

SUBJECT: City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2023)

File Number ACS2023-OCC-GEN-0004

Report to Finance and Corporate Services Committee on 2 May 2023

and Council 10 May 2023

Submitted on April 10, 2023 by Tyler Cox, Manager, Legislative Services

Contact Person: Lucille Berlinguette-Saumure, Program Manager, Accessibility

(613) 580-2424 X 12629, lucille.berlinguette-saumure@ottawa.ca

Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE

**OBJET : Plan d'accessibilité municipal de la ville d'Ottawa – Compte rendu
annuel (2023)**

N° du dossier : [ACS2023-OCC-GEN-0004]

Rapport au Comité des finances et des services organisationnel

le 2 mai 2023

et au Conseil le 10 mai 2023

Soumis le 10 avril, 2023 par Tyler Cox, Gestionnaire, Services législatifs

**Personne ressource : Lucille Berlinguette-Saumure, Gestionnaire de programme,
Accessibilité**

(613) 580-2424 X 12629, lucille.berlinguette-saumure@ottawa.ca

Quartier : CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Finance and Corporate Services Committee recommend that Council:

1. Receive the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2023) report;
2. Receive the updated Web Accessibility Policy (**Document 1**); and
3. Approve the updated *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) Training Plan (**Document 2**), which includes mandatory training requirements for supervisors in a Level 6 SAP designated position to receive the AODA Management Compliance Module Training.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des finances et des services organisationnels recommande au Conseil municipal :

1. de prendre connaissance du Compte rendu de 2023 sur le Plan d'accessibilité municipal de la Ville d'Ottawa;
2. de prendre connaissance de la version à jour de la Politique sur l'accessibilité du Web (**pièce 1**);
3. d'approuver la version à jour du Plan de formation sur la *Loi de 2005 sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario* (LAPHO) (**pièce 2**), qui fait état de la formation obligatoire à suivre par les superviseurs des postes désignés du niveau 6 de SAP, pour qu'ils puissent suivre la formation du Module de conformité pour le Management de l'Ontario dans le cadre de la LAPHO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#) of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#), designated public sector organizations, such as the City of Ottawa, are required to, establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to meet its legislated obligations and prevent and remove accessibility barriers in its services, programs, communications and its public spaces. The [2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan \(COMAP\)](#) was approved by Council on November 25, 2020. The City is also required to prepare an annual status update report on the progress of the multi-year plan.

The City continues to be fully compliant with all applicable requirements under the AODA, with one exception, related to accessible websites and web content. Since 2015, the City has reported non-compliance with section 14 (4) of the IASR to the Province, which includes standards for web sites and web content. The City continues to work towards full compliance and provides updates on its progress to the Province as required. The City is required to submit an AODA Compliance Report to the Province every two years. The next Compliance Report is due to the Province by December 31, 2023.

The recommendations of this report advance the provisions of accessibility in City services, web information, and communication supports accommodations. They also ensure that staff receive AODA training that is appropriate to their duties.

This report provides an overview of the developments with respect to the legislative framework that governs accessibility in Ontario and in Canada. Furthermore, it reflects the content of feedback the Accessibility Office (AO) receives through many channels in place to learn about the issues and experiences of Ottawa residents with disabilities. Although aspects of City business returned to normal in 2022, there remained significant, continued impacts to people with disabilities due to COVID-19 and other emergency situations, including the convoy protests and the derecho storm. These impacts and the City's efforts to assist residents with disabilities will be discussed later in the report.

While the 2022-2026 Term of Council Priorities have not yet been adopted, this report is developed to align with several Council-approved strategies, including but not limited to, public safety and mental health, housing and homelessness and a fiscally responsible City.

The Accessibility Office (AO) recognizes that this report to Council may include technical language. For a condensed, plain language version, see the COMAP 2023 Resident Facing report (**Document 3**).

SYNTHÈSE ADMINISTRATIVE

En vertu du [Règlement sur les normes d'accessibilité intégrées](#) (RNAI) de la [Loi de 2005 sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario](#) (LAPHO), les organisations du secteur public désignées, dont la Ville d'Ottawa, doivent établir, mettre en œuvre, mettre à jour et consigner un plan d'accessibilité pluriannuel décrivant dans leurs grandes lignes la stratégie qu'elles adoptent pour s'acquitter de leurs obligations en vertu de la loi et pour prévenir et éliminer les obstacles qui se dressent contre l'accessibilité de leurs services, programmes, communications et espaces

publics. Le [Plan d'accessibilité municipal de la Ville d'Ottawa \(PAMVO\)](#) a été approuvé par le Conseil municipal le 25 novembre 2020. La Ville est également tenue de préparer un compte rendu annuel sur l'état d'avancement de son plan pluriannuel.

La Ville continue de respecter parfaitement toutes les exigences applicables de la LAPHO, sauf dans un cas, lié aux sites Web et aux contenus Web accessibles. Depuis 2015, la Ville déclare au gouvernement provincial qu'elle ne respecte pas l'article 14 (4) du RNAI, qui prévoit des normes pour les sites Web et les contenus Web. La Ville continue de se consacrer aux efforts qui lui permettront de respecter parfaitement ce règlement et soumet dans les cas nécessaires, au gouvernement provincial, des comptes rendus sur les progrès accomplis. La Ville doit soumettre tous les deux ans, au gouvernement provincial, un rapport de conformité à la LAPHO. Le prochain rapport de conformité doit être déposé auprès du gouvernement provincial le 31 décembre 2023.

Les recommandations exposées dans le présent rapport sont destinées à promouvoir les dispositions prises pour assurer l'accessibilité des services, de l'information Web et des moyens d'aide dans la communication de la Ville. Elles visent aussi à s'assurer que le personnel suit la formation sur la LAPHO adaptée à ses fonctions.

Dans ce rapport, nous donnons un aperçu de l'évolution de la situation en ce qui a trait à la structure cadre législative qui régit l'accessibilité en Ontario et au Canada. En outre, ce rapport fait état de la teneur des commentaires adressés au Bureau de l'accessibilité (BA) sur de nombreux circuits de communication pour porter à sa connaissance les problèmes et l'expérience des résidents d'Ottawa en situation de handicap. Même si sous certains aspects, la Ville a repris ses opérations normales en 2022, la COVID-19 a continué, en plus des autres situations d'urgence, dont la manifestation du convoi de camionneurs et le dérécho, d'avoir des incidences considérables sur les personnes en situation de handicap. Il est question, plus loin dans ce rapport, de ces incidences et des efforts consacrés par la Ville pour aider les résidents en situation de handicap.

Bien que les priorités du mandat du Conseil 2022-2026 n'aient pas encore été adoptées, ce rapport a été mis au point pour qu'il concorde avec plusieurs stratégies approuvées par le Conseil municipal, dont la sécurité publique et la santé mentale, le logement et l'itinérance, ainsi que la rigueur budgétaire de la Ville.

Le BA reconnaît que ce rapport au Conseil peut comprendre des termes techniques. Pour prendre connaissance de la version condensée en langage simplifié, veuillez consulter le rapport 2023 destiné aux résidents sur le PAMVO (**pièce 3**).

BACKGROUND

The AODA requires large public organizations, such as the City, to, “establish, review and update their accessibility plans in consultation with persons with disabilities and if they have an established AAC, they shall consult with the committee.” The 2020-2024 COMAP is the City’s third multi-year accessibility plan since the AODA requirement came into effect. This is the third update on the 2020-2024 COMAP.

To develop the 2020-2024 COMAP, the AO consulted widely with persons with disabilities, caregivers, organizations, the AAC and members of the public. This annual update report was also shared with the AAC for their feedback, which is included in the Accessibility Impacts section of this report.

This is the City’s 21st annual report, which provides a status update on the organization’s progress in 2022 and includes three main sections.

The first section provides information on the City’s compliance with and updates on the Provincial AODA legislation. It also provides updates on the Development of the *Accessible Canada Act* and City Council approved accessibility requirements.

The second section provides details on the City’s 2022 efforts in the areas of stakeholder engagement, partnerships, training and events. This foundational work ensures the City remains connected to the community of people with disabilities and ensure City services and training meet the needs of the community.

The third section provides a summary of the City’s initiatives (**Document 4**) which is broken down into the five standards of the AODA: Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, Design of Public Spaces and Customer Service.

These improvements demonstrate the City’s commitment to meeting the legislated requirements of the AODA as well as implement non-legislated advancements in accessibility, which support the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in Ottawa, including residents, employees and visitors.

The implementation of the AODA and the IASR continues to be a priority for City Council, City of Ottawa leadership and its employees in all departments and services. The City has worked collaboratively with the Government of Ontario, the City’s AAC and the community to implement the legislation and identify and remove barriers to City services, programs, and facilities.

The Ottawa Public Library (OPL) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH), although governed by separate boards, report on AODA compliance with the City. Similarly, the Committee of Adjustment (CoA) is an independent, autonomous tribunal appointed by City Council,

which also reports on AODA compliance with the City. Ottawa Police Services (OPS) is considered a separate “large organization” and as such, reports separately.

The provisions of the AODA and particularly its Transportation Standards do not apply to the City of Ottawa’s conventional bus service, Para Transpo service and rail service managed by the Transit Services Department as they are federally and independently regulated. These services do, however, provide annual accessibility updates through the COMAP report and have committed to meeting the “spirit and intent” of the AODA.

Since 2021, there have been many changes to City departments. This has impacted the departments responsible for some accessibility initiatives, but not the implementation of the initiatives themselves. In 2022, departments impacted by these changes were:

- Transit Services Department (TSD)
- Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development (PRED)
- Public Works Department (PWD)
- Infrastructure and Water Services Department (IWSD)

Any department changes in 2021 and 2022 and subsequent changes to responsibility for initiatives are reflected in this report.

However, early in 2023, subsequent department changes were made which impacted:

- City Manager’s Office
- Financial Services Department
- Innovative Client Services Department (ICSD)

As updates on department initiatives were received prior to these changes, any changes to the responsibility of initiatives will not be reflected until the 2024 COMAP Update Report. The AO will work closely with these modified departments to ensure there are no impacts to service with the department’s transition.

Many of the initiatives outlined in this report have become part of regular business at the City, integrated in operations, and staff will continue to report on their progress in the 2020-2024 plan as they continue to expand, evolve and increase accessibility.

It should be noted that for the purpose of this report, the City continues to use person-first language when referring to persons with disabilities. However, language is continually evolving and there is increasing discussion and preference around using disability-first language. While staff are trained to follow the lead and preferences of individuals, use of person-first language in this report is consistent with the language used in the AODA and the advice of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The

City remains responsive to the preferences of the community of persons with disabilities, and this will be assessed and discussed with the AAC on an ongoing basis.

DISCUSSION

Accessibility Legislation and City Policy Status Updates

City's Compliance with the AODA

As a designated public sector organization, the City of Ottawa is required to submit an accessibility compliance report to the Province every two years. The last report was submitted to the Province in December 2021, and the next report is due by December 31, 2023.

While 2022 was not a reporting year to the Province, the AO leads the Corporation in a compliance reporting exercise each year to ensure the City remains compliant, and that issues can be addressed prior to reporting to the Province. Accessibility Working Group representatives received an orientation on compliance reporting in September 2022. A workbook was provided to support departments to work through the compliance attestation questions, which are signed off by each department's General Manager, or equivalent.

The City continues to be fully compliant with all applicable requirements under the AODA, with one exception, related to accessible websites and web content. Since 2015, and continued in 2022 when a higher standard came into effect, the City has reported non-compliance with section 14 (4) of the IASR which include standards for web sites and web content:

1. By January 1, 2014, new internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A.
2. By January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than:
 - i. success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live), and
 - ii. success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

The City updated its compliance plan agreement with the Province in December 2020 and an update on its progress was submitted in August 2022 (see **Document 5** for the City's Compliance Agreement Plan and **Document 6** for the 2022 Compliance Agreement Plan Update). This agreement highlights the tremendous amount of work and resources the City has committed towards web accessibility, and the steps the City

continues to take towards this goal. A progress update will be submitted with the City's 2023 Compliance Report.

The progress the City has made since 2015 to make all of its new and refreshed web assets both level A and Level AA is significant.

The City has prioritized its main website, ottawa.ca, which contains approximately nine thousand pages of web content, and is currently in conformance with both level A and Level AA. The website was recently rebuilt to upgrade its content management system, and while no significant changes were made to the user experience, the upgrade did allow the City to address some accessibility issues that existed within its framework. The rebuilt website was tested by a third-party vendor specializing in auditing websites against the WCAG standards and has confirmed compliance up to the standards required by the AODA regulations 2.0 AA.

However, ottawa.ca is only one of the many City of Ottawa web assets.

The City maintains a master list of its more than 80 other public-facing web applications and websites and monitors progress on their compliance status. These smaller City of Ottawa websites and applications, which are owned and maintained by various City departments, have also seen much improvement with more than 30% certified as compliant with both level A and level AA.

In addition, the City has made great strides in remediating PDFs, which have been particularly challenging. The City currently has made 85 per cent of its nearly 10,000 PDF's compliant.

For the reasons outlined above, the City will continue to answer "No" to the question about level A conformance on its by-annual AODA Compliance Reports. The City's main website will continue to report non-compliance due to the nature of the site and regulations; however, staff continue to:

- Manage a quality control program to identify and fix issues.
- Train all publishers on accessible content writing to avoid issues.
- Test all new features for compliance with regulations before release.
- Build accessibility in the design of all new features.
- Provide a means for any user to report problems so they can be addressed promptly.

The ongoing efforts includes corporate training on document accessibility, continued adherence to the corporate policy, leveraging expert third-party advice and testing services, utilizing third-party services for complex PDF document remediation,

responding to the public about any identified issues, and working with the AAC on key issues and opportunities.

Supported by the Information Technology Services (ITS) and ServiceOttawa branches, each of the City's web sites and web applications that are still not conformant have been assessed to establish their degree of compliance with WCAG 2.0 level AA. Departments responsible for each URL have developed remediation plans to guide them as they work with their vendors to meet compliance at different times, based on the magnitude of the issues. Some departments have determined that their applications or website cannot be remediated to meet the standard. In these cases, a departmental budget is established to replace them.

The City of Ottawa's current Web Accessibility Policy was originally entitled the "Accessible Web Publishing Procedures" and was approved by Executive Committee on July 15, 2013. As the organization matured in its understanding of the legislative requirement, the Director of Service Ottawa approved the revisions and renaming of the procedures to be the "Web Accessibility Policy" on December 5, 2018.

