

# City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2025)

## Background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (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 new 2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) is the City’s fourth multi-year accessibility plan since this legislated requirement came into effect. This is the first annual update of this new plan.

To develop the 2025-2029 COMAP, the Corporate Accessibility Office (AO) consulted widely with persons with disabilities, caregivers, organizations, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and members of the public. This annual update report was also shared with the AAC for their feedback, which is included in the Advisory Committee Comments section of the Council report.

This is the City’s 24<sup>th</sup> annual report, which provides a status update on the organization’s progress in 2024 and is divided into three sections.

The first section provides information on the City’s compliance with the AODA and the Federally regulated *Accessible Canada Act*.

The second section provides details on the City’s efforts in 2024 in the areas of community partner engagement, training, professional networks, and events. This foundational work ensures the City remains connected to the community of people with disabilities and ensures City services and training meet the needs of the community.

The third section provides a summary of the City’s initiatives which are broken down into the five standards of the AODA: Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment), Transportation, Information and Communication, Employment, and Customer Service. Document 4 provides a comprehensive update of all initiatives. As this new plan only recently launched on January 1, 2025, many of the non-legislative initiatives do not have any updates to provide from 2024. As such, a comprehensive update will be provided to Council for all initiatives as part of the 2025-2029 plan in 2026.

The initiatives and improvements highlighted in this report demonstrate the City’s commitment to meeting the legislated requirements of the AODA, as well as implementation of non-legislated advancements in accessibility, which support the

inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in Ottawa, including residents, visitors, and employees.

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 and monitor 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 is an independent, autonomous tribunal appointed by City Council, which also reports on AODA compliance with the City. Ottawa Police Services is considered a separate "large organization" and as such, reports separately.

As noted in the Council report, the provisions of the AODA, and specifically its standards pertaining to transportation services, do not apply to OC Transpo as it is federally and independently regulated. However, OC Transpo provides annual accessibility updates through the COMAP report and has committed to meeting the "spirit and intent" of the AODA. Transit Services has undertaken several initiatives towards that objective, as outlined in the list of initiatives in Document 4. OC Transpo has also contributed to COMAP, a legislated requirement under the AODA, since the requirement came into effect. This includes providing information in both the multi-year plan and the annual update report to Council.

OC Transpo will continue to provide updates through the COMAP report in addition to the new accessibility plan, mandated under the ACA. OC Transpo will also continue to adhere to the "spirit and intent" of the AODA, including compliance reporting with the City, in addition to meeting the new requirements under the ACA. All Transportation Initiative updates led by Transit Services are provided in the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan Update Report (See Document 2).

For the past number of years, there have been many changes to City departments. These have impacted the departments responsible for some accessibility initiatives, but not the implementation of the initiatives themselves. In 2024, departments impacted by these changes were:

- The Planning, Development and Building Services Department, and
- The Strategic Initiatives Department

Changes to reflect the responsibility of initiatives have been included in the 2025 COMAP Update Report. The AO worked closely representatives from these modified or new departments to ensure there were no impacts to service and program delivery with their departments' transitions.

Many of the initiatives outlined in this report have become part of regular business at the City, integrated into day-to-day operations, and staff have continued to report on their progress in the 2025-2029 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 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

### **Persons with disabilities in Canada and Inclusion Statistics**

According to the 2022 [Canadian Survey on Disability](#), published by Statistics Canada in December 2023, nearly one in three Canadians, or approximately eight million people aged 15 years and over, have one or more disabilities that limit them in their daily activities. This represents 27 per cent of the Canadian population.

The rate of disability in Canada has increased by five per cent since 2017, when 6.2 million people identified as having one or more disabilities. This increase could be partially attributed to both the aging population and the large increase in mental health-related disabilities among youth and working-age adults.

More specifically, youth aged 15 to 24 experienced the highest disability rate increase among all age groups, from 13.1 per cent in 2017 to 20.1 per cent in 2022. The three most prevalent disability types among youth were mental health-related at 13.6 per cent, learning at 9.2 per cent, and pain-related at 6.7 per cent. In fact, mental-health related disabilities marked the highest increase in prevalence among all disability types for this age group during this period, and this increase was notably higher among young women.

Statistics and studies, such as this, help guide the work of the City to prioritize the community of persons with disabilities, including but not limited to youth and women. This is reflected in several of the COMAP initiatives listed in Document 4.

## **Public Information about Accessibility Features in Parks**

As directed by [Council's motion](#) of November 13, 2024, regarding the 2025 - 2029 COMAP, staff have committed to explore options to improve the availability of information regarding accessibility features in City parks for residents and visitors.

Staff from the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS) department, as well as the Accessibility Office (AO) have met regularly to assess existing information, review and benchmark what is available in other municipalities and determine best options for ways the City of Ottawa can provide additional more detailed information on the accessibility features of its parks.

## **Current initiatives to improve accessibility of parks**

Whether constructed in a new park, or as part of lifecycle replacement of park amenities, construction is undertaken to meet or exceed current accessibility standards. While some aspects of accessible design were incorporated in historical park projects, the publication of the first version of the City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards (ADS) in 2015, made these requirements mandatory. The ADS were developed to recognize diversity, barrier removal, provincial directions, and changing demographics. They state that the City embraces the principles of “universal design” defined as the “design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”. The City does not specifically categorize parks based on their accessibility as seen in the Anchorage model referenced in the motion, however, accessibility improvements are always key considerations in the design and development of all parks. There are several design considerations to ensure parks are accessible to everyone including incorporation of the following:

1. Accessible routes: Ensure pathways are wide enough for residents with mobility devices, have smooth surfaces, and gentle slopes to accommodate all users
2. Inclusive play areas: Design playgrounds featuring equipment that can be used by persons of all abilities, including sensory play elements and accessible swings. All play equipment, park furnishings or any features marked as play equipment are commercially manufactured and must comply with accessibility standards. The

City's ability to purchase accessible play equipment is often influenced and limited by what is available from suppliers in the market. The broader industry is still evolving with respect to accessible play equipment options, which can present challenges in procuring safe and affordable options certified for use in Canada.

3. Restroom facilities: Provide restroom facilities and include required features such as grab bars, lower sinks and fixtures, power door actuators, and wide doorways. Where portable toilets are added seasonally to a park, at least one accessible unit is included at each location
4. Seating, gazebos and picnic areas: Include accessible picnic tables and seating areas with enough space for residents using mobility devices to maneuver
5. Signage: Use clear, easy-to-read signs with braille, colour-contrast, and tactile elements to help visitors with sight loss navigate the park
6. Parking: When a parking lot is included in park design, ensure there are designated accessible parking spaces located close to park entrances with clear signage and delineation.

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) plays a key role in helping the City comply with the Act and advance accessibility for people with disabilities. Throughout the year, staff seek advice from the AAC including requests to review municipal project designs, as well as request for input pertaining to city policies, programs and services. Staff report annually detailing an overview of projects and accessibility initiatives related to buildings, including those related to parks and recreation areas. In 2024, new features introduced in parks were highlighted, including amenities such as a sensory table and non-verbal communication board.

Disabilities can affect people in different ways, such as physical, sensory, emotional, or learning challenges. As such, staff strive to include different experiences for people with different abilities. The goal is to include the ability for parents, caregivers, siblings, and friends to participate in a meaningful way with a child so that there is integration into a shared play experience. Public consultations are posted on Engage Ottawa for each park project and designs are considered, and adapted, when possible, when specific needs are brought forward by the community.

## **Consultation**

To obtain a better understanding of the type of park accessibility information residents would like the City to provide, and how they would like to access this information, an online survey was launched through Engage Ottawa in February 2025. The survey

consisted of four questions to evaluate what park amenity information residents want to know about and how they should obtain the information. Accessible survey formats and communication supports (i.e. hardcopy, large print, audio, braille, etc.) were actively offered and available upon request, as well as the option to complete the survey over the phone.

