

# City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan 2023 Update (Resident Facing Report)

## Introduction

This is the third update of the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP). It includes actions to improve accessibility in information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces, and customer service. The City is committed to meeting the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) requirements. It also wants to work with people with disabilities, including residents, employees, and visitors, to make Ottawa accessible for all.

People with disabilities are still facing challenges due to COVID-19 and other emergencies. The City's efforts to help residents with disabilities are outlined in this report.

## AODA Compliance

The City sends an accessibility compliance report to the Province every two years. The next report is due by December 31, 2023. City Council receives an update each year.

While there was no report to the Province in 2022, the City has met all requirements under the AODA except for its websites. Work continues to make websites, web content and applications more usable for all residents.

## 2022 Highlights

### Emergency situations

COVID-19 continued to affect people with disabilities in 2022. Other emergencies, such as the convoy protests and May windstorm, required the City to deliver emergency messaging. We worked closely with City staff and Ottawa Police Services to make sure that information was available and easy to understand for residents. We helped set up live captioning and sign language interpretation in American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ) during daily updates.

In 2023, sign language interpretation will be used for emergencies. We will support departments that want to include sign language at events. We have developed a guide

to providing sign language interpretation. It has step-by-step instructions and suggestions.

## **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

In 2022, the [Accessibility Advisory Committee \(AAC\)](#) held five meetings. Staff worked with the committee through in-person meetings, emails, and working groups. The committee's term ended in spring 2023. During this term, the committee consulted on almost 1,000 projects.

These included:

- The new main branch of the Ottawa Public Library
- All O-train stations
- COVID-19 vaccines for people with disabilities
- Patio program
- New or changed City parks and playgrounds
- All City elections
- Uber and Lyft services
- Electric -scooter pilot projects

A [new committee](#) was formed in March 2023.

## **Working with the Public**

Thank you to all who reached out to us.

Last year, City staff met with groups representing people who are blind or have low vision, the Deaf community, and other people with disabilities. These groups represent about 20 community agencies. During these meetings, City staff answered questions, addressed concerns and received feedback. Questions were asked about City buildings, property, programs and services.

The community provided feedback on the 2022 Electric Scooter pilot. The main issues were people riding on sidewalks and e-scooters not properly parked. City departments and the service providers updated the program. Changes included pricing, better response time for parking and riding issues, better reporting and tracking of issues, and including sounds so people can hear them.

## Partnerships

The City also partners with accessibility organizations in Ontario, in Canada and around the world to work on projects that help people with disabilities.

## Events

The City held three events in 2022: AccessAbility Day on June 1, a Treat Accessibly Halloween event on October 29, and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 1.

AccessAbility Day included a discussion where speakers talked about their experiences as people with disabilities dealing with race, class, and gender.

At the Trick or Treat with the Mayor event, the City partnered with Treat Accessibly to help make Halloween accessible and inclusive for all. This event featured non-food treats, wheelchair accessible lines and entrances, lower sound levels and less lighting effects.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities event included updates on the federal and provincial accessibility standards.

Supports provided during AccessAbility Day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities included sign language, continuous captioning in English and French, and French translation.

## 2022 Municipal Election

The election took place on Monday, October 24 and featured:

- A review of all 678 voting places to make sure they had accessibility features
- More chances to vote
- Mail-in ballots
- Voting by proxy
- Voting in long-term care and retirement homes
- Accessible online voting tools and services
- Other tools like:
  - Large print ballots
  - Magnifying sheets
  - Braille listing of candidates and Braille ballots
  - Curb-side voting
  - Accessible vote tabulator

For more information, read the [City of Ottawa's 2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Report](#).

## Information and Communications

In early 2022, we updated the City's website. Our new section, called "[Accessibility at the City](#)", provides the most current information about accessibility for our residents. The [Accessibility Advisory Committee's \(AAC\) page](#) on ottawa.ca was also changed to provide information on what they do, their recent work, meeting schedule, and past minutes and motions.

## Employment

More employees identify as persons with disabilities. Work continues with the Employees with Disabilities Affinity Group. They meet regularly to discuss concerns and issues about working with disabilities. The goal is to give everyone a chance to share experiences and help each other.

## Transportation

By-law and Regulatory Services gives money to Transit Services for accessible transportation improvements. This includes \$90,000 for taxi coupons, \$56,000 for discounted taxi coupons and \$200,000 for rural transportation. Transit Services provides partners with \$856,000 for services to rural seniors and persons with disabilities.

Learning from the community is important for Transit Services. In 2022, they talked to residents about:

- Tactile signs for the Stage 2 train stations
- Stage 2 train issues for people walking to the stations
- Better information for customers about evacuation procedures from stations, trains, train tunnels, and buses during an emergency
- Accessibility features on the new electric buses
- Para Transpo online services

## Design of public spaces

In 2022, the City looked at how people with disabilities are affected by the following projects:

- Updates to the Transportation Master Plan and the Protected Intersection Design Guidelines
- Keeping on-street accessible parking
- Improvements to the City buildings
- Accessibility problems when removing snow
- New standards to build greener and stronger buildings

## Customer Service

We continue to publish our monthly Accessibility Spotlight newsletter. You can [subscribe](#) to stay up-to-date about all City of Ottawa accessibility news.

Please [share your thoughts](#) as your feedback helps us make Ottawa more accessible for all.

## Conclusion

The City continues its work with staff, people with disabilities and others. These partnerships are important to the work we do as we try to make Ottawa more accessible for all.

There is still more work to do. The City will continue to lead and share resources and knowledge, while always learning from our partners and residents.