The City of Ottawa's Web Accessibility Policy requires that all public facing websites, web applications, and web content procured, acquired, owned or controlled directly by the City of Ottawa, or through a contractual relationship, conform to the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) to a level that meets or exceeds those stipulated by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR).

This policy outlines the requirements for managing, developing, acquiring, or procuring accessible websites, web applications and web content and the reporting of compliance to Council and the Province of Ontario. Additionally, the policy outlines responsibilities for various groups within the organization that are identified as key in achieving compliance.

This policy applies to City employees, volunteers, contractors, individuals, or organizations that provide websites, web applications and web content to the public on behalf of the City of Ottawa. This policy applies to all acquired, procured, and developed public facing internet websites, web applications and web content controlled directly by the City of Ottawa or through a contractual relationship that allows for modification of the web product.

In 2022, the policy was reviewed and updated (**Document 1**) to reflect organizational changes in responsibilities and technology advancements. Key changes include:

- adjusted the structure of the document

- updated language to reflect timelines dictated by the AODA
- adjusted conformance levels, to better align with the AODA
- provided clarity in regard to departmental responsibilities
- refined the distinction between the management of existing web assets and the publishing of new, or significantly refreshed assets
- refined roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders
- added allowance for testing, auditing and reporting to be performed by ITS
- updated the Web Asset Accessibility Status Form

As described above, the City continues its efforts towards reaching compliance with the WCAG requirement and is pleased to share its continued progress through regular reporting or through updates to its Compliance Plan Agreement.

The City continues to update City Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee on its compliance annually. It is also supporting many other municipalities in this area by sharing information and tools, delivering training, and offering guidance on their compliance plans.

Through discussions with other organizations, the City remains steadfast in our opinion that a strict adherence to WCAG conformance is not the most efficient approach to achieving an accessible web in Ontario. While WCAG should remain as an underlying requirement under the IASR, ensuring elements such as policies and web-publishing procedures, testing and monitoring practices, staff training and knowledge-based resources, enhanced procurement statements and the ability to clearly demonstrate a firm commitment to creating accessible content, would be a more practical approach to an accessible Ontario.

Provincial Accessibility Legislation Reviews and Development

Under the AODA, Standards Development Committees are responsible for developing and/or reviewing accessibility standards in Ontario. Each accessibility standard is required to be reviewed five years after it becomes law to assess its impacts and whether changes are required.

The Province has received final recommendations from the Standards Development Committees for the Employment, Customer Service, Information and Communications and Transportation Standards.

In 2022, a Standards Review Committee was formed to review the Design of Public Spaces Standard, which is the last Standard under the AODA to require a review. A member of City staff was nominated by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and subsequently appointed by the Province, to participate in this Committee. In 2022, City

staff had the opportunity to present to the Committee on Francophone engagement, and concerns by Francophones with disabilities in the built environment. Another presentation on Accessible Pedestrian Signals was delivered in 2023 and will be discussed in next year's report. It is expected that the Committee will release their draft recommendations for public feedback in late spring, 2023, at which time the City will have an opportunity to provide comment. After public feedback has been received, the Committee will re-convene and have the opportunity to make changes to their recommendations. It is expected that the Committee will submit their final recommendations to the Province by the end of 2023.

During discussions with the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals, Provincial staff have stated that the Province will look to make legislative changes as a whole, based on the recommendations of the various Standards Development Committees. While the timeline for these changes is unknown, the AO will continue to closely monitor any changes to the AODA and support the City to implement any legislative changes.

The AODA also requires a statutory review, including its regulation. In September 2022, the Province announced that Mr. Rich Donovan would be the Fourth Legislative Reviewer of the AODA. The review will focus on three key areas: potential changes to improve the AODA's success, spreading awareness and building community support, and compliance and enforcement. The AO has shared the opportunity to participate with AWG members, the AAC and through the Accessibility Spotlight e-newsletter. Additionally, Mr. Donovan participated in the City's 2022 International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebration. In consultation with the Accessibility Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the AO compiled responses and submitted feedback on the current AODA review, which included six recommendations to update the current legislation. This submission (**Document 7**) was sent to Mr. Donovan by the City Clerk on April 17, 2023.

Accessible Canada Act Development

In the [2022 – 2026 Council Governance Review](#), under Section 5 - Accessibility Reports, the addition of authority was provided for the City Clerk to execute and file with the designated federal authority all accessibility reports and other information as required under the *Accessible Canada Act*.

In 2022, the City received an invitation to meet with the Chief Accessibility Officer of Canada, Stephanie Cadieux. Ms. Cadieux was appointed as the first Chief Accessibility Officer (CAO) of Canada in May 2022. The CAO will serve as an advisor to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, provide advice on accessibility issues, and monitor and report on progress made under the *Accessible*

Canada Act. A meeting with the CAO was held at City Hall in October and was attended by the AO, the Coordinator of the AAC, the AAC Chair, and staff in Transit Services, at the CAO's request. The meeting was an opportunity for the City to highlight its engagement with the AAC and people with disabilities, and several ways the Transit Services has incorporated accessibility into its regular business. The City looks forward to continuing to build its relationship with the CAO and staff working on the *Accessible Canada Act*.

While the City and its facilities, programs, and services are not governed by the *Accessible Canada Act*, there is interest in following the development of its Standards, particularly for areas that may go beyond the Provincial legislation. Accessibility Standards Canada, the organization responsible for the *Accessible Canada Act*, is guided by seven principles, very similar to the Standards of the AODA:

1. Employment
2. The built environment
3. Information and communication technologies
4. Communication (other than information and communication technologies)
5. The procurement of goods, services and facilities
6. The design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation

Standards are developed by Committees, similar to Standards under the AODA. Committees identify areas where barriers exist for people with disabilities and draft recommendations to improve accessibility. These are then made available for public review. The AO submits feedback when possible, and shares review opportunities through the AWG. The Committee then submits final recommendations for the Standard to the Minister, to be made into regulations. In 2022, work was underway on the following standards:

- Plain language: public review completed, expected publication Winter 2023
- Emergency egress (exit): public review completed, expected publication Summer 2023
- Outdoor spaces: public review completed, expected publication Summer 2023
- Employment: public review Winter 2023 expected publication Fall 2023

- Accessible design for automated banking machines and self-service interactive devices: public review completed, expected publication Winter 2023
- Accessible design for the built environment: public review completed, published Winter 2023
- Accessible Residential Homes: public review completed, expected publication Winter 2023
- Model standard for the built environment – accessibility – Phase 1: public review completed, expected publication Fall 2023

New standards are also being drafted by Committees formed in 2022, including:

- Emergency measures: expected public review Fall 2023, expected publication Fall 2025
- Wayfinding and signage: expected public review Fall 2023, expected publication Fall 2025
- Accessibility requirements for information and communication technology products and services: expected public review to be determined, expected publication to be determined

A staff representative from the City’s Infrastructure and Water Services Department (Standards Unit) was the Co-Chair for the Built Environment Committee. Consultation on the draft recommendations for this Standard occurred in 2022, and the opportunity to consult was shared with AWG members. This Standard was released in February 2023. The City will look for opportunities to implement enhanced requirements in this Standard in the Accessibility Design Standards.

Accessibility Impacts Statements in Committee and Council Reports

On October 13, 2011, Council approved [motion FEDCO 10/1](#), which directed staff to immediately include a mandatory “Accessibility Impacts” section in all reports to Committee and Council. In this section, staff are to review proposed projects, prior to Council approval, for any potential positive or negative impact on people with disabilities and seniors and describe steps taken to remediate any negative impacts identified. On March 27, 2012, Council also approved the first Accessibility Impacts Checklist.

To reflect the City’s additional legislative requirements, in 2022, the Accessibility Office worked with the Accessibility Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to develop the new Accessibility Impact Statement Instructions, which includes three practical steps to creating meaningful accessibility Impact statements, templated responses and a list of resources, to improve accessibility in projects and reduce the

City's risk of non-compliance. These instructions were approved by Council on June 22, 2022.

The AO has also provided enhanced support to report authors by reviewing the legislative agenda on a weekly basis and proactively offering review and recommendations for some reports. More than 40 reports received enhanced support by the AO to complete this section in 2022. Specifically, a number of reports that had previously included "There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report" were improved to include acknowledgement of barriers created or removed by the project, relevant references to legislation, and the City's commitment to accessibility.

This process has received positive feedback from departments and has allowed the AO to build new relationships across service areas, resulting in new opportunities to increase accessibility across the organization. Further, this process has increased consultation opportunities with the AAC and community stakeholders, and information sharing. Due to its success, this practice has been added as a COMAP initiative and will continue in 2023. In addition, the AO created a workshop on how to develop meaningful Accessibility Impacts which was piloted in November 2022. The workshop has been adjusted and three sessions will be delivered in 2023. The City Clerk equally promoted the importance of meaningful Accessibility Impact statements as well as these staff training opportunities in March 2023 (**Document 8**).

The AO will continue to monitor the development and review of legislation at the Federal, Provincial and City level and the adherence to the requirements of the various legislations.

2022 Stakeholder Engagement, Partnerships, Training and Events

Accessibility Working Group

The Accessibility Working Group (AWG) is an inter-departmental working group mandated by Council to monitor the City's Accessibility Plan progress, including compliance with the AODA. All departments, along with OPH and OPL, provide a representative from their Business Support Services unit, or otherwise, to coordinate and facilitate the implementation, maintenance and reporting on compliance with all applicable AODA IASR and Ontario Human Rights Code requirements, as well as other departmental specific accessibility legislation for their department.

In general, this group meets approximately 10 times per year. Staff develop expertise related to accessibility within their service areas, monitor departmental priorities for opportunities, and respond to resident feedback. Training opportunities are frequently

shared with the group by the AO. Some of the work supported by the AWG in 2022 includes, but is not limited to:

- Compiled information on departmental accessibility initiatives for the annual COMAP report
- Provided links to departmental service areas and staff to address accessibility-related feedback and complaints in a timely manner
- Provided feedback on the Web Accessibility Policy
- Provided feedback on the creation of updated customer service signage
- Served as a resource for departmental staff to engage with the AAC
- Applied an accessibility lens to projects

The AO would like to thank the AWG representatives for their commitment and dedication to increasing accessibility across the organization in 2022.

City of Ottawa Accessibility Advisory Committee

In 2022, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) held three regular meetings and two special meetings, including the Duty to Consult meeting, which were conducted over Zoom. As the AAC has requested that these meetings include ASL interpretation, this continues to be arranged by staff to increase accessibility. Other support was actively offered, upon request.

Staff consult with the AAC through in-person meetings, emails, working groups, site plan reviews, Environmental Assessment Studies and Revitalization Project consultations. Hundreds of projects are reviewed as part of the annual Duty to Consult meeting.

The AAC's term will officially come to an end in the Spring 2023, as new Committee members will be appointed. As such, this update will highlight some of the work conducted by the Committee over the 2018-2022 term.

This Committee offers advice to City Council and staff on matters related to accessibility for persons with disabilities and older adults in Ottawa. The City has many advisory committees; however, the AAC is the only one mandated by legislation, under the AODA. In addition to several areas in which the City has a duty to consult with the AAC, City Council and staff are able to consult on a variety of projects that benefit from an accessibility lens. Meetings are open to the public, and there has been an increase in the registration of public delegates for these meetings over the last few years. The Accessibility Office shares meeting information with interested stakeholders in advance of meetings via email and on ottawa.ca.

The City is extremely grateful for the dedication and engagement of AAC members this term. Members were appointed early in 2019, following the 2018 municipal election. AAC members are able to serve on the Committee for two terms, and many members were returning this term. Due to delays in appointment, some Committee members will finish their term with ten years served. It is unknown how many hours Committee members dedicate in their roles; however, it is certain that members are extremely generous with their time and expertise towards making our City more accessible for all.

Over this term, the Committee has consulted on approximately one thousand projects, including site plan proposals and projects that incorporate an accessibility lens from the start, or to retrofit facilities to make them more inclusive. For example, the Committee has been engaged since the conceptualization of projects like Ādisōke, the new main branch of the Ottawa Public Library, and the O-train stations, both which have incorporated new and innovative accessibility features.

The Committee remained engaged throughout the pandemic by providing feedback on Ottawa Public Health initiatives, including the vaccination implementation plan for people with disabilities. Additionally, they provided advice on the Patio Innovation Program, introduced in 2020 to allow new or expanding local restaurant patios and café seating for the purposes of alleviating some financial pressures caused by the Provincial closures.

The City has a duty to consult with the AAC, under the AODA, on new or redeveloped municipal parks and playgrounds. As a result, the Committee has provided sound recommendations to ensure parks and playgrounds are fun, inclusive, and safe spaces for everyone, including persons with disabilities.

The Advisory Committee has also been heavily involved in ensuring that our municipal elections, including by-elections, are conducted in an accessible way and that electors have the adaptive tools they need to make their voices heard and to cast their ballots.

The Committee has equally provided input on sensitive projects, such as the licensing of private transportation companies and the implementation of the City's electric kick e-scooter pilot projects. When needed, members have asked difficult questions of staff to ensure that accessibility for older adults and persons with disabilities was respected, prioritized, and enforced. They have also pushed for greater transparency on accessibility-related decisions so that residents can understand how and why decisions about accessibility are made.

The application process launched in December 2022 to begin the recruitment of new AAC members for this term of Council. Current members supported staff through their

participation in a recruitment video, highlighting the importance of the Committee's work through their diverse perspectives and lived experiences. [This promotional video](#), available in both English and French, equally included accessibility supports including ASL and LSQ interpretation by Deaf interpreters, and captioning. Recruitment efforts are made to ensure diverse representation from the disability community.

The City would like to thank our AAC members for their valuable contributions. Because of these efforts, staff and Council continue to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the removal of physical, social, and attitudinal barriers in our municipal planning, design and decision making.

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement with persons with disabilities continues to be a primary focus of the AO in the 2020-2024 COMAP. Supported by the AO, several other departments have also begun to develop relationships through targeted engagement with persons with disabilities.