There were 257 responses received from the online survey. Results indicate that amenities which allow for longer visits in park space (washrooms, shade, benches, pathways, and accessible gathering spaces) are a top priority ahead of most play amenities. Responses also indicate that digital tools are the preferred source of information, and that easy search functionality is important. There is preference for user-friendly, flexible tools that allow both precise and broad exploration of park options.

The AO also consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on this matter at their February 18, 2025, meeting. Members were also provided with the information to fill out the online survey individually to include their personal feedback based on their lived experiences.

A public delegate at the meeting spoke of their personal experience as a person with a disability taking young family members to parks and, at times, not being able to join them in play. The delegate cited that making parks accessible needs to be a citywide initiative and had some specific suggestions for improving accessibility in parks. Further, they commented that the survey only covers parks, not beaches, and that the distance from parks can pose accessibility issues, noting that they want to be able to visit an accessible park near their home.

A member of the AAC also raised a question about placing signage or having a designated spot for Para Transpo pick-ups and drop-offs, noting their experience with having this at Andrew Haydon Park was tremendously helpful. Staff responded that they could work with Para Transpo to identify suitable park locations and install signage.

## **Availability of accessibility information**

The City of Ottawa has over 1,400 parks of various ages, amenities, and levels of accessibility. On Ottawa.ca, accessibility information for each park is indicated with a “yes” or a “no”. The data captures whether there is an accessibility feature within the park, however, it lacks specificity for all amenities or how it may be accessible.

Current information on park accessibility features is inadequate to build a robust and complete public information data base. Park features are always built according to the accessibility standards applicable at the time of construction. Specific accessibility

information for new amenities added to parks is captured in the project close out report at the completion each construction project. Prior to moving to digital files in recent years, much of this accessibility information was captured in paper records. While some accessibility information is maintained within asset management tracking systems, the level of detail required to be able to accurately present that information to the public is not available for all parks. This is because in the past the standard of reporting and tracking was to indicate yes or no for accessibility for each amenity. There are instances where more detailed information may be captured, for example, there may be notes that there is an accessible swing, however it does not specify whether it is a bucket or a glider swing. Information that may be important to someone looking to plan their park visit and know with a degree of certainty that they would be able to fully access the amenities. This creates a challenge to use existing records to present accurate and detailed information to the public to help plan their park experience.

## **Opportunities**

To improve access to information for residents in the short term, staff in RCFS will develop an accessibility page that would more easily direct users to the existing accessibility information that is online for both parks and facilities with the objective of creating a more user-friendly experience. Additionally, staff will assemble and develop information for some of the most common questions received from the public with respect to park accessibility, including listing the feature parks across the city with unique, specialized or sought-after accessibility amenities and features, as well as pool and beach information. This work should be complete in Q2 2025. Additionally, results collected in the public engagement survey and from the AAC were shared with Parks and Facility Planners for their awareness and consideration in their everyday work. Staff remain committed to improving the availability of accessibility information for all residents and guests of Ottawa.

Given the number of parks in Ottawa, and the incomplete records on accessibility for many parks, staff recommend a phased approach to capturing and validating this information. For new parks or renewal projects, RCFS will work with Infrastructure and Water Services to create standardized criteria to capture accessibility attributes. There are hundreds of unique accessibility attributes in park amenities so staff will work to categorize them in a way that is informative and representative of park user needs. These criteria would then be integrated into established project processes to ensure more detailed amenity accessibility information is accurately captured on an ongoing basis into the future. A multi-year plan will be initiated to collect and validate park

amenity information within existing parks prioritizing district parks, most used parks, and consideration for geographic locations of parks to ensure there is prioritization equitably across the City. This information will then be captured within a GIS database of park information. A process will be created to ensure updates to amenities, including damage or replacement, is also captured and reflected in the data. The next step will be to develop channels to make this information to residents in a progressive way as it is developed for priority sites.

In consultation with Information Technology Services (ITS), staff believe that this project is a strong candidate to use existing technologies and methodologies to capture and ultimately display geospatial data in a clear and meaningful manner. Work on developing the data base criteria and process will start this year and will take up to two years to complete given the number of parks. Accessibility information would then continue to be updated in a multi-year phase in plan.

While a data schema is finalized, a collection program is initiated and a maintenance plan is established, staff will work to develop the end user solution for ottawa.ca. The creation of a digital tool would go through the ITS planning process which includes an evaluation from both the web user experience and web accessibility teams. The information collected from the public engagement survey would be used to help inform the requirements for the project. The final technical solution, once determined, will help inform timelines for implementation. Staff have also had some initial conversations with the digital twin team and will continue to explore this as an option when more defined needs criteria have been established. This type of solution would require a capital investment to purchase equipment that captures the park data; with the value dependant on the need identified.

## **Accessibility Legislation and City Implementation**

### **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 potential positive or negative impacts on people with disabilities and older adults and describe steps taken to remediate any negative impacts identified.

On March 27, 2012, Council approved the first Accessibility Impacts Checklist to support report writers to complete this section. To support staff in the creation of meaningful accessibility impact statements in their Committee and Council reports, as well as to improve accessibility in projects and reduce the City's risk of non-compliance, the AO developed a new Accessibility Impacts Statement Workshop in 2022 and delivered several sessions throughout 2024. Details regarding attendance and participation in these sessions can be found later in this report.

Additionally, the AO continues to provide 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 86 reports received enhanced support by the AO to complete this section in 2024. Specifically, several 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, references to legislation, and enhanced consultation commitments with persons with disabilities and the AAC.

This continued process has received positive feedback from staff across all departments and has allowed the AO to build new relationships across service areas, resulting in new opportunities to increase accessibility across the organization. Due to its success, this practice has been added as a COMAP initiative and will continue in 2025.

## **Accessibility-related Service Requests**

In accordance with Section 80.50 of the IASR, residents and visitors are invited to provide accessibility-related feedback, which is forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented, and tracked. While accessible feedback and resident inquiries have been received and responded to through various other Corporate and departmental-led complaint processes, the [Accessible Feedback and Resident Inquiry Procedure](#) was developed and approved by Council in 2024 to ensure the City meets these legislated requirements.

The AO received a total of 169 accessibility related service requests in 2024, which represents a 260 per cent increase from the previous year. The increase is a reflection of the Accessibility Office's ongoing commitment and deliberate actions to improve tracking and recording of requests, as well as increased public awareness and engagement on accessibility issues, especially during accessibility consultations in the spring and summer of 2024.

The AO continues to promote public engagement with the Office and regularly shares the channels to provide feedback through all public communications and events.

Accessibility related service requests are either first received by the AO, or through other communication channels, such as Councillors' offices, or directed through 3-1-1, and then forwarded to the appropriate department for response when necessary. It should be noted that many simple accessibility-related service requests are also handled directly by City departments through 3-1-1.

The 169 requests that were received in 2024 can be categorized into the five accessibility standards, as follows:

- 60 service requests (32 per cent), customer service
- 79 service requests (43 per cent), built environment
- 12 service requests (six per cent), information and communication
- 16 service requests (eight per cent), transportation
- 0 per cent, employment

In addition to these requests, the AO received two requests for accessible formats and communication supports.

While the City does not have the authority to enforce accessibility compliance for private businesses, the AO goes beyond its legislated obligations and takes a collaborative approach to educate businesses on their Provincial obligations, encouraging them to comply for the benefit of all who use their services or access their goods. Additionally, although the City cannot mandate accessible installations for private businesses, it can address some compliance issues through the Property Standards By-law (No. 2013-416, as amended), which ensures existing accessibility features, such as automatic door openers, remain in good working order, but does not mandate their installation. The City's Building Code Services also ensures that permits for new construction or extensive renovations include accessibility features, as mandated by the Ontario Building Code.

