

# 2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan Consultation Plan

**Drafted by:** Corporate Accessibility Office

**Approved by:** City Council

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## Issue Statement

Under Section 4.1 of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), obligated organizations such as the City, must “establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation,” as well as “review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years.” Further, Section 4.2 of the IASR states that organizations such as the City “shall establish, review and update their accessibility plans in consultation with persons with disabilities and if they have established an accessibility advisory committee, they shall consult with the committee.”

As such, the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) is due to be updated. This consultation plan outlines the Accessibility Office’s (AO) plan for engaging with the organization, the community, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to develop the new plan.

## Objectives

- The new COMAP will both determine the status of accessibility and/or existing barriers within the City’s programs, services, goods and facilities, as well as address strategic priorities as part of the new plan. In addition to meeting our legislative obligations outlined above, we will outline how the City has worked towards the AODA’s purpose of “developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards [...] for Ontarians with disabilities [...] to become fully accessible on or before January 1, 2025.”
- The new 2025-2029 COMAP will be presented to Council for approval in Q4 2024. A consultation outcomes report will also be shared with Council at this time.

## Target Audiences

### External Audiences

Using the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook, the consultation process will include outreach to equity deserving groups. The rationale for each group includes:

- **Persons with Disabilities:** The AO maintains a list of local disability organizations and information will be shared with these groups. This includes organizations and individuals who are and/or work with persons with various disabilities including physical/mobility, learning/developmental, sensory, and non-visible. The AO will also host targeted consultations with persons who are Deaf/deafened/hard of hearing, and organizations that support people with sight loss, including the Canadian National Institution for the Blind, the Canadian Council for the Blind, and the Alliance for Equality for Blind Canadians.
- **Francophones:** The AO will work with staff in French Language Services to develop a plan to reach out to the Francophone community, including soliciting feedback from the French Language Services Advisory Committee. The AO will provide opportunities to provide feedback in French at all consultations, including AccessAbility Day, and through the online Engage Ottawa survey.
- **Newcomers:** The AO will work with staff in both the Workplace Equity, Inclusion and Belonging branch and the Social Development and Funding branch to identify organizations that support newcomers who may have disabilities for feedback. These may include the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Catholic Centre for Immigrants Ottawa, Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa, and others.
- **Indigenous:** The AO will work with staff in the Indigenous Relations branch and the Chief of Protocol to identify organizations and an effective method of outreach to obtain feedback from both community organizations and Indigenous community members.
- **2SLGBTQI+:** The AO will work with staff in the Women and Gender Equity branch to identify organizations that support members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community for feedback.
- **People living in poverty:** The AO will share information with organizations that work with people living in poverty to promote participation in the consultations, including ACORN, Salus, Options Bytown, Ottawa Community Housing, and the Ottawa Community Health and Resource Centres, and others.

- **Racialized people:** The AO will work with staff in the Anti-Racism branch to identify organizations that work with and support various racialized communities. Consultation information will also be shared with the Community Health and Resource Centres, who support many racialized groups, and the Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities for feedback.
- **Rural:** All Councillors representing rural communities will be consulted on how to engage with residents residing in rural areas. Virtual consultations also bring new opportunities to engage residents across the City.
- **Older Adults:** The AO will provide information to all of the City's seniors centres and long-term care centres to promote the consultations, in addition to the Council on Aging and other community organizations supporting older adults.
- **Women:** The AO will share consultation information with various women-led and supported community organizations, including the DisAbled Women's Network, and the City for All Women Initiative to promote the participation of diverse groups of women with disabilities. Crime Prevention Ottawa's Committee on Disability and Abuse, which works with many women's organizations, will also be contacted to participate.
- **Youth:** The AO will share consultation information to various community agencies that work with children and youth with disabilities. Through these channels, consultation information will also be promoted to parents and caregivers of children with disabilities.
- **Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC):** As required by legislation, the AO will consult extensively with the City's AAC to develop the new plan. The AAC will also have the opportunity to provide feedback on the consultation and communications plan.

## Internal Audiences

- **Accessibility Working Group (AWG):** The AWG will be highly involved in the consultation process. Members will review their department's previous COMAP initiatives, as well as review responses to previous accessibility-related feedback and resident inquiries, and feedback received through the numerous consultations conducted. This will inform discussions on new initiatives to reduce barriers in each department. The AWG also will be asked to support in-person and virtual consultations.
- **Other staff who have accessibility as part of their portfolio:** Other staff, such as those who work in the built environment, IT (Information Technology), and others

who regularly work on accessibility projects, will be invited to participate and support the creation of the new plan and new initiatives.

- Affinity Groups: The AO will reach out to the Employees with Disabilities Affinity Group to determine how they would like to be included in the consultation process. The AO will also share consultation information with all the City's Affinity Groups, including but not limited to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Affinity Group for participation and support with promotion.
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT): SLT will receive information on the consultation process and have the opportunity to review initiatives within their departments, prior to the new plan's approval.