In 2022, City staff continued coordinating quarterly meetings with representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Canadian Council for the Blind (CCB), the Alliance for Equality for Blind Canadians (AEBC) and the Ottawa Disability Coalition (ODC). During these meetings, City staff answered questions and addressed concerns from the community regarding City infrastructure, programs, and services. These meetings also serve to inform City staff of trends and new developments, which can inform priorities in the coming years. Some of the topics discussed at meetings in 2022 included:

- Para Transpo online services
- Battery-electric buses
- Transit station text descriptions
- Patio Innovation Program
- Private Taxi Companies and service animals
- E-scooters
- Snow clearing
- Cycle tracks and multi-use pathways
- Disaster planning
- Bus Rapid Transit platform edge treatments
- The Ottawa Hospital
- Affordable, accessible housing

At the City's virtual celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December 2022, Mayor Sutcliffe presented the day's Proclamation to the ODC as a thank you to everyone in the Coalition who works to make the City more accessible and inclusive to our residents.

Staff also continue to work in collaboration with the National Capital Association for the Deaf, and consulted on various items in 2022, including the continuation of the teletypewriter (TTY) service.

The City has a strong relationship with representatives from these organizations will continue to occur in 2023. Many of these representatives are volunteers with their organizations and are very generous with their time and expertise. Staff would like to thank these community stakeholders for their time and continued efforts to ensuring our City is accessible for all residents.

Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals

Since 2019, the City has taken the lead in coordinating the work of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP). ONAP is an unincorporated, voluntary "network of accessibility professionals working towards the advancement of universal access for persons with disabilities through the sharing of information, resources, and best practices." This network is comprised of staff from designated public sector organizations who have a direct role in implementing the AODA. In addition to municipalities, ONAP members typically work for police services, public transportation organizations, hospitals or educational institutions (registered with the Ministries of Education or Training, Colleges, and Universities). The City plays a strong role in sharing information and resources within this group and receives a wealth of information and support from its members.

In 2022, the City hosted a virtual meeting with members of ONAP. Mary Bartolomucci, Director, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Policy and Standards (now retired), presented to the group on new business at the Province, and answered questions from ONAP members. These meetings are an opportunity for the City to learn about new accessibility initiatives, and how the Province is supporting the public sector in AODA compliance. The City will work with the City of Waterloo to host an in-person meeting in the spring 2023.

Canadian Accessibility Network

At the City's AccessAbility Day in 2021, it was announced that the City would be partnering with the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN). This Network, now under the leadership of the Accessibility Institute at Carleton University, is a national collaboration to advance accessibility for persons with disabilities through:

- Research and Innovation
- Education and Training
- Policy
- Employment
- Community Engagement

CAN empowers collaboration and knowledge exchange across sectors, disciplines, and industries, to minimize duplication and build on each other's strengths and achievements toward solutions.

CAN is comprised of a consortium of collaborators, representing various organizations across Canada, including postsecondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, service providers, associations and foundations, public and private industry.

The Advisory Council is comprised of member representatives for each of the formal partners of CAN. The role of these members is to bring a pan-Canadian voice to the Network, as it relates to advancing accessibility for people with disabilities. Members across the country provide advice and recommendations to the Governing Council on behalf of partner organizations with a focus on:

- Ensuring that the Governing Council and the Domain Area Committees benefit from the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and their support teams
- Offering a cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary and cross-country sounding board for the Governing Council and Domain Area Committees
- Informing the efforts of the Domain Area Committees by having some of its members serve on one or more of these committees as appropriate and feasible
- Providing a forum for partner organizations to come together to learn from one another, engage in collaborative initiatives and network

The City is a member of the CAN Advisory Committee and Chairs the Policy Community of Practice. The AO has also started participating in all other Communities of Practice and will work with City staff to increase representation in 2023.

This collaboration directly supports the City's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and assists the City in advancing Council's Strategic Priorities. The City continues to leverage this partnership to:

- Grow service excellence through innovation to improve and meet the needs of the community
- Invest in the professional development of the City's current and future leaders by involving them as City representatives
- Attract talent from across Canada by engaging a group of professionals in 12 post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, associations, foundations, and private industry that is healthy, adaptive and diverse
- Advance the Ottawa brand on a national level as an employer of choice
- Focus and advance the safety, accessibility, culture, social and physical well-being for vulnerable residents; and
- Leverage accessible and sustainable designs in the built environment to meet the future growth and service needs of the City

This partnership is an opportunity for the City to inform and advance the work of its AAC, AWG, staff working on accessibility in each department, and the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan.

As a leader in accessibility, the City continues to showcase the innovative work of our staff, to meet the current and future needs of our diverse communities and leverage partnerships that would support the City's efforts to promote its residents' right to participate in Ottawa's social, political, economic and cultural life without barriers.

International Association of Accessibility Professionals

In 2020, the City became a member of the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP) and expanded its membership in 2021. The association's mission is to define, promote, improve, and diversify the accessibility profession globally through certification, education, and networking in order to enable the creation of accessible products, content, services and environments.

The IAAP is a not-for-profit membership-based organization for individuals and organizations that are focused on accessibility or are in the process of building their accessibility skills and strategies. The objective is to help accessibility professionals develop and to support organizations integrate accessibility into their services, products and infrastructure. This membership provides the City of Ottawa with access to accessibility experts, learning opportunities and best practices from around the world to enhance accessibility at the City of Ottawa. The City continues to benefit from many

learning opportunities through the IAAP. Staff from the AO will also work towards certification through the IAAP, which would positively contribute to City projects and supporting City staff.

Meetings to share information are also held upon request. In October 2022, staff in PRED, Transit and the AO met with TransLink, the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority, to discuss best practice and the City's design guidance for floating bus stops.

2022 Accessibility Training

As stated in section 7 of the IASR, organizations, such as the City, are obligated to provide training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the Ontario Human Rights Code. Training must be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons, such as those who participate in developing the organization's policies and must be delivered as soon as is practicable.

The original parameters of the City's Accessibility Training Plan were approved by Council on March 27, 2012. **Recommendation 3** of this report approves the updated AODA Training Plan for staff (**Document 2**), including the addition of the new Accessibility Impacts Workshop and updates to existing training offerings. It also includes the amendment of the AODA Management Compliance training module to now also be required for supervisors in a Level 6 designated position. Moving forward, managers and supervisors from Level 1 through to Level 6 will receive this training as described below.

Third-party vendors and contractors are also required to ensure they and their staff are trained as part of the General Terms and Conditions of doing business with the City. This online [Accessibility Training for External Contractors/Consultants](#) training course is comparable in content to the online session completed by City employees.

Throughout 2022, COVID-19 as well as other City emergencies continued to influence the delivery of accessibility training for City of Ottawa staff and volunteers. As such, all training continued to be offered virtually. While the AO understands the value of in-person training for targeted discussion and information retention, it also should be noted that virtual training offers a higher level of accessibility and allows the AO to include a high number of participants in sessions to meet compliance requirements in a timely manner. The AO will continue to discuss training delivery options in the future.

As of December 31, 2022, 87 per cent of City employees have completed the Corporate-wide AODA: Accessibility for All training. New staff are trained as soon as practicable. A total of 3,148 individuals completed the AODA: Accessibility for All

training last year, including part-time and seasonal hires. In addition, following the 2022 municipal election, both new and returning Councillors were provided information in their orientation packages and presentations on the mandatory completion of the AODA: Accessibility for All training. This e-learning session is required for all Councillors and their office staff.

The breakdown by language was as follows:

- English: 3,115
- French: 33

Individuals who complete the training are asked to provide feedback on the course through a survey. Some of the feedback in 2022 included:

- The videos were really well done! I enjoyed the one with the sign language interpreter in particular since I felt I could understand what they were saying as the audio was being said.
- The extra videos really made this presentation special, I would have not enjoyed it as much without them.
- They were useful and accountable.
- Very nice and informative presentation.
- Super easy and great program!
- The additional resources helped better understand the topics.
- Although I did not have to use the supporting resources, after viewing them, they appear to have the potential to be very helpful for anyone who is in need.
- It was a great experience. I learned a lot, I was hoping for it to contain a little less information, but it was great. Thanks!

Feedback is reviewed regularly to make improvements to the course. Based on previously received feedback, the AO is aware that the length and of the amount of information provided in this course is quite comprehensive. Staff continue to provide support to staff across the organization on accessibility-related questions and concerns related specifically to their positions and department's business.

It is important to note that the compliance rates included in this report are based on a snapshot in time as some staff may have been trained in the interim of when they were hired, and when the report was completed. It is also important to note that it is not practicable to train staff that are not actively in the workplace, including those on long-term disability, maternity, and other leave of absences. Non-compliance with the regulation is monitored on a quarterly basis, and management, the City's Human

Resources hubs, the AWG and the AO work collaboratively to ensure the City meets the staff training requirements of the IASR.

To ensure staff receives training that is “appropriate to their duties”, the City offers the following themed AODA related trainings, described in this report:

- AODA: Accessibility for All
- AODA Management Compliance
- Accessible Procurement
- Accessible Documents
- Accessibility Impacts Workshop

AODA Management Compliance Training

Managers and supervisors at or above Level 5 attend mandatory AODA Management Compliance training to clarify their specific roles and responsibilities and further meet the requirements of section 7.2 of the IASR. This training encourages managers to embrace accessibility, understand accommodations for staff with disabilities, and ensure they and their staff meet the requirements of the AODA.

Due to reporting changes, supervisors at a Level 6 were included on the list of mandatory staff to receive AODA Management Compliance Module Training in 2022. As a result, there was a significant increase in training demand for this course across the organization.

As such, in 2022 the AO facilitated 14 training sessions, including 3 intact sessions for staff in specific departments, with a total of 342 staff in attendance across all sessions. This represents an increase of 300 staff that were trained in 2022 alone, compared to the previous year. Additionally, due to the Accessibility Office’s active involvement supporting accessibility during Special Advance Voting during the Municipal Election, the AO and staff in Transit Services worked together to organize a session led by the Co-ordinator, Transit System Accessibility, that included 17 participants. All department requests for intact training were met in 2022, and this will continue to be prioritized in 2023.

Supervisor responsibilities within positions designated at a Level 6 have been changed across the organization. As such HR has recommended that the AO continue to include staff at this level in the mandatory training requirements going forward.

Accessible Procurement Training

To integrate and track accessible features in procurement, the AO delivers the Accessible Procurement Workshop to staff whose role includes making regular purchases. This highly interactive workshop allows participants to explore what accessible features are, what to consider when purchasing items and administering contracts, and how to enhance the accessibility of goods, services and facilities in general. While no Accessible Procurement workshops were held in 2022, these sessions are available upon request. Over 900 employees have attended this workshop to-date. An informal discussion with staff in Community and Social Services was held in 2022 and was effective in ensuring staff were able to ask targeted questions about how accessibility applies to their regular purchases. Accessible procurement resources continue to be shared by the AO on a regular basis with staff who are required to complete the accessible procurement tracking.

Accessible Document Training

In 2022, over one hundred staff were trained to produce accessible documents using Microsoft Word. An additional fifty staff were trained to produce accessible Portable Documents (PDF) and twenty-five staff were trained on the use of Axes software to verify and remediate PDF documents.

Accessibility Training for Volunteers

All City volunteers are required to complete AODA training as part of their onboarding. In 2022, 194 new volunteers completed this training. This is an increase of 156 from 2021 as a result of the increased demand for volunteers to return in-person to support City programs, services and facilities.

New - Accessibility Impacts Workshop

To support staff across the Corporation to write meaningful Accessibility Impacts statements in their Committee/Council report, the AO developed a new training session intended for report writers, project managers and any staff that work in policy development. The 90-minute session reviews the "Three Steps to Developing Accessibility Impact Statements" document and offers participants the opportunity to reflect on department-specific reports and associated accessibility considerations.

In late 2022, the AO offered this training session as a pilot with staff from across the Corporation, including members of the Accessibility Work Group. This specific session included additional time and resources to receive staff feedback to improve the course's

offering. The AO has reviewed this feedback and implemented various improvements to offer the session widely throughout 2023.

Procurement

The Corporation continues to ensure that City purchases include accessible design, criteria and features as prescribed by section 5 of the IASR. The City ensures that accessibility design, features and criteria are included where possible in procurement, regardless of dollar value.

In 2021, Supply Services awarded over 1,300 new contracts (including optional extensions) valued above \$15 thousand under delegated authority totaling approximately \$1.035 billion. In terms of dollar value, accessibility requirements were included in 99 per cent of all new procurements after adjusting for those where it is not applicable. It should be noted that there is a lag in the City's ability to provide this information that does not align with the timing of this report, therefore this information will always be reported one year behind.

Most departments track accessible procurement under \$15 thousand using the Monthly Procurement Tracking form. This form was created in 2020 using Office 365 tools, making it available to all employees without the need for network access. Departments that track by exemption are encouraged to send reminders to staff who make purchases, to ensure accessibility is considered for all practicable purchases. Most departments that track by exemption primarily purchase items found on the non-practicable list. By including accessible design, features and criteria in all City purchases, the City ensures items, information and public facilities are accessible to clients with disabilities.

2022 Municipal Election

The Elections Office is committed to administering accessible municipal elections for electors, elections workers, candidates, and third-party advertisers, in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the "MEA"), the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), and the related standards and regulations.

To this end, the Elections Office undertakes a wide variety of initiatives in its preparations for municipal elections, such as meeting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), making several accessibility tools and services available to electors, and training all election workers on accessibility, as further described below.

Accessibility Plan before Voting Day

In accordance with Section 12.1(2) of the MEA, the City Clerk must “prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election”.

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal Elections, the Elections Office presented at the AAC on June 21, 2022. Members of the AAC provided feedback regarding the number of voting places where accessible vote tabulators are made available to electors, accessible washrooms at voting places, the recruitment of persons with disabilities as election workers, the communication and promotion of Ottawa’s municipal elections and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in those promotional materials.

Based on feedback received from the AAC, the public, “lessons learned” in previous municipal elections, and to meet the requirement of the MEA, the Elections Office drafted an Accessibility Plan and made it available on ottawa.ca/vote on Friday, September 23, 2022, in the following formats:

- [City of Ottawa’s 2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan](#) (detailed version)
- [City of Ottawa’s 2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan](#) (abridged version)

Overview of the 2022 Municipal Elections

The 2022 Municipal Elections took place on Monday, October 24, 2022, and were conducted in accordance with the MEA and the staff report titled, “[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and amendments to election-related by-laws and policies](#)” as further described below.

Voting places

When choosing voting places for an election, Section 45 of the MEA prescribes that the City Clerk has the statutory duty to establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she “considers most convenient for the electors”. Pursuant to Subsection 45(2) of the MEA, “in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.”