As a result of these ongoing challenges with the accessibility of private business, the AO, with support from the Economic Development service area, will be leading a new COMAP initiative to build accessibility competence of private businesses through education. This will be done through webinar presentations and resource sharing with Business Improvement Areas (BIA's).

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 partners, and residents to ensure that accessibility-related feedback is received and responded to appropriately.

## **City's Compliance with the AODA**

As a designated public sector organization, the City is required to submit an accessibility compliance report to the Province every two years, which was last done in December 2023. However, the AO leads this compliance reporting exercise annually to ensure all departments continue to follow the requirements under the AODA, and to mitigate any non-compliances before the next Provincial report, due by December 31, 2025.

Accessibility Working Group representatives received an orientation on the compliance reporting process in September 2024. A workbook was provided to support departments to work through the compliance attestation questions, which were 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 two exceptions: accessible websites and web content under the Information and Communication Standard, and exterior paths of travel under the Design of Public Spaces Standard. This information was previously shared with City Council by [memo from the City Clerk](#) in February 2024.

## **Web Accessibility**

Since 2015, and continued in 2021 when a higher standard came into effect, the City has reported non-compliance with Section 14 (4) of the IASR which include standards for websites 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:
  - a) success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live), and
  - b) success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

The City updated its compliance plan agreement with the Province in December 2020 and, as per the Province's request, the most recent update on its progress was submitted in June 2024 (see Document 5 for the 2024 WCAG Compliance Plan

Agreement Update). This agreement plan update highlights the resources the City has committed towards web accessibility, and the steps the City continues to take towards this goal.

As shared with the Province in June 2024, and in previous years, the wording and measurement for web accessibility requirements remains challenging. However, the City's commitment towards WCAG compliance continues with significant effort, time, and resources invested to comply with this Standard. Among the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), the City continues to be recognized as a leader in this area. The Province also recognizes the City's leadership in web accessibility, with two City staff participating in the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility WCAG Advisory Panel in 2024 to inform legislative directions.

This leadership is also demonstrated by the expertise of staff, many of whom have completed the International Association of Accessibility Professionals certification program to become a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC), Certified Professional in Web Accessibility (CPWA), Web Accessibility Specialist (WAS) and Accessible Document Specialist (ADS). Staff have also completed the NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access) Expert certification.

The City's main website, [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca), is a dynamic website containing approximately 10,100 pages published in both English and French. Content is updated on a constant basis by over 200 contributors. Over 90 per cent of current web pages conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA criteria. The City's website continues to evolve, and as new features are added, or existing content is refreshed, stringent testing is conducted in accordance with the Corporate Web Accessibility Policy to ensure it meets or exceeds expected accessibility requirements. Additionally, [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca) also contains approximately ten thousand PDF files, of which 80 per cent conform to either WCAG and/or PDF/UA standards. Efforts to improve these ratios continue.

The City also maintains a master list of all other public-facing web applications and websites, and monitors progress on their compliance status. As of June 2024, the City has 69 public-facing web applications and websites, which are owned and maintained by various departments. Approximately 50 per cent of these are conformant with WCAG 2.0 AA. The City's decision to report non-conformance reflects the sheer volume of pages and the number of content contributors that its main website and these other sites accommodate. This status acknowledges that due to the dynamic nature of content changes, it is difficult to confirm that every content element on every page within

each site fully conforms to the WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard. That said, our commitment and goal to achieve or exceed that level remains intact.

The ServiceOttawa branch works closely with the Quality Assurance (QA) team to ensure that new or updated features to all websites, both internally and externally facing, exceed legislated requirements. Across the corporation, we are now testing against WCAG 2.2 AA levels. Additionally, ServiceOttawa, Information Technology Services (ITS) and the Procurement branch have been working on developing procurement processes which reduce the risk of launching a new service with a non-compliant third-party solution.

During the Request for Proposal (RFP) and pre-RFP stages, the City is working to better articulate accessibility needs to vendors, assisting with eliminating or reducing risk to projects, and post signing of contracts and Statements of Work. The QA team consistently collaborates with client groups to incorporate accessibility considerations throughout the product lifecycle. The QA team conducts accessibility reviews and provides consultations on specific accessibility requirements for vendor solutions, well before the RFP process begins. Additionally, the QA team contributes to the accessibility-related wording and content of RFPs, prior to their posting. Once the RFP closes, the QA team tests and validates that vendor solutions meet their stated compliance levels.

Before implementing third-party solutions, the QA team works with clients to ensure vendors fulfill their contractual obligations relating to accessibility compliance. The QA team frequently meets with vendors and clients to recommend tools and process improvements to ensure compliance, both before and after the go-live of their web assets. For in-house developed applications, the QA team collaborates directly with project teams from the project kick-off to ensure accessibility features are considered and integrated into the final product.

With respect to software platforms that are not fully compliant, (i.e., Microsoft applications) the QA team works directly with vendors to identify and track accessibility concerns and re-test those platforms once fixes are provided. This ensures software applications are more accessible for the City and benefits the vendor's other clients. By adopting the approach described above, the QA team ensures solutions provide full functionality for residents on both desktop and mobile devices, exceeding current AODA requirements and enhancing usability for a broader audience.

As described above, the City is continually working towards reaching compliance with the WCAG requirement and is pleased to share its continued progress through regular

reporting or through updates to our Compliance Plan Agreement. Of note, the City received a request from the Province to demonstrate full compliance with this requirement by December 31, 2025. The AO and City Clerk will work closely with the Province on this request. It is expected that the next WCAG Compliance plan agreement update will be submitted to the Province along with the full Compliance report in December 2025.

## **Design of Public Spaces**

In 2022, the City launched the Accessibility Requirements in Construction (ARC) project, a comprehensive initiative to evaluate legislative applications for all City construction programs. The goal was to determine whether each activity qualifies as maintenance or redevelopment under the IASR. With guidance from the AO and Legal Services, a thorough assessment was conducted to ensure each program incorporates the necessary accessibility features.

During the review, it was determined that implementing certain traffic control measures such as an All-Way Stop Control (AWSC), a Pedestrian Crossover (PXO), or an Adult School Crossing Guard (ASCG) may be considered redevelopment if they introduce new elements to an existing public space or significantly alter its functionality. In such cases, the City must adhere to the applicable Design of Public Spaces (DOPS) standards and the City's Accessibility Design Standards. To ensure compliance with the IASR, the intersection must meet the accessibility requirements outlined in Sections 80.23, 80.26, and 80.27, which pertain to exterior paths of travel.

With this clarification, it was found that certain traffic control measures installed since 2016, including AWSC's, PXO's, and ASCG's did not fully comply with the IASR at the time of implementation. In some locations, intersections are missing key accessibility elements outlined in Sections 80.23, 80.26, and 80.27, including curb ramps, depressed curbs, and tactile walking surface indicators.

The City is pleased to report that ten locations received retrofits in 2024. Two additional non-compliant locations were discovered and added to the list. As such, a total of 89 locations remain non-compliant, with another ten locations currently planned to receive retrofits in 2025. A total of 99 locations have been identified as non-compliant (see full list in Document 7), all of which will be addressed by or before 2029 through the Pedestrian Accessibility and Intersection Ramping (PAIR) Program. Remediation will be carried out as stand-alone projects submitted to Infrastructure Services Design & Construction or, where feasible, integrated into future roadway resurfacing,

infrastructure projects, or other transportation initiatives. Supplemental funding from the Road Safety Action Plan Program will continue to support these retrofits until all locations meet legislative compliance.

The City has submitted a subsequent Compliance Plan Agreement to the Province concerning the DOPS, along with the Provincial Compliance Report in December 2024 (see Document 6). Updates will be provided to the Province as requested and to Council through this annual report. At this time, Council has approved \$2 million in funding from the 2025 Road Safety Action Plan program. This funding is supplemental to the Council-approved 2025 PAIR program budget. A review is currently underway to identify which locations are now planned to receive retrofits throughout 2025.

