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)’s purpose and scope and appropriate information sharing amongst the stakeholders.	Agree	2. AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) will develop the RPS (Real Property Services) National Accessibility and Inclusivity Built Environment Engagement Strategy. The strategy will identify stakeholders, outline standard engagement activities to communicate and engage with stakeholders, develop methodologies to track and analyze participant feedback from engagement sessions.	2. The final RPS (Real Property Services) National Accessibility and Inclusivity Built Environment Engagement Strategy	2 Summer 2024	ADM (Assistant Deputy Minister) RPS (Real Property Services)	Not applicable (N/A)

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
		2.1 AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) will develop and support the implementation of the RPS (Real Property Services) engagement plan which will be the detailed roadmap to ensure consistent, meaningful, measurable and ongoing consultation and collaboration with diversity networks, partners, clients and stakeholders.	2.1 The final RPS (Real Property Services) National Accessibility Guide Accessibility and Inclusivity Built Environment Engagement Plan	2.1 Summer 2025		

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) develops a standardized methodology for estimating the costs of implementing accessibility improvements, which include provisions for contingencies, regional cost factors and other add-ons to the base cost estimate in order to improve the quality and reliability of its costing data.	Agree	3. AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) is currently developing the RPS (Real Property Services) Accessibility Action Plan which will provide a costed and prioritized plan based on a standardized costing methodology to implement accessibility improvement across the portfolio.	3. Final RPS (Real Property Services) Accessibility Action Plan, which includes a standardized costing and prioritization methodology.	3. Spring 2024	ADM (Assistant Deputy Minister) RPS (Real Property Services)	N/A (Not applicabl

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) implements more effective engagement approaches with all building users, including people with disabilities and disability support organizations (for instance Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Rick Hansen Foundation; Canadian Association of the Deaf) to obtain more comprehensive views on the improvements made and needed as well as assessments of building user satisfaction.	Agree	4. AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) will develop the RPS (Real Property Services) National Accessibility and Inclusivity Built Environment Engagement Strategy. This will outline an engagement strategy for connecting with building occupants, particularly occupants challenged by barriers in the workplace. The strategy will identify stakeholders, outline standard engagement activities to communicate and engage with stakeholders, develop methodologies to track and analyze participant feedback from engagement sessions. It will	4. The final RPS (Real Property Services) National Accessibility and Inclusivity Built Environment Engagement Strategy	4. Summer 2024	ADM (Assistant Deputy Minister) RPS (Real Property Services)	N/A (Not applicabl

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
		also outline the most effective strategies for continued consultation with key external accessibility stakeholders such as Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Rick Hansen Foundation, Canadian Association of the Deaf, etc.				

Recommendations	Management response	Management Action Plan	Deliverables	Targeted implementation date	Office of Primary Interest	Office of Secondary Interest applicab
		4.1 AIBE (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment) will develop and support the implementation of the RPS (Real Property Services) engagement plan which will be the detailed roadmap to ensure consistent, meaningful, measurable and ongoing consultation and collaboration with diversity networks, partners, clients and stakeholders.	4.1 The final RPS (Real Property Services) National Accessibility Guide Accessibility and Inclusivity Built Environment Engagement Plan	4.1 Summer 2025		

Annex B: Evaluation methodology, limitations and mitigations

Lines of evidence	Interviews	Focus groups	Document review	Quantitative data analysis	Case studies of projects
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Methodologies	33 interviews with accessibility stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) senior management: 4 • program management: 12 • advisory groups including building users, Persons with Disabilities Network and external stakeholders (TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat), Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Rick Hansen Foundation; Canadian Association of the Deaf): 17 	2 focus groups with regional program officials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Regional Director Generals: 3 participants • PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) regional accessibility coordinators: 7 participants 	230 documents reviewed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 AGBE (Accessible Government Built Environment) documents • 20 GC (Government of Canada) policy and regulations • approximately 150 TAA (Technical accessibility assessments)s 	2 distinct AGBE (Accessible Government Built Environment) administered surveys covering 50 Crown-owned buildings up for assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Building Accessibility Survey (2021 to 2022) • National Capital Area's Building Accessibility Survey (2022) 9 AGBE (Accessible Government Built Environment) performance datasets/documents	9 building access products/technologies being trialled in (Government of Canada) buildings December 2018 March 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GoHere app enabling location of washrooms buildings • contactless elevator button access: 3 buildings • electronic signs with QR codes/NFC tags: 9 buildings/1 individual installation • indoor wayfinding app: 1 building • other projects as motion sensor door actual touchless washrooms
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Limitations	Some interviewee responses were based on elements of the work environment that were out of scope of the AGBE (Accessible Government Built Environment).	Among the Regional Director focus group, only a minority of the regions were represented.	Identification of total cost estimates for accessibility improvements was impacted by completion rate to date (73%) as well as inconsistencies in the cost estimates available for assessed buildings. Assessment of budget expenditures for TAA (Technical accessibility assessments)s (forecasted vs actual cost) impacted by data availability issues as well as due to outstanding work (27% of buildings still to be assessed).	A planned ESD (Evaluation Services Directorate) designed survey did not end up being feasible due to issues to successfully reach targeted groups during the spring 2023 Public Service Alliance of Canada employment strike. As noted in the evaluation findings, the surveys administered by AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) resulted in 75% of those contacted unable to complete the survey.	Data for some projects were difficult to obtain.
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Mitigations	Limitations were taken into consideration when establishing findings.	Limitations were taken into consideration when establishing findings.	<p>The evaluation has presented estimated total cost requirements for implementation of accessibility features as a range rather than a single figure in consideration of data limitations.</p> <p>Budget figures reported in the evaluation are those presented to central agencies as part of funding requests made by program area.</p>	<p>ESD (Evaluation Services Directorate) leveraged interview data in lieu of a survey, including interviews with members of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Disability Network.</p> <p>ESD (Evaluation Services Directorate) was able to analyze and leverage the data from the 2 AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) surveys which, representing 25% of invited participants, included approximately 300 responses.</p>	AGBE (Accessible Government Built Environment) pilot project officials were engaged with to fill any gaps in pilot project information.
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1 Floor rentable area is a measurement to ensure accuracy in property management, and calculated by subtracting building services and indoor parking from gross area.

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