Subsection 45(7) of the MEA mandates that on Voting Day, a voting place be provided on the premise of:

1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces
2. An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm
3. A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied

In addition to the provisions of the MEA, the Elections Office considers Ottawa's diverse geography (urban, suburban, and rural) as well as the social and economic makeup of the population to ensure that there is equitable access to all electors in every ward and that no undue hardship is experienced when participating in the democratic process of electing their representatives.

In accordance with the above-noted provisions, staff identified 678 voting places for the 2022 Municipal Elections. This included multi-residential facilities that provide care that do not meet the "bed count" threshold set out in the legislation but have been historically used as voting places in previous municipal elections.

As in past elections, the Elections Office reviewed the accessibility of every location that was used as a voting place. Staff conducted site visits and completed a detailed accessibility checklist to ensure that all voting places were accessible to electors, workers, and candidates with disabilities.

The accessibility checklist was previously developed in consultation with staff in the City's Accessibility Office and the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department, and includes the evaluation of features such as elevators, ramps, handrails, lighting, and door widths. The accessible features were made available to electors on ottawa.ca/vote and on the Voter Notification Letters.

Feedback cards were also made available at all voting places listing ways for electors to provide feedback to the Elections Office, as required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The feedback cards were printed to meet the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's (CNIB) guidelines for clear print and include Braille.

In-person voting opportunities

There were three separate voting opportunities, with a total of seven in-person voting days, for electors to cast their ballot in the 2022 Municipal Elections. Based on the past success of special advance voting days, the Elections Office expanded special advance voting to nine locations over four days from Saturday, September 24 to Tuesday, September 27, 2022. During this voting event, voting places offered an "anywhere

voting” which allowed electors to attend any voting place, regardless of their address, to cast their ballot. All special advance voting places offered an Accessible Vote Tabulator (AVT) as further described below.

Advance Vote Days took place on Friday, October 7 and Friday, October 14, 2022, and Voting Day occurred on Monday, October 24, 2022. On these voting days, electors had the opportunity to vote in their wards.

All voting places were open from 10 am to 8 pm with the exception of some long-term care and retirement homes that had reduced hours in accordance with the MEA.

In addition, if an elector was physically unable to go inside the voting place, they could have requested to have their ballot brought to their vehicle, outside of the building, or to another area within the voting place. Electors could have notified election workers that they wished to curbside vote when they arrived at the voting place by calling the Elections Office or a friend or support person could notify election workers inside the voting place.

Voting by special mail-in ballot

As previously noted, on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, City Council approved and enacted By-law No. 2022-75, being “A by-law of the City of Ottawa to authorize the use of an alternative voting method for the 2022 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2022-2026 Term of Council,” in accordance with Subsection 42(1)(b) of the MEA. This Subsection provides that a municipal council may pass by-laws “authorizing electors to use an alternative voting method, such as voting by mail or by telephone, that does not require electors to attend at a voting place in order to vote.”

Voting by special mail-in ballot was first piloted in Ottawa during the 2020 Ward 19 Cumberland By-election in response to COVID-19. In preparation for the 2022 Municipal Elections and following discussions with OPH regarding the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, staff recommended that a special mail-in ballot process be implemented for the 2022 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

This process allowed any eligible elector to submit an application to the Elections Office to receive a special ballot by mail. Following the close of the two-week application period, the Elections Office mailed out 10,179 Special Ballot Voter Kits. The kits included instructions on how to vote, a voter declaration form, a ballot, a secrecy envelope, and a prepaid return envelope. Electors were required to mail or deliver their

sealed return envelope to the Elections Office or to the City's Client Service Centres by 4:30 p.m. on Voting Day, Monday, October 24, 2022.

There were four special mail-in ballot processing events for the 2022 Municipal Elections and unofficial results from the special mail-in ballot processing events were stored in a secure location until they were uploaded to the results server in the presence of external auditors after the close of voting on Monday, October 24, 2022.

In total, 8,549 special mail-in ballots were successfully cast, and one special mail-in ballot was rejected in accordance with the Procedures for Special Ballot Voting.

Voting by proxy

Electors who were unable to get to a voting place on voting days, or who felt uncomfortable going to a voting place to cast their ballot, were able to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf in accordance with the MEA. A proxy must be an eligible elector and can still cast their own ballot. A proxy can vote for only one other person unless they are representing members of their own family.

To appoint a proxy, the elector and the person they wanted to appoint were required to fill out two copies of an Appointment for Voting Proxy – Form 3. The individual that was appointed was required to take the completed forms to the Elections Office, City Hall, or any Client Service Centre (excluding Walter Baker Sports Centre) from Thursday, September 1, 2022, until Monday, October 24, 2022, during regular business hours, and have it certified by City staff. Once certified, the proxy was required to take the form to the voting place to receive a ballot.

A total of 364 proxy forms were certified in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

Voting in long-term care and retirement homes

As previously noted, Subsection 45(7) of the MEA states that, on Voting Day, a voting place shall be provided in the premises of institutions in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm and a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied. In accordance with the MEA, voting took place in 114 long term care facilities during the 2022 Municipal Elections.

To help mitigate the risks surrounding COVID-19 for both residents, staff, and election workers at long-term care and retirement homes, staff worked with OPH to implement safety measures to provide residents with the opportunity to vote.

In addition to election worker training provided by the Elections Office, election workers in these facilities were also required to watch a training video provided by OPH regarding general infection prevention and control and personal protective equipment.

Voter turnout

Following the revision period which ended on Friday, September 16, there were 722,227 eligible electors in the City of Ottawa's 2022 Municipal Elections. A total of 316,254 electors cast their ballot for a voter turnout of 43.79 per cent. This is slightly higher than the 2018 Municipal Elections where 269,772 ballots were cast for a voter turnout of 42.55 per cent.

Accessible voting tools and services

Building on the successful rollout of new technologies during past elections, the Elections Office continued to make available several online tools on ottawa.ca/vote for the 2022 Municipal Elections. These online tools allowed electors to:

- Verify where they could vote
- Verify if they were on the Voters' List
- Add themselves to the Voters' List
- Amend their information on the Voters' List
- Verify who was running in their ward
- Apply for a special mail-in ballot

An additional online tool allowed members of the public to apply to work as an election worker in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

To ensure that the in-person voting process was accessible for all electors, the Elections Office continued to make several accessibility tools available to electors including:

- Large print ballots
- Magnifying sheets
- Braille listing of candidates and Braille ballot templates
- A cell phone with elections call centre staff on standby. Electors could use this feature to call elections staff to have their ballot read to them over the phone.

Further, all special advance voting places, area-wide advance voting places and voting places in retirement residences and long-term care facilities offered an Accessible Vote

Tabulator (AVT). The AVT allows electors with disabilities to vote privately and independently through the use of its accessible features, which include:

- Bilingual visual support through a 19-inch screen with zoom, high contrast features
- A braille keypad
- Left-right paddles (colour-coded left and right paddles)
- A sip-puff device
- Bilingual audio through headphones

This process involves the prior completion and certification of a prescribed form. In addition, election workers could assist an elector in casting their ballot by their bedside in an institution.

In addition, Para Transpo customers could reserve their trip to and from a voting place one week in advance on any of the seven in-person voting days. This extended booking timeline ensured that Para Transpo customers had the opportunity to schedule their trips ahead of the routine 24-hour bookings.

Election workers

The Elections Office is committed to meeting the requirements of the accessible employment standard and ensuring that accessibility is incorporated into its recruitment and hiring practices. The Elections Office attended several outreach events in an effort to reach as many individuals as possible who wished to be election workers. These events included booths at recreation centres or special events and virtual presentations with various community groups.

For the 2022 Municipal Elections, eligible individuals applied using the online election worker application, by email, by mail, or in person at the Elections Office or at one of the above-mentioned outreach events. The Elections Office continued to make workplace disability accommodations for all elections workers, as requested. Applicants could note any accessibility requirements on their application forms. All election workers were required to complete election worker training, which included a formal section on accessibility. In addition, every City employee who participated in the 2022 Municipal Elections completed mandatory AODA training.

Communications and outreach for the 2022 Municipal Elections

Information about the 2022 Municipal Elections, including information about accessibility tools and initiatives, were communicated to electors, candidates, and third-party advertisers through numerous bilingual and accessible communications platforms, as

further described below. Where applicable, all communications met the requirements of the AODA, IASR, and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standards.

To raise awareness about the voting options available during the election, and in addition to statutory advertisement requirements, in partnership with Public Information and Media Relations (PIMR), the Elections Office created and mailed a bilingual brochure to every eligible elector on the Voters' List in August of 2022. This brochure provided information on how, where, and when an elector could vote as well as information about how electors could find their ward name and number, and a list of candidates running in their ward.

Further, staff executed a thorough social media campaign to communicate with electors, candidates, and third-party advertisers throughout the election cycle. Videos, infographics, and photos were posted to the Elections Office's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages in both English and French, and covered a variety of topics related to the 2022 Municipal Elections including:

- The nomination and registration periods for candidates and third-party advertisers
- Ward boundary changes
- The recruitment and hiring of election workers
- Web-based tools for residents
- Voting dates and times and the option to vote by special mail-in ballot
- Accessibility tools available to electors

Of the videos shared, the Elections Office, in consultation with the Accessibility Office, produced live action videos that demonstrated electors using the accessibility tools and services available at voting places including a large print ballot, magnifying sheet, the Braille listing of candidates and Braille ballot templates, the AVT and curbside voting.

Public outreach events

The Elections Office participated in several outreach opportunities to provide information to residents about voting opportunities and how to apply to work in the 2022 Municipal Elections. These outreach events included booths at various community events, schools, and City facilities.

Virtual presentations were also given through the United Way Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) and the Good Companions Seniors Without Walls community groups.

Information for candidates and third-party advertisers

As the Elections Office recognizes the importance of encouraging diversity and inclusion on City Council, staff worked with internal stakeholders, including staff in Gender and Race Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development Services, French Language Services, and the Accessibility Office, and various community groups and organizations to provide more information about how to become a candidate in the 2022 Municipal Elections. Further, staff developed a “Becoming a candidate for the office of Mayor or City Councillor in the City of Ottawa’s 2022 Municipal Elections” guide and held a virtual information session on this subject. The guide and information sessions slides were posted to ottawa.ca/vote and shared with stakeholders who passed them onto their networks.

Staff also created guides for prospective School Board Trustees and third-party advertisers titled “Becoming a candidate for the office of School Board Trustee in the City of Ottawa’s 2022 Municipal Elections”, and “Becoming a registered third-party advertiser in the City of Ottawa’s 2022 Municipal Elections”. These guides were also posted to ottawa.ca/vote and shared with stakeholders.

In addition, the Elections Office provided candidates with a copy of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) “Candidate’s Guide to Accessible Elections” upon the filing of their nomination forms.

Throughout the election cycle, information regarding accessible communications, selecting an accessible campaign office, and accessible customer service was provided to candidates and third-party advertisers through written communications and virtual information sessions. All virtual information sessions were offered in English and French and included sign language interpretation.

Accessibility Report after Voting Day

Finally, as required under the MEA, the City Clerk must make public a report on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities. This report is to be completed and made public 90 days after Voting Day in a regular election.

As such, the Elections Office reviewed the implementation of the above-mentioned Accessibility Plan and feedback received on the accessibility of the 2022 Municipal Elections and prepared the [“City of Ottawa’s 2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Report”](#) which was published on ottawa.ca/vote on Monday, February 20, 2023.

The Elections Office will continue to review the feedback received on the accessibility of the 2022 Municipal Elections and work with our stakeholders in preparation for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

AccessAbility Day Event

As part of National AccessAbility Week, the City of Ottawa held its 19th annual AccessAbility Day event on June 1, 2022. The theme of this year's event was "Intersectionality – celebrating diversity within our community."

Attendees of this virtual event were joined by Deputy Mayor Laura Dudas, who proclaimed June 1 as AccessAbility Day in Ottawa, and City Manager Steve Kanellakos, who encouraged all attendees to, "fully embrace disability as part of an inclusive society."

The event also featured keynote speaker Sarah Jama, Executive Director of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, who provided a realistic and thought-provoking overview of some of the institutional, systemic, environmental and physical barriers still faced by those with disabilities in Ontario.

The event concluded with a panel discussion on intersectionality and disability. Panelists spoke about their lived experiences as people with disabilities and intersectional identities. They discussed daily barriers and challenges and how everyone can be more inclusive in our personal and professional lives.

To promote the inclusion of all participants, various accessibility supports were provided during the event including American Sign Language and Langue des signes Québécoise interpretation, continuous real-time captioning in English and French, and simultaneous French translation.

Treat Accessibly Halloween Event

On October 29, 2022, the City of Ottawa hosted the annual Trick or Treat with the Mayor event in-person at City Hall for the first time since 2019. This year, the City partnered with "Treat Accessibly", a movement that aims to make Halloween accessible and inclusive for everyone and increase awareness of accessibility by distributing treats at the end of one's driveway. In this spirit, the Office of Protocol introduced several features to make the event more accessible, including non-edible treats (pencils and stickers were distributed to children), wheelchair accessible queues and entrances and reduced sound levels and lighting effects. Promotion of this initiative was done through social media and other external communications. Additionally, "Treat Accessibly" lawn

signs were on display at the event, and lawn flags were distributed to event attendees to bring home and also participate in the initiative on Halloween night.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities Event

On December 1, 2022, the City of Ottawa hosted its fourth annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities event virtually over Zoom. While the recognized day itself is observed on December 3, the City held its event in advance to accommodate participants wishing to attend multiple virtual events held across the City or around the world, and to ensure high quality speakers for the event.

Over 160 participants attended this year's event. The City celebrates this day annually to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and to increase awareness of the barriers that persons with disabilities face.

The UN's theme for this year's event was, "Transformative Solutions for Inclusive Development: The Role of Innovation in Fuelling an Accessible and Equitable world."

Mayor Sutcliffe kicked off the event by delivering opening remarks regarding the City's focus on accessibility heading into the new term of Council, as well as delivering the Proclamation of the day. Interim City Manager Wendy Stephanson highlighted some of the accessibility initiatives the City has implemented over the past year.

The event featured two speakers, Mr. Philip Rizcallah, Chief Executive Officer of Accessibility Standards Canada, who provided an update on the development and progress of federal accessibility standards, including a review of the built environment standard, and Mr. Rich Donovan, who outlined the focus and direction related to the fourth legislated review of the AODA.