The City remains committed to delivering accessible infrastructure for residents and will prioritize future projects that address urgent public safety concerns while ensuring compliance with IASR requirements at the time of implementation. Any newly warranted traffic control measures will only be introduced if they fully meet IASR standards. Through ongoing education and discussions led by the AO, with support from Legal Services, staff are now better equipped to identify when regulatory standards apply and to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance.

To support staff in ensuring that further non-compliances do not occur in future projects, staff in Public Works created and distributed a reference guide related to legislated accessibility requirements due to minor modifications at existing intersections. Within this document, relevant sections of the legislation are referenced, along with scenarios and explanations, to provide clear and comprehensive information regarding the legislative requirement under the AODA to upgrade accessibility features at any redeveloped pedestrian crossings. Work continues to create a more fulsome guide to be used across City projects.

The Accessibility Office equally remains engaged through the planning and design process of numerous built environment projects across the city through both formal and informal consultations, including participating in Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings. Through these consultations, the AO can ensure staff not only meet the legislated requirements under the Design of Public Spaces standard, but also are providing the highest level of accessibility within the built environment, based on industry best practises and previously received community feedback.

## **Provincial Accessibility Legislation Reviews and Development**

Provincial Standards Development Committees (SDCs) include representatives from various sectors, including businesses, municipalities, and people with disabilities, who make recommendations on how to improve and develop new standards set out by the AODA. These committees are responsible for developing and/or reviewing accessibility standards in Ontario in five key areas: Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, and the Design of Public Spaces.

Each accessibility standard is required to be reviewed five years after it becomes law to determine its impacts and make improvements, if required. The committees put forward initial recommendations for public feedback to help them draft their final recommendations to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility for consideration. The Province has now received final recommendations from the SDC's for all accessibility standards. The final Committee, regarding the Design of Public Spaces (DOPS), was formed in 2022 and includes a member of the City's AO. The Province released the Committee's recommendations in June 2024 and the AO sought feedback from all departments, especially those impacted most by these recommendations, and through the City Clerk's delegated authority, provided comprehensive feedback to the Province on the recommendations for consideration in August 2024.

Additionally, in the summer 2023, the Ministry established another SDC to undertake an evidence-based and focused review of the Customer Service Standard for the second time, since the original draft recommendations on the Standard were submitted to the Province in 2014. The Province released this Committee's recommendations in October 2024 and, once again, the AO solicited and coordinated feedback from all departments. Feedback will be reviewed by the Committee before submitting final recommendations to the Province.

The City Clerk did submit feedback on behalf of the City in early February 2025. It is expected the Customer Service SDC will review all submitted feedback and prepare their final recommendations following the Provincial election as well.

During discussions with the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), Provincial staff have stated that they will look to make comprehensive legislative changes, based on the recommendations of the various SDCs.

## Accessible Canada Act Development

The 2024-2026 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, under the City's Transit Services Department, is the first to be developed to meet legislative responsibilities under the *Accessible Canada Act*. Since some OC Transpo bus routes extend beyond provincial borders, its services fall under Federal regulation. While the ACA is a relatively recent, enacted in 2019, OC Transpo has long committed to designing and delivering services that align with the City's accessibility standards as captured through the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP), as well as the Provincial legislation under the AODA. This includes ongoing compliance reporting through the City's AODA Compliance Report and adherence to all AODA requirements, including all Standards under the IASR. All City departments, including OC Transpo, actively contribute to the multi-year plan and provide annual COMAP updates to City Council.

The development of this plan involved a thorough assessment of the accessibility of OC Transpo's services. Extensive engagement with persons with disabilities, community organizations, the public, and the City's AAC helped identify existing barriers. Further consultations with public members of the City's Transit Advisory Working Group will take place, and their feedback will be incorporated into the second iteration of this plan after 2026. As the plan evolves, these groups will continue to play a key role in providing feedback and guidance.

Excluding OC Transpo, the City and its facilities, programs, and services are not subject to the ACA. However, the AO has been closely monitoring the development of its standards, particularly in areas that may extend beyond provincial legislation. Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC), the organization responsible for establishing accessibility standards under the ACA, operates based on seven principles that closely align with those of the AODA.

- Employment
- The built environment
- Information and communication technologies
- Communication (other than information and communication technologies)
- The procurement of goods, services and facilities
- The design and delivery of programs and services
- Transportation

During the 2023-2024 reporting period, three new accessibility standards were published by ASC, in collaboration with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) group. These standards represent “another step towards contributing to a more inclusive and barrier-free Canada” and include:

- Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services (May 2024)
- Employment (December 2024)

In addition to these standards, 12 others are currently under development. These include:

- Accessible and equitable Artificial Intelligence systems
- Accessible Procurement
- Accessible Ready Housing
- Accessible Service Delivery
- Accessible Tourism
- Accessible travel journey
- Employment
- Existing Built Environment
- Emergency Measures
- Heritage Buildings and Sites
- Outdoor spaces
- Emergency egress (exit)
- A model standard for the built environment - accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the Accessible Canada Act
- Wayfinding and signage
- Plain language
- Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services

A member of staff currently participates on the Committee for, “A model standard for the built environment.” This allows the City to actively contribute to standards development, demonstrate leadership and learn from other experts in the field.

Though Delegated Authority (By-law No.2025-69), the City Clerk will execute and file with the designated federal authority all accessibility reports and other information as required under the ACA.

The AO will continue to collaborate with ASC on the development and implementation of its standards, assessing their potential impact on the City as Provincial legislation evolves. Additionally, the AO will actively monitor legislative developments and reviews

at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels to ensure compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements.

## **Accessibility Working Group**

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

In general, this group meets approximately ten 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 2024 included, but is not limited to:

- The development of the 2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan
- The development of the 2024-2026 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan
- Consultations with members of the public
- 2024 AccessAbility Day
- 2024 International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- Accessible Feedback and Resident Inquiry Procedure
- 2025 Corporate Compliance Attestation
- 2025 Accessibility-related items as included in the Draft Budget
- Feedback on Provincial accessibility standards recommendations
- Department specific accessibility feedback and responses to residents

The AO would like to thank all AWG representatives for their commitment and dedication to increasing accessibility across the organization in 2024.

## **2024 Partnership Engagement, Training and Events**

### **City of Ottawa Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a legislated committee that provides guidance to City Council and staff on accessibility issues affecting persons with

disabilities and older adults in Ottawa. In addition to the City's mandated duty to consult with the AAC under the AODA, City Council and staff may also seek input on various projects that benefit from an accessibility lens. Members of the public are welcome to attend, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation is provided, as well as an active offer to provide any other accessible format and communication support upon request, and the AO shares meeting details in advance with interested community partners via email, e-newsletters, and on [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca).

Staff engage with the AAC through in-person meetings, emails, working groups, site plan reviews, Environmental Assessment Studies, and Revitalization Project consultations. Each year, hundreds of projects are also assessed during the annual Duty to Consult meeting.

Throughout 2024, the AAC consulted on roughly 22 projects during the eight regularly scheduled meetings. This does not include the annual duty to consult meeting, which includes consultation on hundreds of planned capital projects for the year. Some projects of note include:

- The Ottawa Hospital to Dow's Lake LRT Station Multi-use Connection Environmental Assessment Study
- O-Train Operations Transition to Push-Button Doors
- Lansdowne 2.0 Phase 1 Event Centre, as well as North Side Stands Accessibility Design
- Traffic and Parking By-law Amendments: Accessible Parking
- E-Scooter Pilot Project
- City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan Consultations

On projects that are politically sensitive in nature, the Committee also offers input where accessibility must be balanced with other priorities. When necessary, members have posed challenging questions to staff to ensure that accessibility for older adults and persons with disabilities is upheld, prioritized, and enforced. They have also advocated for greater transparency in accessibility-related decision making so that residents can understand the rationale.