## Public Environment Scan and Background

The AODA and its regulation require a statutory review every three years after the previous review report was tabled to assess its effectiveness. The reviewer is appointed by the Government of Ontario

In September 2022, the Province announced that Rich Donovan, recognized around the world as a subject matter expert on the connection of disability and corporate profitability, was appointed as the Fourth Reviewer of the AODA.

Throughout late 2022 and 2023, Mr. Donovan conducted several public consultations to receive feedback from Ontarians across the province regarding the progress of the AODA. In his final report, submitted to the Province in June 2023, he emphasizes the lack of progress made since the inception of the legislation. In the report's introduction, he states, "the direct and tangible threat to the lives and well-being of a quarter of Ontario's population, combined with 17 years of missed opportunities under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), I, the Fourth Reviewer of the AODA, have no choice but to declare a crisis."

Additionally, on December 1st, 2023, Statistics Canada released data from the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). This survey collects information about the lived experiences of youth and adults who may face disability-related barriers. This data is used to evaluate services, programs and policies for Canadians living with disabilities so they may participate fully in society and the economy.

The CSD found that the number of Canadians aged 15 years and older with disabilities has increased from 22 per cent in 2017 to 27 per cent in 2022. Of these Canadians, 72 per cent reported experiencing one or more types of barriers to accessibility. As a result of this increase, it is more important than ever to identify and remove barriers to ensure all Canadians living with disabilities can access inclusive services, programs, goods and facilities.

These documents and others will be analyzed and considered in the development of the new COMAP to ensure the City remains a leader across Ontario and Canada.

## Strategic Considerations and Analysis

- While the Province has not yet announced any updates to the current AODA, this could happen at some point throughout the duration of the new plan, which would have direct impacts on various programs, services, good and facilities across the City.
- Throughout the consultations, staff anticipate receiving a range of feedback, both positive and negative. This may be triggering for some participants. Staff will be trained to provide support, de-escalate, and debrief concerns with participants, within and outside of the larger group as required.
- People with disabilities are often expected to advocate and provide feedback on all areas that impact their lives. This may result in many the feeling of consultation burnout. The AO will provide multiple venues, channels and opportunities to provide feedback to ensure a wide range of perspectives are captured.
- The current 2022-2026 Term of Council priorities will be considered in the drafting of strategic priorities and departmental initiatives.

## Key Messages

- The City of Ottawa is an industry leader in accessibility, embedding the spirit of “nothing without us” to ensure our services, programs, goods, facilities and information is accessible.

## Approach

To provide the highest level of engagement and participation in the consultation process, a variety of methods and tools will be used to collect feedback. These will include:

- In-person consultations
  - In-person consultations will kick-off at the City's 21<sup>st</sup> annual celebration of AccessAbility Day held on May 30, 2024.
  - Three additional in-person consultations will take place in the late Spring, which will include venues located downtown, the West end, and the East end, and take place both during the day and in the evening.
- Virtual consultations
  - Three public virtual consultations will take place in the late Spring during the day and evening
  - Additional targeted virtual consultations will take place with specific organizations and members of disability community, as well as the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Engage Ottawa survey
- Consultation tool kit
  - To support community organizations who wish to conduct a consultation without City staff present, a consultation tool kit will be provided.

## Engagement Resources and Materials

Accessibility supports will be actively offered, including but not limited to, sign language interpretation in both American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ), captioning, ensuring the accessibility of any in-person venues, and the use of Personal Support Workers. All presentation materials will be available in accessible formats, as required. Opportunities to provide feedback will be shared through the City's social media channels, Engage Ottawa, through the Accessibility Spotlight e-newsletter, and by leveraging the relationships that the AO has established with community partners.

## Communication/Marketing

To obtain as much diverse feedback possible, the AO will use multiple approaches to promote consultation opportunities. These will include:

- City of Ottawa social media (Facebook, X, Instagram)
- The AO's monthly Accessibility Spotlight newsletter
- Communications will be shared with the Accessibility Advisory Committee for participation and assistance with promotion within their networks
- Communications sent via email to the AO's list of community organizations

## Recording, Reporting and Reflection of Stakeholder Input

The input received through the consultation process will be used to guide the development of the upcoming 2025-2029 COMAP. This plan will outline the City's strategic priorities for accessibility, and the goals and objectives of various City departments. It will include initiatives to improve accessibility and define outcome measures.

After the consultations conclude, the AO will prepare a consultation outcomes report which will highlight who participated and through what channels. It will also provide common themes of feedback and how this information will be implemented towards the development of the new COMAP. This report will be available through the 2025-2029 COMAP Engage Ottawa page, on the "Accessibility News and Events" page on [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca), promoted through the Accessibility Spotlight e-newsletter, and shared with Council with the new COMAP in Q4 2024.