The latter half of the event featured speeches from community representatives who work collaboratively with the City on numerous accessibility initiatives. Mr. Phillip Turcotte, Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, spoke about the numerous projects the Committee members reviewed with an accessibility lens over the past four years, as well as spoke about the upcoming recruitment of new committee members. To close the event, Mr. Jerry Fiori, former-Chair of the Ottawa Disability Coalition, spoke about the group's origins and the importance of formal and informal networks, and their need to collaborate with the City to increase awareness and remove all types of barriers for people with disabilities in the community.

2022 Departmental Accessibility Initiative Achievements

Highlights of various accessibility initiatives and actions undertaken across City departments and service areas throughout 2022 are summarized below. These

initiatives have prevented and removed barriers to accessibility in City services, programs, policies, purchases and projects.

This report does not include all the accessibility initiatives undertaken by the City in 2022. A full listing of all 2022 accessibility initiative outcomes is available in **Document 4**. Many initiatives that had been on hold due to COVID-19 resumed last year.

2022 Information and Communications Initiatives

The City is proud to be a leader in accessibility and is committed to sharing information on its accessibility policies, procedures, and trainings through ottawa.ca. In early 2022, the AO updated its accessibility-related pages on the City's website to provide a better user experience. This new section, entitled "Accessibility at the City", includes refreshed pages and articles to provide a "one-stop-shop" to the most current information regarding accessibility to our residents. The Accessibility Advisory Committee's (AAC) page on ottawa.ca was also refreshed to provide clear and transparent information regarding the Committee's mandate, recent work, meeting schedule, and past minutes and motions. The link to the AAC's page is also now included on the "Accessibility at the City" landing page to provide users with further visibility to the Committee.

While many City services resumed regular service in 2022, COVID-19 continued to disproportionately impact people with disabilities. In addition, other emergencies such as the convoy protests and the derecho storm required the City to provide emergency communications in accessible formats. During these emergencies, the AO worked closely with other City departments and Ottawa Police Services to ensure accessible communications were available to residents by including information for vulnerable residents in public information, such as the *Accessibility Spotlight* newsletter, as well as including the provision of captioning and sign language interpretation in ASL and LSQ in the daily media availabilities.

In 2022, the cost of sign language interpretation services for post-Council and emergency-related media availabilities, events, and virtual town halls was \$71 thousand. This represents 149 sessions completed for the City. This was a decrease in 2021 from \$82 thousand and 192 sessions as a result of fewer media availabilities related to COVID-19. These efforts contribute to reducing communication barriers for the Deaf community and ensuring all residents in the City of Ottawa have access to essential information.

Due to increased visibility of these supports during the pandemic, there has also been an increase in departments providing sign language interpretation for technical briefings and events.

Based on discussions with staff in Public Information and Media Relations, it was decided that going forward in 2023, sign language interpretation would only be included for emergency-related media availabilities. However, the AO will continue to support any department that wants to include sign language interpretation for their virtual or in-person events and has also developed a Guide to Providing Sign Language Interpretation, which includes step-by-step instructions and considerations for its inclusion in all City meetings, consultations, celebrations, or community events.

With Council approval of the 2021 COMAP Annual Update, a pilot was approved to allocate \$10 thousand from the Council Administrative Budget on a first-come-first-served basis to assist Members of Council to provide accessible formats and communication supports when communicating with their constituency. This budget item is now permanently available to all Council members.

This fund can be used when communicating in writing, in person and via video and video conference to ensure their communications are accessible.

These funds could be used for:

- Captioning and transcripts for events/live or pre-recorded video (including the French translation and French captioning)
- Sign Language Interpretation in ASL and LSQ
- Personal Support Workers (live events)
- Braille Translation
- Creating Accessible Word, PDF and Power Point documents, including Ward newsletters
- Twenty per cent of the fund per year can be used to increase accessibility of their websites and e-documents, such as newsletters, using the services from the City's standing offer list.

This budget is managed by the Council Support Services on behalf of the City Clerk, under rules previously established by the former Member Services Committee.

New members of Council were informed of this fund during their "Legislative Framework" orientation session in October 2022, and more communications on this fund will be shared with all Members of Council in 2023.

The AO releases a monthly e-newsletter called, "*Accessibility Spotlight*." The newsletter includes accessibility articles related to City services, events, programs, initiatives and other related topics in order to keep residents and subscribers informed. Spotlight articles for 2022 included but were not limited to the following subjects:

- Booking for 4th Dose Vaccine Appointments and Accessibility Supports
- Support for residents through the City of Ottawa (regarding the convoy protests)
- Public Works Departmental Engagement Sessions
- Accessible Reading Materials at the Ottawa Public Library
- My Para Transpo online services
- Time to make a splash at your local City of Ottawa beach
- 2022 Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Program
- Ottawa's First Hydrant Drinking Water Fountain
- Accessibility Supports Available at City of Ottawa Voting Places
- Fourth Legislative Review of the AODA
- OC Transpo's Travel Training Program Takes the Spotlight
- Snow Go and Snow Go Assist programs
- Catherine Street Community Service Hub Offers Accessible, Safe Space for Residents
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is Recruiting

In 2022, the AO sent out 16 editions of the newsletter in both English and French, featuring over 50 articles about accessibility initiatives, services, events, and invitations from all departments across the City. By December 2022, the newsletter was distributed to 4,643 subscribers in English, an increase of 310 from 2021, and 215 in French, an increase of 23 from last year. The AO is committed to sharing updates and information with public and will continue to work to find ways to increase the newsletter's subscribers.

In the fall 2022, Council approved the implementation of the Vacant Unit Tax (VUT). As such, staff in the former Finance Services Department ensured that the VUT form was designed to meet AODA compliance. Additional accessibility-related supports are also available to residents during the declaration period, including a dedicated phone line which allowed residents to complete their declaration with assistance over the phone, or request a paper form be mailed to them. Accessible supporting documentation regarding the VUT also include accessibly designed materials, information available in multiple languages, and an extensive promotion campaign designed to reach residents across the city.

The City is proud to note that as a result of its continuing efforts to increase web accessibility, ottawa.ca has recently ranked in the top one per cent of WebAIM's accessibility rankings. WebAim is a non-profit organization based in the Institute for Disability Research, Policy and Practice at Utah State University. Since 2019, it has

conducted an annual accessibility analysis on the home pages of the top one million web sites; a list compiled from a variety of reputable sources. In 2022, ottawa.ca ranked 13,329 of the one million sites analysed; however, as recently as March, 2023, our website now ranks 6,156 (99th percentile). This is the highest ranking the City has ever achieved and the highest known ranking among major municipalities in Ontario.

The City's Quality Assurance (QA) team assesses both public facing and internal facing web applications and web sites for WCAG compliance and usability by people with disabilities. This team has completed over 180 accessibility reviews using a variety of tools for both automated and manual testing. These staff are fully trained and certified testers who work closely with independent third-party accessibility companies to ensure the most positive user experience for those with disabilities.

The City has dedicated a tremendous number of staff hours to ensure new and existing web applications meet or exceed AODA legislated requirements. In addition, this team has been working with software vendors, internal development teams and procurement to promote the importance of producing accessible applications and web sites.

In 2022, the QA team continued to refine their tools and processes as part of continuous improvement of the web accessibility testing process and expanded their testing to include mobile devices as part of future proofing web applications for continued compliance. Also in 2022, the QA team was successful in adding additional rated requirements to many Requests for Proposal (RFP) to ensure greater overall compliance to current AODA legislation by third party vendors. The QA team has provided countless hours of consulting, training and guidance to various client groups to assist in enhancing their accessibility knowledge, not only to remediate the current accessibility gaps, but also to apply the lessons learned for future initiatives.

Prior to 2022, the City used an application called SIRE E-Agenda to create and publish online City Council, Committee and Board agendas, meeting minutes and reports. SIRE E-Agenda reached the end of its lifecycle, and the Office of the City Clerk recently replaced the existing software with the new eScribe solution. This software is used by several other Canadian municipalities and some of the key benefits include:

- Improved performance and reliability
- Improved web accessibility
- Bilingual web streaming better integrated with agendas
- Enhanced IT security
- Improved format and “look and feel” of Council and Committee meeting documents

- Improved efficiencies relating to staff time and resources
- Enhanced user experience for members of Council, residents, and staff

Although all components of the new application (including documents migrated from the former application) do not fully conform to all WCAG 2.0 AA requirements, it has been tested and validated by a third party. Most remaining deficiencies have been remediated, and the vendor is committed to working with the City to ensure all remaining components are fully accessible. The City will continue to offer accessible formats and communication supports to ensure residents with disabilities can access information in a timely manner.

2022 Employment Initiatives

Various corporate policies and procedures affecting employees with disabilities were also updated throughout 2022.

Last year, the Workplace, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging unit, within Community and Social Services, updated and digitized the Count ME In! self-identification questionnaire for employees. All staff, including new hires, continue to complete this questionnaire, and the data is assessed accordingly. As such, employees who identify as persons with disabilities indicated the highest increase in representation from all equity-deserving groups listed in the questionnaire, from 7.7 per cent in December 2021, to 15.3 per cent in December 2022.

Work continued last year regarding the LEAD IT (Leverage Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion Targets) Program. Staff in Community and Social Services and Innovative Client Services have worked in partnership over the last year to bring LEAD IT to implementation through the creation of key guidelines, training, tools, and resources designed to ensure the City of Ottawa incorporates a comprehensive approach to an equitable staffing process. Phased implementation started in Q4, 2022 with two departments, including presentations to Department Leadership Teams and Hiring Manager Orientations, and an evaluation framework is in development to measure both quantitative and qualitative processes and outcomes of the implementation.

At the end of 2021, staff in Community and Social Services introduced Bias Awareness Training for Employees and for Leaders. These courses aim to help participants strengthen their roles and clarify their responsibilities as leaders in reducing unconscious biases within the organization and their communities and emphasize the importance of self-checking inherent beliefs that create systemic barriers for some employees in our workforce, including those with disabilities.

In 2022, the Learning Centre ran 27 sessions of Bias Awareness Training for Employees, and 11 sessions of Bias Awareness for Leaders. Additional intact sessions also took place within specific departments.

The continued impact on mental health on City employees, not only in the context of the pandemic, but also due to the numerous emergencies that took place in 2022, is recognized by management and staff across the corporation. As such, a SharePoint site for People Leaders was launched featuring self-assessment and check-in tools, as well as conflict management resources. Equally, a SharePoint site dedicated to employee wellness, featuring articles and resources related to mental health was updated throughout the year to ensure the content remained relevant. Communications from the Senior Leadership Team continued to encourage staff to utilize available resources and supports, including the Employee and Family Assistance Program and LifeSpeak, a self-directed digital wellness platform. LifeSpeak content was refreshed to include new awareness modules on a variety of topics.

The City also partnered with vendors to ensure our individual contributors and people leaders had access to a variety of events and training materials focused on mental health and well-being. Departments across the City have been working with HR Wellness Consultants to establish and expand Peer Support Programs in alignment with current best practices. Peer Support safeguards mental health and well-being through confidential, non-judgmental, and supportive conversations.

Additionally, the City launched a MentorAbility virtual mentoring event from October to November 2022 as a new initiative to help recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month in partnership with Performance Plus Rehabilitative Care Inc (PPRC). PPRC provides bilingual job coaching services to Ottawa job seekers with visible and non-visible disabilities and does other outreach work through the Employment Accessibility Research Network (EARN). City of Ottawa volunteer mentors, which included managers, supervisors and staff, had a one-time, one-hour mentoring session to gain knowledge about their career options in their field of interest. Participants asked their mentors questions about daily tasks, responsibilities and challenges in a safe and confidential space. The top areas of interest were customer service, administration, technology and finance.

The City's Affinity Groups were quite active in 2022, which included the Employees with Disabilities Affinity Group. An article entitled "Disability Pride and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities" was published by the Affinity Group lead in the internal *In the Loop* newsletter, which included quotations from active members as they came

together to reflect on what disability meant to them in celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Affinity Group leads also hosted a showcase in November to promote their work and provide City staff with the opportunity to learn about currently active groups, how to become a member, and how to create new groups. The event also included introductory and supportive remarks from the City Manager.

The City currently has 10 active Affinity groups that support various lived experiences and social identities that also consider intersectionality in their membership.

The AO continued to share information with employees and management through internal communications in 2022. This included updates and resources available to employees returning to the office, as well as the City's continued commitment to its legislative responsibilities. In 2022, the AO published 14 articles in the internal *In the Loop* employee newsletter, as well as 11 articles in Management Bulletins. These included, but were not limited to:

- Individual Workplace Emergency Response Information (IWERI) reminders
- AODA Management Compliance training
- COMAP update highlights
- Accessibility Design Standards
- Accessible municipal virtual events
- Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) conference invitation

In late 2021, the City launched its new Scents and Sensitivities in the Workplace Policy and Procedure, reducing the likelihood of employees or clients being negatively impacted by scented products. Internal communications promoting awareness of both the Policy and Procedure were sent in February 2022, and resources have been developed, including sample scent-free notification statements, as well as a list of Frequently Asked Questions on scents and sensitivities in the workplace.

The Workplace Accommodation Policy and Procedures was also updated in June 2022, to ensure they reflect and support the needs of our current and future workforce. The duty to accommodate employees in the workplace legally requires employers, under the AODA, to proactively eliminate workplace standards, practices, policies, requirements, procedures or rules that have or may have a discriminatory impact on an individual or group of individuals as required under human rights law. The Workplace Accommodation Policy is the framework the City uses to ensure an inclusive, barrier-

free work environment that allows a diversity of individuals to contribute as full members of their work teams.

And finally, in 2021, the City's e-learning platforms migrated from iLearn (networked) and uLearn (non-networked) to the new Learn (for networked staff) and oLearn (for non-networked staff, contractors, and community partners). Over the course of 2022, staff worked to ensure content on these migrated platforms was accessible to all users. As such, 100 per cent of HR developed courses have an accessible version and an accessible transcript, two vendor-developed mandatory courses are currently being remediated, and accessible transcripts are being developed for four other courses.

2022 Transportation Initiatives

As directed by Council, Emergency and Protective Services (EPS) conducted a study throughout 2021 of the complaints and concerns expressed regarding the quality, availability and costs of on-demand accessible taxi services. The consultant's report was received, and the department is reviewing the recommendations and preparing the staff report, which will be presented to the Committee in the late spring of 2023.

The AO continues to receive numerous complaints, both through 3-1-1 and other direct channels, about the challenges and lack of available accessible taxis in the city. These issues are tracked accordingly and responded to in a timely manner.