AAC members can serve for up to two terms, and about half of the previous members have returned for the current term. Their time and expertise play a vital role in making the City more accessible for everyone.

The City is extremely grateful for the support and guidance provided by the members of the AAC, and would like to express gratitude to members for their valuable contributions. Their efforts help staff and Council promote inclusion for persons with

disabilities while identifying and removing physical, social, and attitudinal barriers in municipal planning, design, and decision-making.

## **Community Partner Engagement**

Engagement with persons with disabilities was the primary focus in the development of the 2025-2029 COMAP and will continue to be a priority of the AO in 2025. Supported by the AO, several other departments have also begun to develop relationships through targeted engagement with persons with disabilities.

In 2024, City staff continued coordinating 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), the Ottawa Disability Coalition (ODC) and the National Capital Association of the Deaf (NCAD). The AO has also recently established a new relationship with the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) and are very appreciative of their feedback provided to ensure persons who are D/deaf can participate equitably in all City services, programs, goods and facilities.

During these consultations, City staff received feedback and concerns from the community regarding City infrastructure, programs, and services. These targeted consultations also serve to inform City staff of trends and new developments, which inform priorities and COMAP initiatives in the coming years.

In the spring of 2024, the AO worked with staff in various departments to organize site visits with community partners. In collaboration with staff from Traffic Engineering and Signal Design and Construction, staff visited two intersections along Scott Street to discuss signal pole placement and the legislated requirements under the IASR. Participants who are blind or have low vision were specifically invited to attend this site visit, including representatives from the CNIB and the AEBC. Valuable feedback was received regarding the importance of pole placement consistency which then supports pedestrians with vision loss align themselves with the tactile walking surface indicator and corresponding crossing.

In collaboration with staff in Transportation Engineering regarding the accessibility of roundabouts specific to pedestrians, a second site visit took place in the fall of 2024. Participants included representatives from the CNIB, the AEBC, the ODC, the City's AAC, and the Co-Chair of the Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Committee within the Council on Aging of Ottawa. Feedback provided by participants was well received and will help inform the development of the Roundabouts for Complete Streets Design Guide.

Finally, in collaboration with staff in Standards and Quality Management and Municipal Design and Construction, a third site visit took place in the late fall 2024 to the recently completed pedestrian pathway along the Mackenzie King Bridge. Participants included representatives from the CNIB and the AEBC who were asked to assess the tactile delineation plates that had been recently installed along this site. Due to structural limitations, the existing bridge could not accommodate a half-height curb to separate the pedestrian and cycling pathways across the bridge, as is the current City practice. Therefore, as part of the bridge design, staff initiated a pilot project to test these tactile plates. The pilot also included the implementation of black concrete for the cycle tracks to enhance the colour contrast between the pedestrian and cycling facilities. The input from community members will be incorporated into the pilot project report, which will inform future updates to design guidelines and standards related to the delineation between pedestrian and cycling spaces.

The City has a strong relationship with representatives from all these organizations and consultations and meetings will continue in 2025. The AO is also exploring new opportunities to build relationships with other community organizations, including those who represent persons with disabilities with other intersectional identities, including Indigenous communities and newcomers.

Many of these representatives are volunteers within their organizations and are very generous with their time and expertise. Staff would like to thank these community partners for their time and continued efforts to ensuring the City is accessible for all residents.

## **Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals**

Since 2019, the City has taken the lead in coordinating 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 leading role in sharing information and resources within this group, especially with smaller municipalities and regions, and receives a wealth of information and support from its members.

In 2024, the City supported two hybrid ONAP conferences, hosted by York Region and the City of London. The City's AO continued to organize and facilitate sessions, as well as present and share resources. Both meetings were attended by staff from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, who spoke to developments within the Ministry and progress updates regarding Standard Development Committees, and supports to municipalities regarding enforcement of the AODA, especially with private business non-compliances that are outside of its jurisdiction.

The City will continue to coordinate this group in 2025, as well as play a lead role in the facilitation of any future in-person conferences and virtual meetings.

## **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

In 2024, the City remained a member of the CAN Advisory Committee. All members of staff in the AO also participate respectively in the Education and Training, Policy, and Research, Design & Innovation Communities of Practice.

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 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 COMAP.

As part of the partnership with CAN, the City attended the inaugural CAN Business Meeting and celebration of CAN's fifth anniversary. This event took place on December 2 and 3, 2024, at Carleton University, and was hosted by the Accessibility Institute and CAN National Office. CAN members came together to network, discuss and participate in professional development sessions and hear from leaders in accessibility with keynote speeches and panels.

## **International Association of Accessibility Professionals**

As of the end of 2024, all members of the AO either renewed or became members of the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP), with one member being a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC). It is the intention of the remainder of the team to work towards the CPACC in the coming years.

The mission of the Association is to define, promote, improve, and diversify the accessibility profession globally through certification, education, and networking to enable the creation of accessible products, content, services and environments.

As a not-for-profit, membership-based organization, the IAAP serves as a valuable resource for individuals and organizations focused on accessibility, helping them build their skills and strategies in this area. Its mission is to support accessibility professionals and assist organizations in seamlessly integrating accessibility into their services, products, and infrastructure. Additionally, the City benefits from this membership by gaining access to global accessibility experts, educational opportunities, and best practices that enhance its accessibility efforts. The City continues to take advantage of these learning opportunities through the IAAP.

## **2024 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 completed as soon as is practicable.

A revised training plan for all City employees, volunteers and third-party contractors was approved by Council in May 2023, outlining all mandatory and optional accessibility-related training available, as well as intended participants.

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. The online Accessibility Training for External Contractors/Consultants course is comparable in content to the online session completed by City employees.

Throughout 2024, training sessions facilitated by the AO were offered both virtually and in person, depending on the needs and number of the participants. Both options will continue to be offered by the AO throughout 2025.

To ensure staff receives training that is "appropriate to their duties," the following themed AODA related trainings are offered and available for staff, which are described further in this report:

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

### **AODA: Accessibility for All Training**

As of December 31, 2024, over 88 per cent of City employees have completed the Corporate-wide AODA: Accessibility for All training. This is a 1 per cent increase from 2023, and most departments (15 out of 18) are sitting at a 90 per cent or higher compliance rate. The AO understands new staff are trained as soon as practicable, which can be challenging due to time constraints and service delivery expectations; however, compliance is monitored through the City's Human Resources hubs to ensure training is completed. A total of 5,166 individuals completed the AODA: Accessibility for All training last year, including part-time and seasonal hires.

The breakdown by language was as follows:

- English: 2,593
- French: 2,573

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 and covers all Standards. The AO continues to provide support to staff across the organization on accessibility-related questions and concerns related specifically to their positions and department's business.

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 leaves 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.

## **AODA Management Compliance Training**

Managers and supervisors at or above Level 6 must 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 gain accessibility knowledge related to their roles, understand accommodations for staff with disabilities, and ensure they and their staff meet the requirements of the AODA.

The AO worked closely with members of the AWG and other City staff to organize intact sessions for staff in departments, including three sessions specifically for Ottawa Public Library managers and supervisors, including both the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Deputy CEO. These sessions were delivered in-person at the Greenboro library branch to meet the operational needs of participants.

As such, in 2024 the AO facilitated eight training sessions, including these three intact sessions for staff in OPL, with a total of 254 staff in attendance across all sessions. Corporate and in-tact training sessions will continue to be offered in 2025 either virtually or in-person to meet the needs of staff.

## **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 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.

The AO facilitated two intact Accessible Procurement workshops with staff in Community and Social Services in 2024, and these sessions are actively offered and available to all departments upon request. The AO also facilitated a presentation in 2024 during an AWG meeting, in collaboration with staff in Supply Services, on accessibility considerations during the procurement process and contract administration.

Over 900 employees have attended this workshop to-date. Accessible procurement resources continue to be shared by the AO on a regular basis with staff who are required to complete accessible procurement tracking.

## **Accessible Documents Training**

In 2024, 20 staff were trained to produce accessible documents using Microsoft Word. An additional 10 staff were trained to produce accessible Portable Documents (PDF). Additional individualized support was also provided by staff in ServiceOttawa to ensure staff were comfortable in the remediation of their documents.

## **Accessibility Impacts Statement Training**

As previously noted, to support staff across the Corporation to write meaningful Accessibility Impacts statements in their Committee/Council reports, the AO developed a new workshop in 2022 intended for report writers, project managers and any staff that work in policy development and the legislative agenda. The workshop 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 2024, the AO facilitated four sessions with staff across the organization in nearly all departments. All sessions were nearly full at capacity, with a total of 40 staff trained, and participants provided positive feedback on the content. They also indicated they had a better understand and ability to produce accurate and meaningful statements on future reports.

## **Accessibility Training for Volunteers**

All City volunteers must complete AODA training as part of their onboarding. In 2024, 259 new volunteers completed this training, 96 more than those trained in 2023.

## **Procurement**

The Corporation remains committed to ensuring that all City purchases incorporate accessible design, criteria, and features in accordance with Section 5 of the IASR. Whenever possible, accessibility considerations are integrated into procurement processes, regardless of the purchase amount.

In 2023, Supply Services awarded 1,151 new contracts (including optional extensions) valued above \$25 thousand under delegated authority, totaling approximately \$1.1 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 record accessible procurement under \$25 thousand using the Monthly Procurement Tracking form, following an increase from \$15 thousand in 2024 due to the update to the Procurement By-law (No. 2000-50). Departments that track by exemption are encouraged to remind staff involved in purchasing to prioritize accessibility whenever feasible. In most cases, exempted departments primarily procure items listed as non-practicable. By incorporating accessible design, features, and criteria into all City purchases, the City ensures that products, information, and public facilities remain accessible to individuals with disabilities. The AO continues to provide staff with training and resources to support accessible purchasing decisions.

## **Emergency Preparedness Event**

In February 2024, staff hosted a virtual public information session and discussion on emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities. Coordinated by the AO, the session included presentations from staff in the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH) who provided information and resources with a focus on key emergency preparedness considerations for those living with disabilities.

The development of this event was largely spurred by feedback provided by Ottawa's disability community due to the increase in climate-related emergencies over the past number years, including heavy winds and tornadoes, heavy rainfall and flooding, as well as extreme cold and heat events. Additionally, given that the City is the nation's capital, political demonstrations and protests have also contributed to various recent emergency events and responses.

During the presentations, staff in the OEM highlighted the importance of personal, professional and/or community supports, assistive devices, including back-up options in the event of a power outage, as well as considerations for the management of one's health, including ensuring an adequate supply of medication, where possible.

Staff in OPH also presented on the diversity of personal experiences, and that emergency preparedness is not "one size fits all". Staff went onto explain various considerations to keep in mind for either sheltering in place or evacuating.

Following the presentations, participants had the opportunity to engage with City staff from both teams with their own concerns, questions and feedback based on their personal experiences from past emergency events.

Staff in the AO compiled all feedback, either shared during the event itself, as well as through the event evaluation survey and all communications received post-event and shared it with both staff in the OEM and OPH for their awareness and establishment of future actions and initiatives.

## **AccessAbility Day Event**

On May 30, the City celebrated the 21<sup>st</sup> AccessAbility Day at City Hall. This annual event is held during National AccessAbility week each year to celebrate accessibility and inclusion for all. This year, the theme was *Looking towards 2025 and the future of accessibility*, an acknowledgement of the goal of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* for Ontario to become fully accessible by 2025. Based on feedback, the event was held in-person for the first time since 2019, with a very positive response. The morning event was also live streamed for the accessibility of all participants.

The event began with Mayor Sutcliffe, who proclaimed May 30 as AccessAbility Day in Ottawa. Staff from the AO gave a presentation which highlighted some of the accessibility projects happening across City facilities and services, including beach wheelchairs available at select beaches, lowered counters at customer service counters and accessible hydrant drinking fountains.

Former chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and accessibility advocate, Phillip B. Turcotte gave the keynote address. Mr. Turcotte's speech centered on the commitments of the AODA, and he shared the history of this legislation, the history of ableism, the importance of building disability competent organizations who take responsibility for identifying barriers and removing them, the importance of building disability confidence with non-disabled people and the importance of building disability positive communities. A common theme throughout the keynote was the shift from viewing disability as a burden to an asset to achieving innovation.

In the afternoon, consultations began and were attended by over 150 people. The feedback gathered informed the development of both the 2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) and the first 2024-2026 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan.

AccessAbility Day was supported by many staff members from across the corporation who assisted with the event in various roles, including wayfinding, distributing lunch, facilitating consultations, and assisting with the resource fair. Some of the highlights from the resource fair included a demonstration of the City's new accessible rowing

machine, the tactile delineator plates project on Mackenzie King Bridge, and Braille books available through OPL.

## **Treat Accessibly Halloween event**

On October 26, 2024, the City hosted its annual Trick or Treat with the Mayor event in person at City Hall. Again, this year the City partnered with “Treat Accessibly,” a movement that aims to make Halloween accessible and inclusive for everyone, as well as increased awareness of accessibility during the holiday by distributing treats at the end of one’s driveway.

In this spirit, the Office of Protocol continued with initiatives to make the event more accessible to persons with disabilities, including distributing non-edible treats, ensuring queues and entrances were accessible to mobility devices, and reducing 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 participate in the accessibility initiative on Halloween night.

## **International Day of Persons with Disabilities Event**

On December 3, 2024, the City held the inaugural raising of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities flag during its annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) ceremony.

The United Nations’ IDPD, celebrated annually on December 3, is a Global Day of Recognition that aims to promote the inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. It serves as a day to promote the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities, and celebrates their achievements within the City, and around the world.

Deputy Mayor Laine Johnson proclaimed December 3, 2024, as International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Ottawa. The Program Manager, Accessibility, offered an introduction about the significance of the day. Following the opening remarks, the Proclamation was presented to Head Coach Rick Burton and athlete Kenzie McDougall from Swim Ottawa, a not-for-profit swim club that supports a thriving ParaSwim program. This Proclamation served as an important reminder of the City’s commitment towards barrier-free access to all sports and recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities.

During the event, the flag of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was raised for the first time in Ottawa. The flag, which was designed by Eros Recio, a professional dancer and member of the disability community, reminds us of our collective responsibility to overcome barriers together to create a world that is inclusive for all. The flag was first raised in 2017 during IDPD in Peru, an initiative that has since been adopted by the United Nations.

This event was an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of persons with disabilities, recognizing that work remains to achieve a shared vision of an accessible city for all, and the commitment and progress made towards this goal by the City of Ottawa.

## **2024 Departmental Accessibility Initiative Achievements**

Highlights of various accessibility initiatives and actions undertaken across City departments and service areas throughout 2024 are summarized below. These initiatives have prevented and removed barriers to accessibility in City services, programs, policies, purchases and projects.

Due to the high volume, this report does not include all the accessibility initiatives undertaken by the City in 2024. However, a full listing of the 2024 accessibility initiative outcomes is available in Document 4.

## **2024 Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment) Initiatives**

The City is considered a leader in the accessibility of public spaces. Staff in the AO often promote the City's Accessibility Design Standards (ADS), owned by the Standards Unit in Infrastructure Services, which not only includes the technical requirements under current Provincial and Federal standards, but also goes above and beyond through the inclusion of best practise information, as provided by feedback from the disability community and expert collaborators. These guidelines, last updated in 2015, will be updated within the next year, and staff in the Standards Unit have begun discussions with various internal staff groups, including the AO, regarding the scope of work, methodology and overall approach for coordinating City and external partner engagement.