By-law and Regulatory Services continued to provide financial support to Transit Services (TS) to provide accessible transportation improvements. This includes \$90 thousand for taxi coupons, \$56 thousand for discounted taxi coupons and \$200 thousand for rural transportation funding.

In addition to this funding, Transit Services also provided Community and Social Services agencies with \$856 thousand in funding last year for the delivery of transportation services to rural seniors and persons with disabilities. \$200 thousand of the overall funding envelope was provided by the Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Fund, which is generated through an accessibility surcharge paid by ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft. Demand for transportation services increased in 2022, providing 6,713 one-way trips, an increase of about 11 per cent compared to 2021. The agencies were able to meet about 93 per cent of all trip requests. Going forward, TS will continue to provide funding to CSS agencies as part of the Council-approved 2023 budget.

Community consultation remained a key priority for TS staff regarding their implementation of various accessibility initiatives. In 2022, staff engaged with representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) and the Canadian Council of the Blind

(CCB) in a quality assurance review of tactile signage samples for the Stage 2 O-Train stations.

Staff also continued to work with the public, disability community stakeholders and Councillors on Stage 2 O-Train pedestrian connectivity issues. More than 10 public information sessions were held last year, including one with east-end residents to review changes required in the vicinity of Jeanne d'Arc and Convent Glen Stations, and another for residents between Richmond Road and Connaught Avenue. Seven of 11 pedestrian connections were installed in 2022, providing access to future Stage 2 stations consistent with the City's Accessibility Design Standards. This includes pedestrian bridges at Trim Road, Place d'Orléans, Greens Creek, Rideau River, Hunt Club, Algonquin and Woodroffe. Once completed, the Stage 2 Pedestrian Connections program will add 25 km of new multi-use pathways, cycle tracks and pedestrian bridges.

As a result of feedback from the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and other disability community stakeholders, OC Transpo staff also continued to enhance information available to customers about the procedures in place to safely evacuate stations, trains and buses during an emergency. Web content was developed and includes details relevant to persons with disabilities, which was also reviewed by internal stakeholders. In 2023, web content on these emergency evacuation procedures will be finalized and communicated to customers and internal stakeholders through various channels, including social media.

Evacuation procedures from O-Train tunnels were also reviewed in 2022 to ensure adequate provisions are in place to accommodate persons with disabilities. A tabletop exercise on rail evacuations for customers of all abilities also took place last year.

In 2023, staff will conduct an O-Train evacuation exercise that simulates a large-scale emergency. This simulation will include a component for customers with disabilities to validate the effectiveness of the evacuation plans, as well as staff's readiness to manage this type of event. This exercise will help prepare our front-line staff, as well as first responders and emergency personnel, in the event of an actual emergency.

In early 2022, OC Transpo added four 40-foot battery-electric buses to its fleet. These buses were equipped with sound-emission technology to help ensure pedestrians and cyclists could hear the vehicle. OC Transpo has been monitoring customer feedback on the new vehicles' accessibility features, which has been compiled from several sources, including various accessibility stakeholders, persons with disabilities and the public.

Additionally, two orientation sessions were held in March and May 2022 to familiarize stakeholders with the buses' sound-emission technology and other accessibility features. Representatives from the AO, AAC, CNIB, AEBC, CCB, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada and CNIB Guide Dogs participated in the sessions. Based on their feedback, staff will continue to equip all future battery-electric buses with the equivalent sound-emission technology, and the same on-board accessibility features.

Stakeholders from the disability community were also instrumental in providing feedback during the bird-friendly bus shelter pilot with Safe Wings Ottawa in 2022. This pilot project equipped three on-street shelters with glass with a dense pattern of small white 5-mm dots. At the pilot's completion, OC Transpo engaged several stakeholders to assess the bird-friendly patterns' impact on persons with disabilities, including members of the CNIB, AEBC, CCB, Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, and the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre. The accessibility stakeholders' consensus was that OC Transpo should not include any bird-friendly pattern on the front and upstream glass panels of bus shelters, since these were the areas through which customers required a clear and unimpeded line of sight to view oncoming traffic and their arriving bus. As a result, should OC Transpo decide to expand the pilot to include other shelters throughout the city, no bird-friendly pattern will be applied to the front and upstream glass panels of bus shelters.

Members from the Para Transpo Customer Service Working Group were consulted and engaged on a variety of issues relevant to Para Transpo customers in 2022. The working group consists of individuals who are or represent registered Para Transpo customers, including a representative from the AAC. OC Transpo staff met with working group members eight times last year.

This group was highly involved in the development of My Para Transpo online services, which were launched for all Para Transpo customers last spring. This initial set of services, which are WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant as required under the AODA, included online Para Transpo trip booking and cancellation and ride tracking. Staff will introduce the next phase of My Para Transpo services in 2023, which will include functionality that permits designated support persons and institutions to book or cancel trips on behalf of their clients, as well as trip reminder notifications, all of which will be WCAG 2.1 compliant, exceeding Provincial requirements.

In the fall of last year, staff also enabled a new live text feature for Para Transpo customers. Users are now able to text 57272 (or 5PARA) to connect with OC Transpo customer service representatives to find out the estimated arrival time of their Para Transpo vehicle, cancel an upcoming trip, or ask a general question about Para

Transpo services. Currently, Para Transpo trips can only be scheduled between 6 a.m. and midnight; however, in 2023, staff will be conducting a feasibility study on offering the service 24/7 to customers. If the study determines overnight service would be feasible, a report would be brought to Transit Commission and Council to recommend this policy change.

Finally, to improve overall access to public transit, Council maintained its fare price freeze at 2019 levels for the Community Pass (for Ontario Disability Support Program recipients), EquiPass (for people with low incomes), and Access Para (for Para Transpo customers who also use conventional bus and train service). Additionally, in 2022 OC Transpo staff eliminated the need for customers to reapply for their Community Pass. Customers who are already approved now have their pass automatically renewed every two years. Community passes will only expire when a customer reaches the age of 65 or when they are no longer eligible for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Going forward, OC Transpo has brought forward a 2023 budget, as directed by City Council, that will include no increase in transit fares for next year, including those for Community Pass, EquiPass and Access Pass.

2022 Built Environment (Design of Public Spaces) Initiatives

In 2022, the AO began the development of a City-wide matrix that clarifies the requirements of the AODA, the Design of Public Spaces Standard, the Accessibility Design Standards (ADS) and the general inclusion of accessibility features in current construction programs. The goal of this initiative is to ensure staff across all departments understand accessibility requirements in projects in the built environment. Several meetings of the Accessibility Requirements in Construction (ARC) group were held, including representation from staff in all departments who work on projects in the built environment. Smaller meetings grouped by department or service area were also held. A draft matrix is being populated at these meetings, which will eventually be confirmed by Legal Services, and included as an Appendix to the City's ADS. This work will continue in 2023.

Raising awareness and promoting education on accessibility legislation and emerging practices remains a priority for the City. In 2022, the City partnered with the National Capital Heavy Construction Association and the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies to offer a virtual version of the annual Education Series. Four virtual sessions addressed issues of mutual interest to the City and industry partners, and an additional presentation on universal accessibility in urban spaces and the public right of way was also included. City staff also presented on accessibility features at protected

intersections, including delineation between cycle tracks and sidewalks, and the application of directional Tactile Walking Surface Indicators.

Variances to the City's ADS or AODA non-compliance are subject to a deviation process and documented as per the AODA. The City's deviation process for infrastructure projects is overseen by the Standards Unit, situated within the Infrastructure and Water Services Department (IWSD). The AO is also included in this process and reviews projects to assist in increasing awareness of the legislation and mitigating possible barriers created by these deviations where possible. Other departments participate in the IWSD process or follow a similar deviation process. Consultation with the AAC may occur for these projects. There were nine deviations to the ADS recorded in 2022. These included:

- Belfast Road Overpass Cycling Facilities: Transportation Association of Canada Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads recommends the curb height be no more than 200mm for roadways with operating speeds less than 60 km/h. Due to existing bridge constraints, curb height was 295mm.
- Robinson Road Multi-Use Pathway: Pathway could not meet slope requirements due to existing constraints.
- Fitzroy Harbour sidewalks: Due to presence of hydro poles, some sidewalk locations could not meet required 1.8 meter width.
- Albert Street, Queen Street, Slater Street and Bronson Avenue sidewalks: Re-instated existing roller coaster style sidewalks. It was found that ramp style sidewalks would lead to grading and drainage problems, an increase in sidewalk crossfall to over 3% away from driveways, exacerbation of lateral pinch-points caused by obstructions in the sidewalk (hydro poles) adjacent to driveways, and vehicles bottoming out.
- Aquaview Pond Pathway: Three locations along pathway rehabilitation could not meet slope requirements.
- Walkley Road O-Train Bridge Rehabilitation: The access aisle is not intended as a parking or vehicular area therefore the dimension of the Passenger Pick Up and Drop Off area is smaller than typical.
- Integrated Renewal: Lebrun, Longpré, Marquette, Michel Circle, et Al, – Sidewalk Deviation Review: Traditional sidewalks implemented as in several locations, the introduction of the ramp style sidewalk may result in grading/drainage and tie-in issues at the impacted entrances.

- All Way Stop Control – Olmstead Steet and 8 intersections: Constructed in locations that do not meet accessibility criteria (curb ramps, depressed curbs, Tactile Walking Surface Indicators)
- Adult School Crossing Guard locations – River Run and 4 intersections: Locations do not meet accessibility criteria (curb ramps, depressed curbs, Tactile Walking Surface Indicators)

There were no AODA non-compliant projects reported in 2022. The projects listed above are either deviations to the City's ADS, which often go above and beyond legislative requirements, or were deemed to be exceptions under the IASR.

The Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development (PRED) Department made significant progress towards the update of the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) in 2022. Consultation on the draft TMP policies and proposed active transportation projects launched in December 2021 and wrapped up in April 2022, with a public meeting held on March 29. While the intent was to bring the policies and active transportation projects to Transportation Committee and Council in 2022, this has been deferred until Spring 2023 due to impacts from the convoy protests and the timing of the 2022 municipal election.

The Origin-Destination (OD) Travel Survey, a key supporting element of the TMP, was successfully completed in the Fall of 2022, with over 29,000 randomly selected households in the National Capital Region participating. A new question on whether anyone in the household has a disability or cognitive or physical condition that affects or limits their ability to travel was added this year. The data collected from the OD Survey will be used to develop the TMP Capital Infrastructure Plan, with the bulk of this work expected to occur in 2024, once the OD Survey data has been processed and used to update the City's long-range travel model. An equity lens will be applied to analyze the survey data which will help to understand and address transportation challenges and barriers. Equity will also be a key consideration in the development of the Capital Infrastructure Plan, including project prioritization.

Work is also underway to update the City's Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) guidelines and right-of-way requirements for selected arterials. Finally, the TMP team is exploring new tools to better reach equity-deserving groups as development of the TMP Capital Infrastructure Plan moves forward.

As reported in the last update to Council, the Protected Intersection Design Guidelines were completed in 2021 and made available to internal and external stakeholders. Staff in IWSD continued this work in 2022, which included the Sidewalk and Cycle Track Delineation Design Elements project. This project, led by the Standards Unit in partnership with Transportation Planning, supports the application of recently adopted, half-height curb delineation method between sidewalk and cycle tracks. A report to staff with recommended detail drawings and additional guidance for application in various infrastructure or urban design elements, as appropriate, is expected in Q1 2023. This work includes, but is not limited to:

- The holistic review of existing City specifications and other guidelines and standards applicable to design and construction of pedestrian and cycling facilities
- Identification of gaps within the City's guidelines and standards applying half-height curb delineation to determine where additional details for application are required or where delineation treatment and other accessibility requirements are missing or cannot be applied
- Development of recommendations to address these gaps and update/develop applicable City guidelines, standards, and detailed drawings

Additionally, staff also proposed a scope change for the Protected Intersection Design Guide (2021) to update guidance regarding multi-use pathway splits into cycle tracks and sidewalks, as well as use of directional Tactile Walking Surface Indicators.

Identified as a 2023 priority in the 2022 COMAP Update Report, the AO worked with department staff to ensure the protection of on-street accessible parking in a variety of projects. Staff consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on projects where on-street parking is impacted.

The Council-approved 2022 budget for the Accessibility Barrier Removal Program was \$2.5 million, which is now managed by IWSD. This budget is used to enhance accessibility features at City Facilities and Parks, as identified in accessibility audits. Funding is also used to refresh accessibility audits, in compliance with the ADS, and to address the removal of barriers as requested by client groups and the general public. Work completed under this program includes the installation of ramps, elevators, power door operators, signage, handrails in arena stands, exterior and interior paths of travels, parking lots, washroom/changeroom/kitchen remedial work, and playgrounds.

Staff made significant progress last year on the remaining accessible elements projects in recreational facilities, which included:

- The accessible viewing platform in the Steve Yzerman Arena at the Nepean Sportsplex
 - The remaining tasks for this project include the installation of four pieces of glass and additional seating, with completion anticipated by Q1 2023.
- A fully accessible kitchen at the Greenboro Pavilion

Last year, the Public Works Department (PWD) consulted the public as part of their Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review. In 2022, ongoing awareness campaigns were created for front line staff, supported by resources in the AO, to increase awareness and education on accessibility issues in snow-removal operations. Additionally, PWD staff work in collaboration with staff in Transit Services to identify “hot spot” bus stops where accessibility is an issue because of winter maintenance. This work is ongoing to increase accessibility awareness through staff training.

The Patio Innovation Program continued in 2022. This Program was originally developed in 2020 to support businesses impacted by COVID-19 by encouraging new restaurant patios and café seating. All patio applications must maintain a 2-meter clear pedestrian path of travel and must comply with the City’s ADS, including cane-detectable delineation around the patio’s border. Accessibility continues to be verified by City staff at the application stage, including staff in the AO. Additionally, when new or expanded patios are considered, every effort is made to maintain a straight pedestrian path of travel. Consideration is given for street furniture and other barriers when ensuring a straight pedestrian path of travel. Businesses may receive additional accessibility support through staff in PRED and the AO, including site visits.

In Q1 2023, a revised Patio By-law will be considered by Committee and Council, along with accompanying new Urban Design Guidelines for Patios. To ensure clarity, a definition of cane detectability and further information is provided in the new Urban Design Guidelines for Patios. Additionally, based on feedback from the community of persons with disabilities, considerations for accessible patio furniture are included in the Guidelines.

In 2022, the Integrated Street Furniture (ISF) Program focused on life-cycle repairs and replacing damaged accessible benches and accessible three-stream waste receptacles. New furniture is inclusive and accessible to everyone. Furniture is placed to ensure adequate clearances for mobility devices. Furniture bases are cane detectable.

Furniture is selected so that colour contrasts with the surfaces on which it is placed. All benches include back support, and seat depth and height meet the ADS. All benches include a third arm located one seat-width from an arm at the end of the bench. Waste receptacles have side openings at accessible heights and use colour, images and text for each compartment. In 2023, the ISF Program will resume installing new accessible benches and accessible three-stream waste receptacles.

The High Performance Development Standard, approved by Council in 2022, includes voluntary and required standards that raise the performance of new building projects to achieve sustainable and resilient design. Sustainable design includes considerations for health, energy efficiency, accessibility, ecology, resiliency, waste management and mobility. This has positive impacts on all residents in the City, including people with disabilities. Accessibility considerations were included in the metrics of this Standard, working with the AO. This Standard is a positive example of how environmental sustainability can incorporate accessibility. Staff working on the implementation of the HPDS will continue to work with the Accessibility Office to ensure accessibility is considered in areas including, but not limited to, mobility and parking.

In 2022, as an environmental initiative, the City installed several Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations in various locations. Staff in PRED and the AO conducted site visits of all EV Charging Stations in the summer to assess for accessibility. The AO made several recommendations for the selection of sites in the future, including but not limited to curb cuts to access the Charging Station, and access aisles. Staff in PRED also consulted with the AAC on the placement of EV Charging Stations.

The City abides by clause 80.44 of IASR for procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order. In City facilities, this is overseen by Recreation, Culture and Facility Services (RCFS). In Parks and outdoor spaces, accessible elements are maintained by Public Works.

The Parks Maintenance team conducts maintenance with an accessible lens to ensure debris and obstructions are clear from accessible routes to the City's parks and playgrounds. This is done in a variety of ways with regular preventative maintenance on the pathways such as sweeping, trimming of tree branches, and keeping shrubs in check that may interfere with anyone who may be travelling along a path in a mobility device. Asphalt and stone dust pathways are maintained to prevent physical barriers. Parking lots are maintained in the same manner to ensure parking lots continue to be accessible. Potholes and cracks are identified during park inspections and, if

determined a hazard, they are repaired as soon as possible. When staff conduct park inspections, they look for uneven surfaces caused by large cracks, gaps, holes, and wash outs due to flooding or heavy rain. The Parks team also looks for uneven slabs, curbs, ramps or bridges with uneven cladding that may require repair.

Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Program

Due to the numerous accessibility concerns and issues regarding the 2021 electric kick scooter (e-scooter) pilot project, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) held two special meetings about this item in December 2021, and another on February 1, 2022. Seven public delegations addressed the Committee at this second meeting, all expressing numerous accessibility concerns with the e-scooters and noted their opposition to the continuation of the pilot project. An additional written correspondence from a stakeholder of the disability community was also received by the Office of the City Clerk.

At the time, the AAC passed a Motion advising City Council not to conduct any more pilots that would allow e-scooters, to decline any further participation in the Provincial e-scooter pilot, to take measures to restore the prohibition on the use of e-scooters (shared and private), and to dedicate resources towards enforcement of the prohibition. This Motion (**Document 9**) passed seven to one. The resolutions state:

- The AAC advises City Council not conduct any more pilots that would allow e-scooters to be used in any public places in Ottawa, whether the e-scooter is owned by, borrowed by, or rented by the rider.
- The AAC advises City Council to decline any further participation in O.Reg 389/19 – Pilot Project – Electric Kick- Scooters.
- The AAC further advises City Council and city staff to take any measure necessary to restore the prohibition on the use of e-scooters in any public places effective immediately, whether the e- scooter is owned by, borrowed by, or rented by the rider.
- The AAC further advises City Council and city staff to dedicate adequate, ongoing resources for the real-time enforcement of the prohibition on the use of e-scooters in any public places in Ottawa.

The AAC also sent a memo to Members of Council suggesting that if another pilot year was approved, that certain accessibility considerations should be incorporated into the project.

Staff presented the 2021 Electric Kick Scooter Strategy and Pilot Report at Transportation Committee on March 2, 2022. There were ten delegations from the public for this agenda item. Other than representatives of the e-scooter companies and one resident, the other delegations spoke overwhelmingly about the safety and accessibility barriers created by e-scooters. Nevertheless, Transportation Committee members approved the report recommendations with only one committee member's dissent.

Ahead of this Committee meeting, there were three complaints from members of the public indicating that the 2021 Electric Kick Scooter Strategy and Pilot Report, as well as all supporting documentation, was not provided in an accessible format until the day before. The City Clerk issued formal apologies to these individuals, acknowledging that these documents should have been available in an accessible format when the original agenda was published the week before, and that the Office of the City Clerk will strive to do better going forward.

This item was then discussed at City Council on March 23, 2022, and members were fairly divided on their support. Several members of Council shared the safety concerns previously expressed by the public delegations and the AAC over another pilot; however, other Councillors were hopeful of the anticipated changes to the project and wanted to allow for another season. Ultimately Council voted to approve another pilot, with a result of 16 to seven.

The City's 2022 e-scooter pilot season ran from July through to November. Improving safety and accessibility was a priority this season, starting with a competitive procurement process and stronger regulations and technological requirements to address three main issues related to sound emissions, sidewalk riding and mis-parking. Throughout the 2022 season, City staff, including the AO, continued to work with other departments, the AAC and community stakeholders to try and remove the accessibility barriers and create a safer e-scooter season for people with disabilities.

From the beginning of the Request For Proposal (RFP) process, staff in the AO provided support to staff leading the project. This included the in-person assessment of several accessibility features during the RFP process. As the project continued, staff in the AO attended various meetings to test new sound emissions from the e-scooters.

Due to the ongoing safety issues and concerns, significant changes were made to this pilot. This included limiting both the number of e-scooter providers and, as a result, the size of the fleet, to a maximum of 900, amending the fee structure to fund additional resources required to effectively manage the program, enforcing a 15-minute response time (down from 1-hour) regarding improper riding behaviour and mis-parking,

streamlining the mechanisms used to report and track issues and moving forward with sound emission improvements for e-scooters in operation. Through extensive collaborative efforts, multiple City departments and the service providers felt significant improvements were achieved in 2022.

Staff remained committed to addressing these issues and the 2022 season saw significant improvements to reduce barriers to persons with disabilities. A special meeting with the AAC was held in February 2023 where the AAC retracted the 2022 motion. The 2023 COMAP annual update report will include more information on this meeting and the evolution of this program.

2022 Customer Service Initiatives

While many City services resumed regular service in 2022, COVID-19 continued to disproportionately impact people with disabilities. This includes continued concerns about masks and illness.

A process for requesting and responding to disability-related accommodation requests for vaccine appointments was introduced early in OPH's efforts to vaccinate all residents. Those requesting accommodation could complete an online form or call OPH. These requests included, but were not limited to, sign language interpretation, more time for an appointment, use of a quiet, low sensory area, the presence of more support persons, and navigation support. This process remains in place to this day and hundreds of accommodation requests have been met.

Additionally, all vaccine clinics continue to include accessibility considerations in the built environment. Clinics are assessed for accessibility using the City's Accessibility Design Standards.

When the pandemic was declared in March of 2020, the City of Ottawa's Human Needs Task Force was established with community partners to support the emergency response efforts in addressing urgent community needs. The Task Force's mandate was to bridge the gaps to ensure the City remained responsive to emerging needs from the community, particularly those who may be vulnerable to health and socioeconomical impacts, many of whom have one or more disabilities. The group has maintained its presence through 2022 supporting the community through the ongoing COVID-19 response. In addition, the group also supported community concerns through the convoy protests and the derecho storm.

The self-named "Freedom convoy", which arrived in Ottawa in late-January 2022, resulted in another declared state of emergency and was detrimental to residents with disabilities living in the City's downtown core. The AO received feedback from many

residents on the impacts of emissions and noise on those with environmental sensitivities. Other disability-specific feedback included the lack of ability to navigate for persons with sight loss living in the downtown core, as the noise impacted their ability to listen for other directional cues in the environment, including Accessible Pedestrian Signals for crossing intersections. All feedback received was documented and shared with the City's Emergency Operations Centre.

In May, Ottawa was hit by a derecho storm, creating widespread, prolonged power outages across the city, causing significant infrastructure damage, and resulting in the declaration of another state of emergency. Once again, this emergency situation had disproportionate impacts on people with disabilities, including, but not limited to, elevator access in high rise buildings, and the inability to charge mobility devices and oxygen tanks. The Human Needs Task Force was mobilized to ensure vulnerable residents received critical supports. Information for vulnerable residents was included in media availabilities and other methods of communication.

As a result of these repeated states of emergency, the AO worked with staff in the Emergency Operations Centre to consult with community stakeholders on the impacts of emergency situations on people with disabilities. An introductory discussion was held in late 2022, and another meeting is planned for 2023. Through these consultations, meaningful initiatives targeted towards people with disabilities during emergency situations are anticipated in the future which will help identify gaps in information for community stakeholders that the City can work to remediate moving forward.

As required by the AODA, the City is continually receiving and responding to accessibility related service requests, feedback and inquiries. The City's AO received a total of 47 accessibility related service requests in 2022 through 3-1-1, an increase of nearly double since 2021. The requests are first received by the AO, and then forwarded to the appropriate department for response, when necessary.

The requests that were received in 2022 can be categorized into the five accessibility Standards, as follows:

- 13 per cent, customer service
- 40 per cent, built environment
- 11 per cent, information and communication
- 32 per cent, transportation
- 0 per cent, employment

In addition to these requests, the AO also received 2 requests (4 per cent) for accessible formats and communication supports.

The AO also received numerous complaints, questions and feedback from residents in the form of emails sent to the Office's general inbox, as well as through many phone calls made directly to AO staff members. The increase in requests is an indication of improved tracking and recording of requests, as well as increased public awareness and engagement on accessibility issues. The AO continues to promote public engagement with our Office and regularly shares the channels to provide feedback through all public communications and events.

Feedback on City services, programs, goods and facilities is extremely important for the City to continue to improve accessibility. The AO will continue to work with the AAC, disability community stakeholders, and residents to ensure that accessibility-related feedback is received and responded to appropriately. The AO is also currently updating the Accessibility Service Inquiry Process, in collaboration with our AWG members, to formalize these actions.

In 2020, the City introduced the Canada Video Relay Service (VRS) for Ottawa residents, as a result of feedback received from the Deaf community. The service allows Canadians who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired to make phone calls using internet and cellular phone-based technologies. Callers using VRS are connected to a sign language interpreter who provides real time interpretation for telephone calls. This allows callers to express themselves in their first language, ASL, or LSQ when asking questions or making requests to the City. This initiative continued to be well used throughout 2022 and is ongoing.

Additionally, Innovative Client Services introduced the City of Ottawa mobile application last year in both official languages. This application allows residents to access online services from the convenience of their mobile device. Throughout 2022, the application continued to be a supported and operational channel for residents to access City information and services, as well as report non-emergency issues like potholes, graffiti and problems with garbage collection.

Committee and Council Services, within the Office of the City Clerk, introduced a hybrid meeting process for Standing Committee and Council meetings, allowing members to participate in-person or virtually, in accordance with Section 238 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* as amended by the *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020*. To ensure accessible participation, members of the public are still welcome to provide written or oral submissions electronically, which are given equal consideration by the Committee. Public delegations are still encouraged and can be conducted by calling or emailing the committee coordinator. A computer or video sharing device is not required to participate in the Zoom meeting as a toll-free number is available.

Staff in Community and Social Services manage various programs that are instrumental to residents with disabilities. This includes the Snow Go Program, which provides a matching service to those who need to find a contractor or community member for snow removal, and the Snow Go Assist Program, which provides older adults and people with disabilities on a low-income with financial assistance for snow removal services. Both continue to be highly utilized programs. In 2022, \$140 thousand was allocated to nine agencies to provide snow removal services to applicable residents, and staff responded to 1,409 requests from older adults and people with disabilities in the 2021-22 winter season.

Additionally, the new Catherine Street Community Service Hub, located at 370 Catherine Street, opened in August 2022. This space was designed to be safe and welcoming for everyone and aims to remove barriers and simplify the client experience for residents living in the Centretown area. Person-centered services and supports are provided by an integrated service delivery team comprised of City and community staff who work side-by-side to support residents with different needs, including:

- Crisis support and referrals to community services
- Financial and social assistance
- Child care fee subsidy application support;
- Housing support and referrals
- Newcomer support (settlement)
- Employment services (Employment Ontario)

The safe and diverse space includes a variety of features that focus on accessibility, equality and inclusion, such as:

- Accessible parking spots located outside the entrance of the building
- Elevator access from the building's front door to first floor (hub location) and second and third floor (Employment and Social Services offices)
- Lowered countertop heights at workstations and meeting cubicles
- Lowered individual adjustable computer desks
- A 2-tiered reception desk (accessible counter)
- Gender neutral and accessible washrooms
- Braille on washroom signage
- Accessible formats of City public documents
- Lowered resource racks (reachable)
- Free Wi-Fi
- Phone and accessible device charging stations

- A safe resting space and seating to enjoy a complementary coffee

The Ottawa Public Library has developed Memory Activity Kits to increase engagement, decrease isolation, and provide affordable programs and resources for people living with dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment along with their care partners and families. This program took place throughout 2022 and the items in these kits have been specifically chosen to help start conversations, encourage social engagement, trigger memories, and be cognitively stimulating.

The Recreation, Culture and Facility Services (RCFS) Department also implemented numerous programs for persons with disabilities throughout 2022.

The new LINK program works with acquired brain injury and post-stroke clients to identify and connect them with community recreation and leisure opportunities that are person-centered, meaningful and contribute to overall well-being and quality of life. Staff also launched a new pilot program called Timeless Originals Art and Social Club for seniors with developmental or physical disabilities.

The Inclusive Recreation unit returned to near pre-pandemic programming offerings, which included Summer Plus programming and Adventure/Experiences camps, intended for youth and adults with developmental disabilities. These programs included additional supports, such as Shared Care, integration support for children with disabilities to ensure successful integration into a summer camp of their choice, as well as Mentor support, offered to staff, to provide the support, resources and tools to all participants.