Staff in the Standards Unit also lead the annual Specifications Updates, which included several improvements to accessibility in the built environment. Specifically, the Standards Unit continue to work on developing a pedestrian facilities design guide, which includes a comprehensive review of existing design practices and standards for

sidewalks with vehicle access, such as at driveways, as well as design guidelines for other pedestrian facilities including multi-use pathways, crossings, commercial plaza entries, and roadside zones.

Deviations to the City's ADS or AODA non-compliances are subject to a deviation process and documented as a requirement of the AODA. The City's deviation process for infrastructure projects is also overseen by the Standards and Quality Management branch. 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 Infrastructure Services process or follow a similar deviation process. Consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) may occur for these projects. There were three non-compliances to the ADS recorded in 2024. These included:

- Elevator Modernizations at Centre Richelieu Vanier: The existing cab dimensions of the Centre Richelieu elevator are smaller than what is included in the ADS, and due to lack of available space within the hoist way, it is not possible to upgrade the lift to allow for increasing the internal cab dimensions to meet these standards. As such, the Asset Management team will modernize the lift by upgrading and replacing the cab, locks and electrical components, while keeping the existing doors, rails, sling and piston.
- Carling and Champagne Ave. Intersection Modification: Due to the location of an unexpected gas main, the City's signal design team, in collaboration with Enbridge, determined it is not possible to relocate the signals pole to meet the requirements under the ADS to have the Automated Pedestrian Signal (APS) buttons within 1.5 metres from the curb. The solution will keep the pedestrian push buttons in the same position as the pre-existing condition, as this is the only possible location a pole will fit.

Regarding some of the City's newly constructed facilities, the Ādisōke project significantly progressed in 2024. The building's iconic roof structure was completed, as well as the installation of all the glass windows. Significant progress was also made on building envelope items including insulation, air vapour barrier, and stone to ensure the building is watertight. Inside the building, scaffolding was installed to complete the interior glass installations and much of the wood millwork, and plumbing, electrical and mechanical work is ongoing. Project partners will continue to build on the strong relationships established with Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation as programming planning for the facility begins. Staff have

invited partners from the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation to continue discussing plans for how the new library's spaces will be used, room naming opportunities, and the types of programs and services that will be offered. Ādisōke is set to open in 2026.

Other existing library branches received many accessibility-related retrofits and upgrades within their facilities in 2024. The Stittsville branch underwent construction to combine two single washrooms into one accessible universal washroom which was also equipped with an adult change table. Additionally, both the Nepean Centreponte and Rideau branches received a full elevator modernization of the mechanical systems and interior cabs. Both elevators servicing Ben Franklin Place, in which the Nepean Centreponte branch is located, were also modernized as per current standards.

Additional accessibility improvements at existing City facilities included the recent completion of the washrooms on the main floor of City Hall across from the client service centre, which now includes two accessible universal stalls. The public washrooms closest to Andrew S. Haydon Hall (Council Chambers) are currently under construction and will include additional accessible universal stalls, with anticipated completion in the spring of 2025. Other accessibility-related improvements at City facilities include, among many others, the renovated washrooms and enhancements to the concessions counter at Meridian Theatres at Centreponte, a larger and more user-friendly space for changerooms at the Ray Friel Recreation Complex, a redesigned elevator at the Navan arena, and a ramp to the Elgin Street doorway of City Hall, all anticipated to be completed by or before 2029.

Additionally, engagement and consultation regarding the accessibility of the new event centre and north side stands as part of the Lansdowne 2.0 project began in 2024. These new facilities will create a modern and welcoming venue that complies with current accessibility standards, including the Ontario Building Code, the AODA and the City's ADS. These enhancements will improve accessibility within Lansdowne's built environment, ensuring that everyone, including people with disabilities and older adults, can easily access and utilize these facilities. As the Lansdowne Partnership Sustainability Plan is implemented, accessibility will play a leading role in revitalization efforts. The design team has engaged an accessibility consultant as part of the architectural team to review standards and provide reviews and recommendations throughout the design process. Staff have also begun consultations with the community, including specific input from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), as their Ottawa office is located on the site, as well as the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee. The design team is also working with the AO to ensure that people with disabilities and older adults are engaged, and that consultations are accessible to all.

Regarding the accessibility of the City's emergency family shelters, progress continued in 2024 at the Corkstown and Carling family shelters to enhance accessibility and functionality. At the Corkstown facility, this included the development of a new communal kitchen and accessible laundry rooms, with completion targeted for 2025. At the Carling facility, accessibility improvements included widening doors for wheelchair access, and the installation of automatic door operators on some of the bedroom doors. Critical infrastructure upgrades completed previously, including the installation of a new generator, have already provided essential back-up during recent power outages. Planning for additional accessibility retrofits is underway, with the targeted completion of all upgrades at both facilities in 2025.

The AO is also working closely with staff in Public Works on a new one-year pilot project to introduce designated on-street accessible parking spaces at specific locations across the city to improve services to people with disabilities and older adults. The development of this pilot project is a result of consistent feedback from both the public and members of the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) regarding the lack of available on-street accessible parking where it is most needed. Additionally, with competing infrastructure within the public realm, including cycling facilities and streetside patios, the availability of on-street parking, in general, is decreasing. The outcome of this pilot project would determine if these spaces should supplement existing on-street parking privileges for Accessible Parking Permit holders, including the ability to park in no-parking zones with restrictions, as well as being able to park for free for up to four hours at on-street pay-and-display locations. Further consultations with the AAC on the design and location of these spaces will occur later this year.

Finally, the City is fully committed to improving accessibility in the City's public realm and regularly completes projects annually to upgrade aging infrastructure to current standards. In 2024, the Public Works department installed 11 new pedestrian crossovers at locations across the city, allowing all vulnerable pedestrians, including persons with disabilities, older adults, and children, to cross streets safely at locations where no crossing previously existed. Additionally, by the end of 2024, approximately 92 per cent of the City's signalized intersections were equipped with Pedestrian Countdown Signals hardware, and approximately 88 per cent of the City's Accessible Pedestrian Signals hardware was upgraded to the newer audible, visual, tactile, and vibro-tactile signals. This equipment ensures pedestrians, especially those who are D/deaf, deafened and hard of hearing, those who are blind or have low vision, and those who are Deafblind can see, hear or feel the pedestrian signal to indicate a safe intersection crossing.

## **2024 Transportation Initiatives**

By-law and Regulatory Services (BLRS) continued to provide financial support to Transit Services (TS) to provide accessible transportation services for persons with disabilities and older adults living in rural areas. This included \$159,218 for taxi vouchers and \$93,762 for discounted taxi vouchers. TS also provided \$856 thousand in funding to community agencies in 2024 for the delivery of other transportation services to persons with disabilities and older adults living in rural areas. \$200 thousand of the overall funding envelope was provided by the Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Levy Fund, which is generated through a surcharge paid by ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft.

As previously mentioned, to fulfil the obligations under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the AO in collaboration with Transit Services developed the City's first Accessibility Plan for OC Transpo. Reflective of its unique position as a Federally-regulated department within a Provincially-regulated municipal government, OC Transpo will continue to provide updates through the annual COMAP reporting process in addition to annual progress reports on the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan (see Document 2). It is anticipated that there will be significant overlap between the initiatives described in both plans. As such, further updates regarding Transit Services accessibility initiatives can be found in Document 4. In addition, as mandated under the ACA, the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan will be updated every three years, with the new Plan to be published by June 1, 2026. OC Transpo will also continue to be guided by the standards set out in the AODA and its regulations, including compliance reporting with the City, in addition to meeting the new requirements under the ACA.