Finally, the I Love to Ski program was offered in partnership with Ausome Ottawa to provide children with ambulatory autism a chance to learn how to cross-country ski at a local facility. Additionally, the program included adult support persons as participants to allow the children to continue to pursue the sport beyond the end of the program with assistance from the recently trained adult skiers. This program is funded through Canadian Tire Jump Start charities and received approximately \$4 thousand in funding last year.

At the end of 2022, RCFS implemented Active Net, a new registration, booking and payment system that improved the overall user experience. The full recreation guide that lists all programs City Wide is now broken into categories online. The guides are available online through JoinOttawa, and on ottawa.ca. Computers to access the Recreation Guide may be used on a drop-in basis at all Ottawa Public Library branches and are also available at designated “Smart Site” Recreation facilities.

To ensure equity of all residents without access to a computer or reliable internet, each facility has also developed guides/brochures of their recreation program offerings and both physical and digital copies are readily available to the public and can also be mailed by facility staff at the request of the resident.

All existing Inclusive Recreation Day Program participants, as well as anyone who received Ottawa Hand in Hand financial assistance, had their online profiles transferred over to the new system by City staff. Email communications outlining detailed instructions of how to use the new system and who to reach out to for support was sent out to all Inclusive Recreation clients.

OC Transpo resumed in-person community outreach sessions in 2022 on the public transportation options available to seniors and persons with disabilities. In June 2022, the department's Accessibility Specialist met with about 20 residents of The Bradley Gracious Retirement Living complex in Kanata to provide them with information on OC Transpo services, programs and facilities. Outreach also continued virtually and by telephone and email with a wide range of individuals and stakeholders.

Four in-person training sessions were also organized for customers or groups who were concerned about boarding conventional or Para buses using their mobility devices or service animals. These customers, accompanied by their occupational therapist or travel trainer, were given access to a bus so that they could practice boarding and positioning in the cooperative seating area at their own pace.

Additionally, OC Transpo partnered with CNIB Guide Dogs in 2022 to provide a decommissioned 40-foot OC Transpo bus to the CNIB's Canine Campus in Carleton Place. The Canine Campus is a state-of-the-art national training centre, where guide dogs learn the skills needed to become partners in mobility for people who are blind or partially sighted. The bus, which was formally handed over to CNIB Guide Dogs on January 31, 2023, will enable future guide dogs to learn the procedures for boarding, travelling, and exiting public transit.

Finally, OC Transpo promoted the Travel Training program and received some international exposure in 2022 by partnering with BBC StoryWorks Commercial Productions who produced a four-and-a-half-minute video. [The video](#), produced for the online series "The Way We Move", focused on the program's impact on one of its past participants, Daniel. As a graduate of the travel training program, Daniel now uses public transit daily and independently for both work and leisure.

Priorities for 2023

Many of the initiatives highlighted in this report will continue in 2023 and will be included in the next annual report.

As a central theme of the 2020-2024 COMAP, the AO will continue to expand opportunities for engagement with persons with disabilities and community organizations. The AO will also continue to encourage and support City departments to consult with people with disabilities, including the AAC. The AO will continue to prioritize engagement with diverse persons with disabilities.

In 2023, staff in the AO will continue to nurture strong partnerships, such as the Canadian Accessibility Network, the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals, and all levels of government. These partnerships allow the City to remain a leader in innovative accessibility, and for the City to provide support to organizations that may be new in their accessibility journey.

With the new Term of Council, the AO will ensure that all Members are supported to provide accessible service to residents. The AO is a resource for Members of Council to resolve accessibility feedback and inquiries from residents. The AO will also promote and work with Members of Council to access the allocated fund for accessible formats and communication supports.

With the new Term of Council, recruitment is underway for new members of the City's AAC. The AO, staff in Committee and Council Services and Public Information and Media Relations collaborated to develop a video showcasing the efforts of previous members of the AAC in order to support recruitment of diverse persons with disabilities, or those with expertise in accessibility. This video was promoted on social media as part of the recruitment campaign.

When a new Committee is appointed, the AO will work closely with staff in Committee and Council Services to ensure members are well supported in their work with the City. This will include education on various tasks of the Committee, including site plan reviews. The AO continues to work with staff to ensure the City is meeting its consultation requirements under the AODA during the transition of the Committee.

Finally, accessibility training and education will be a focus for City staff in 2023. This includes ensuring staff have completed mandatory training, including training for Management. The AO will also offer sessions of the new Accessibility Impacts training. As the AO continues to prioritize relationship building with staff at all levels in the Corporation, new opportunities emerge for training and education. The AWG also plays a key role in identifying needs for training.

Conclusion

Though COVID-19 restrictions resulted in fewer impacts on City services in 2022, the City was required to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the community during various unanticipated emergency situations, as staff continued to work towards the goals of the 2020-2024 COMAP.

As described in this report, the City remains committed to meeting and exceeding the requirements of the AODA. This commitment will be demonstrated in the 2023 AODA Compliance Report to the Province and will be highlighted in the 2024 annual update report to Council.

Among the many accessibility initiatives highlighted throughout the report, the City continued to prioritize consultation with people with disabilities, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee and our disability community stakeholders. These partnerships remain central to the work of the City, as staff continue to implement innovative approaches and best practices.

Though much work has been done, the City recognizes there is still much more to do, and that we must continue to learn and implement creative approaches as we create a city that is accessible for all. The spirit of “nothing without us”, borrowed from the Federal Accessibility Strategy, is embedded in our work and commitment to a fully inclusive and accessible City as staff continue to engage regularly with people with disabilities. The Accessibility Office will continue to demonstrate leadership and share resources and knowledge, while continually striving to learn from our partners in accessibility.

Finally, the AO will continue to update the Province, Council, the AAC and the general public on the status of the City’s compliance with the AODA and the accessibility of our services, programs and facilities through these annual updates.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to Committee and Council’s approval of the recommendations of this Report.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

This is a City wide report.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS

A special meeting was held with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on March 21, 2023 to consult on the content in this report, which highlights some of the accessibility accomplishments and challenges in 2022. Due to the timing of the previous members' term ending, the AO has summarized the feedback they provided at this meeting below.

The AAC is pleased with the City's commitment to ensuring accessibility in its programs, facilities, and services. However, members continue to express that more communication is needed to ensure all residents are informed about accessibility initiatives. Members specifically encouraged the City to consider creating a primer document to support the public in understanding Committee and Council reports, including all the of Impacts sections. Members emphasized this document must be in plain language and explain the significance and the rationale of all Impacts sections included in reports.

Along these same lines, members also encouraged the City to create supporting documents and a presentation to support the new members of the AAC, who started their term March 22, 2023, to understand the COMAP consultation process and other AAC specific requirements.

As noted in this report, the AAC also encouraged the development of further stakeholder engagement related to emergency planning for persons with disabilities, including further promotion of tools and resources available both before and during an emergency.

Finally, members noted they would also like to know more about the challenges of procurement that meet both accessibility requirements as well as bilingual requirements, as per the City's bilingual policy.

CONSULTATION

Thorough consultation was conducted to develop the current 2020-2024 Accessibility Plan and more information can be found on this in the [2020 COMAP Report](#). As stated in the report, the AAC plays an important role in providing accessibility feedback on City initiatives. Throughout the year, they are consulted on many projects, services and programs. As requested by the AAC, the entire Committee is consulted on this report as part of a special meeting.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

All information and initiatives outlined in this report aim to remove or reduce barriers to accessibility in the areas of customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation, and procurement. The initiatives in this report aim to positively impact a wide range of persons with disabilities, and diverse persons with disabilities.

Each year, the City of Ottawa demonstrates its commitment to accessibility by consulting with the AAC on City projects that advance the accessibility agenda for City residents, visitors and employees in line with Council's Strategic Priorities.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Many of the initiatives in this report positively affect the City's built environment and apply the City's Comprehensive Asset Management Policy Guiding Principles. They are customer focused and better enable its assets to meet future challenges, including changing demographics and populations, customer expectations, legislative requirements, technological and environmental factors. COMAP initiatives continually improve City assets to meet the needs of the City's residents, visitors and employees with disabilities. Work undertaken follows the City's ADS.

Comprehensive Asset Management (CAM) is an integrated business approach involving planning, finance, engineering, maintenance and operations geared towards effectively managing existing and new infrastructure to maximize benefits, reduce risk and provide safe and reliable levels of service to community users. This is accomplished in a socially, culturally, environmentally and economically conscious manner.

The initiatives documented in this report are consistent with the City's CAM Program objectives. The City of Ottawa's Municipal Accessibility Plan supports a forward-looking approach to meet future challenges, including changing demographics and populations, legislative and environmental factors.

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Accessibility considerations are reviewed for projects that can positively affect the climate. Examples for 2022 are the EV charging stations and Electric bus purchases. Reviewing the accessibility and environmental impacts in a coordinated way ensures a better more inclusive and environmentally sound product and service to all residents.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The AODA, which governs the work outlined in this report, has specific and general exceptions in the Design of Public Spaces Standards of the IASR, which protect the environment as described below:

Clause 80.15 Exceptions, general:

Exceptions to the requirements that apply to recreational trails and beach access routes are permitted where obligated organizations can demonstrate one or more of the following:

1. The requirements, or some of them, would likely affect the cultural heritage value or interest of a property identified, designated or otherwise protected under the Ontario Heritage Act as being of cultural heritage value or interest
2. The requirements, or some of them, would affect the preservation of places set apart as National Historic Sites of Canada by the Minister of the Environment for Canada under the Canada National Parks Act (Canada)
3. The requirements, or some of them, would affect the national historic interest or significance of historic places marked or commemorated under the Historic Sites and Monuments Act (Canada)
4. The requirements, or some of them, might damage, directly or indirectly, the cultural heritage or natural heritage on a property included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's World Heritage List of sites under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.
5. There is a significant risk that the requirements, or some of them, would adversely affect water, fish, wildlife, plants, invertebrates, species at risk, ecological integrity or natural heritage values, whether the adverse effects are direct or indirect.
6. It is not practicable to comply with the requirements, or some of them, because existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces or features, such as where surrounding rocks bordering the recreational trail or beach access route impede achieving the required clear width. O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.

INDIGENOUS GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

Through discussion with the City's Indigenous Relations Branch, the AO has learned that their research shows that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately likely to experience disability, including mental health disability, in comparison to the general population. In our work to increase accessibility for all, the City strives to be mindful of Indigenous peoples, and work to build relationships to ensure the full inclusion of Indigenous persons with disabilities. This is reflected in the 2020-2024 COMAP as part of our commitment to an inclusive accessibility plan.

In developing the 2020-2024 COMAP, the AO included Indigenous organizations in its outreach. Staff continue to share information with Indigenous organizations in communications, and has also sought advice from the City's Indigenous Relations Specialist on how to develop relationships with organizations that support Indigenous persons with disabilities. These efforts will continue.

The AO recognizes that COVID-19 and other emergency situations have disproportionately impacted people with disabilities, and these impacts are even greater for women and gender diverse persons, as well as other equity-deserving groups. When communicating with the public, the AO ensures that community organizations representing women and gender diverse persons with disabilities are included. Information is shared through social media, by email and through community organizations to ensure a broad outreach.

The AO participates on the cross-departmental Women and Gender Equity Team, to ensure that women and gender diverse persons with disabilities are represented in the Women and Gender Equity Strategy.

The AO continues to work closely with the AAC, which includes diverse gender representation amongst members, to inform our work.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risk implications with this report are associated with non-compliance with the AODA legislative obligations.

The AODA states that if it is found that a person or organization has contravened a provision of an accessibility standard or of any other regulation, the director may, by order, require the person or organization to do either or both of the following:

1. Comply with the accessibility standard or other regulation within the time specified in the order.
2. Subject to subsection (6), pay an administrative penalty in accordance with the regulations.

If a person or organization fails to comply with an order and no appeal of the order is made within the time specified, a director may, make an order requiring the person or organization to pay an administrative penalty in accordance with the regulations.

Every person who is guilty of an offence under the AODA is liable on conviction,

- (a) to a fine of not more than \$50,000 for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur; or,
- (b) if the person is a corporation, to a fine of not more than \$100,000 for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur.

As stated above, the City has reported non-compliance to the Province with respect to section 14 Websites and Web Content standards of the IASR in 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021. The City updated its compliance plan agreement with the Province in 2020. The 2020 Compliance Plan Agreement is included in **Document 5** of this report and an update was provided in 2022 (**Document 6**). The agreement outlines the measures that the City is taking to meet the legislated requirement. General Managers have been made aware of this risk.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

The initiatives in this report have a positive impact on people with disabilities across the City. Many initiatives contained in this report also benefit rural residents. Rural facilities are included in the City's Retrofits program which allows for major upgrades to accessibility features.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

As described in the WCAG sections of this report, technology plays a significant role in providing the City with the ability to meet the AODA accessible websites and web content clauses. The dedicated resources of the Technology Branch and the Web Services Branch are invaluable to the corporation in meeting and maintaining compliance with section 14 of the IASR. All City departments are engaged in the WCAG Implementation Strategy which strives to meet AODA compliance as soon as practicable given COVID 19 complications.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The City of Ottawa accessibility initiatives outlined in this report directly impact and support Council's Strategic Priorities. All departmental initiatives are designed to advance equity and inclusion for the city's diverse population through continuous planning and execution of barrier removal in all City programs, services and facilities. Intersectionality also is considered in accessibility plans ensuring alignment with other City efforts included but not limited to the efforts of the Women and Gender Equity Strategy, the Anti-Racism Secretariat and the Reconciliation Action Plan.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Web Accessibility Policy

Document 2 – AODA Training Plan

Document 3 – COMAP 2023 Update (Resident Facing Report)

Document 4 – 2020-2024 COMAP Initiatives - Updates

Document 5 – City of Ottawa WCAG Compliance Agreement Plan

Document 6 – City of Ottawa WCAG Compliance Agreement Plan Update 2022

Document 7 – City of Ottawa Submission – 4th Review of the AODA

Document 8 – Accessibility Impacts Statement Section in Committee and Council Reports

Document 9 – AAC Motion: E-scooters Pilot Project Update 2022

DISPOSITION

The City of Ottawa's efforts to meet its legislated accessibility requirements under the AODA and IASR is a corporate wide effort coordinated through the Corporate AO. Specific initiatives, goals and programs outlined in the five-year plan have been assigned to operational departments and progress is monitored by the Office of the City Clerk. All City departments are responsible for the implementation of the City's COMAP plan and for compliance with the AODA and the IASR.