In November 2024, as part of the initiative to procure and test software for OnDemand Transit, City Council directed staff in Transit Services to investigate options to leverage the software, or source new/existing software, to enhance booking options for Para Transpo, and work to ensure that this technology allows for service improvements, such as same-day bookings. City Council also directed staff to report back to the Transit Commission with a projection of whether increased funding would be required to provide additional capacity for same-day bookings. This is also discussed further in Document 2.

## **2024 Information and Communication Initiatives**

The AO publishes a monthly e-newsletter, "Accessibility Spotlight" which features articles on accessibility in City services, events, programs, and initiatives across all City

Departments. The purpose of the publication is to keep residents and subscribers informed on all matters accessibility related at the City.

In 2024, the AO published 13 editions of the newsletter which featured a total of 45 articles, which were distributed in both English and French. As of December 2024, the English edition was sent to 5,161 subscribers (an increase of 196 since 2023) and the French edition was sent to 270 subscribers (an increase of 19 since 2023). The AO is dedicated to keeping the public informed and continually seeks new ways to grow the newsletter's audience. In 2024, featured articles included:

- Promotion of the City of Ottawa's Emergency Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities Event
- Opportunities for engagement through the Accessibility During Construction- Site Assessments
- Accessibility Advisory Committee Updates
- New programs being offered by Ottawa Public Library
- Engagement opportunities regarding electoral experiences
- Trick or Treat with the Mayor
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities Flag Raising Ceremony

Three special editions were published to support information sharing with the public related to important events and emergency situations. These included:

- Special Events By-law Reviews
- Extreme Heat Resources
- Para Transpo Talk events

The City is enhancing services for residents by improving access to development applications, permits, and licenses through the Land Management System project. As part of this phase of the project, an accessible online public portal was launched in Q3 2024. Prior to the launch, an external consultant conducted an accessibility audit, with nearly 100 per cent of tested items passing successfully. Two low-severity defects were identified, and a plan is in place to remediate these. Once resolved, an accessibility consultant will conduct a follow-up audit and provide the City with the results.

Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services made efforts to improve accessibility of departmental applications forms during this reporting period. The Cultural Funding Unit uses an online, accessible grants management system and made continuous updates to programs, improvements to back-end functioning and the development of resources for applicants to better navigate the system. In 2024, accessible online forms were

implemented for both the Commemorative Bench Program and Commemorative Naming Program.

## **2024 Employment Initiatives**

All staff including new hires, continue to be encouraged to complete the Count ME In! questionnaire. This questionnaire is managed by the Equity Team. As of December 31, 2024, 78 per cent of continuous staff had completed the questionnaire, which was a decline in participation in the questionnaire from last year, at which time 85 per cent of staff had participated. In December of 2023, 22 per cent of staff self-identified as having a disability, compared to 20.8 per cent in December of 2024. This decrease reported representation may be due to the overall decrease in participation of the questionnaire compared to the previous year, and is close to the proportional representation of persons with disabilities within the general public. Additionally, as of December 2024, 11.5 per cent of the City's management identified as persons with disabilities, which is an increase in representation compared to 9.8 per cent in 2023.

Throughout 2024, work progressed on the LEAD IT (Leverage Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion Targets) Program. Staff from Community and Social Services (CSS) developed essential guidelines, training, tools, and resources. Their efforts aimed to ensuring the City adopts a comprehensive and equitable approach to staffing. The phased implementation of the LEAD IT pilot continued throughout the year, and currently 61 staff have completed the LEAD IT: Introduction for Strategic Hiring training, 85 staff have completed the LEAD IT: Bias Awareness for Strategic Hiring training, 55 staff have completed the LEAD IT for Hiring Managers training, and 35 staff have completed the LEAD IT for Hiring Panels training.

Bias Awareness Training for Employees and Leaders remains available for in-person sessions. These courses help participants enhance their roles and understand their responsibilities in minimizing unconscious bias within the organization and their communities. They emphasize the importance of self-reflection to identify and address inherent beliefs that contribute to systemic barriers, particularly for employees with disabilities.

In 2024, the Corporate Learning (Learning Centre) ran 17 sessions of Bias Awareness Training for Employees, and seven sessions of Bias Awareness for Leaders. Additionally, four sessions of Learning My Way were provided, which is a course designed to provide participants a deeper understanding of neurodiversity and the different types of learning disabilities to support changes that can be made in the

workplace to accommodate a neurodiverse workforce. These opportunities were provided as part of the corporate offerings and intact opportunities. To further support these efforts, in February 2024 LinkedIn Learning accounts were offered to staff as an alternative learning opportunity, providing two thousand learning licenses to the organization. Included in their course offerings are 348 modules with an equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging lens, in addition to 22 modules that are specific to accessibility inclusion. One such course example is called Inclusive Mindset, which utilizes current research and best practices to support cultivating safer, more inclusive spaces by promoting allyship, building a culture of empathy, and acknowledging common challenges such as privilege, ignorance, human error, and cultural insensitivity.

To continue to promote the City as an inclusive employer, staff in Human Resources (HR) participated in various job fairs that support job seekers with disabilities and developed partnerships with community organizations to promote employment opportunities.

As part of these efforts, HR attended 11 outreach and career fair events and conducted 28 presentations to a wide variety of schools and organizations. These engagements showcase the City as an employer of choice, and highlighted job opportunities and programs. Notable events included the Accessible Spring Fair, presented by Algonquin College's Co-op and Career Centre, in partnership with the Centre for Accessible Learning, as well as an event hosted by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) for individuals who are blind or partially sighted.

Additionally, HR planned and led the corporate Take Our Kids to Work Day event, which saw a record attendance of 150 students. This initiative provided students, including those with disabilities, with insight into different career options available at the City.

Similarly to the above-mentioned initiatives, staff in both Finance and Corporate Services along with the AO supported a collaborative working relationship with CNIB, with the goal of supporting their talent pool members obtaining employment at the City. To support this, the AO arranged for staff in Human Resources, Community and Social Services and the CNIB to attend a presentation facilitated by hiring managers to talent pool members from CNIB. Additionally, the CNIB's hiring initiatives (Mentorship, Connecting the Dots, and Come to Work) were promoted to City staff internally through Accessibility Working Group members.

Another example of collaborative work with community partners was through the efforts towards establishing a relationship with LiveWorkPlay (LWP), an organization which supports individuals on the autism spectrum find meaningful employment. The AO

coordinated a meeting between LWP, as well as staff in HR and CSSD to begin the process of a collaborative hiring partnership. LWP also presented to HR and other City hiring managers, and staff in the Ottawa Public Library also held an initial meeting with LWP. The AO also met with LWP and staff from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) to build a relationship with union representation to further support collaborative and inclusive hiring practices.

Throughout 2024, the AO worked to ensure that managers, supervisors, and staff were well-informed about accommodation plans and the Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Information (IWERI) process. To facilitate this, the AO shared information through internal communications on how employees with disabilities can create their own IWERI plan, as well as how managers and supervisors can provide support to their direct reports. Additionally, a range of resources, including a fillable PDF and instructional videos tailored for both employees and managers, are readily available on SharePoint. These videos, along with their corresponding transcripts, were recently updated to ensure accuracy and increase accessibility.

## **2024 Customer Service Initiatives**

The City is committed to accessible customer service, as included in numerous initiatives across the Corporation.

To improve the accessibility for public delegations and general participation at Standing Committee and Council meetings, new equipment was installed in Andrew S. Haydon Hall (Council Chambers) in late 2024, including a full update to the audio and visual systems to improve quality and sound in the room. Hearing loops have also been installed to work in conjunction for individuals with hearing aids or cochlear implants. City staff continue to work with the vendor to ensure optimal calibration of the system and achieve a stable state for meetings hosted using the new system throughout 2025.

All municipal governance committee meetings, including Standing Committees, Council, Advisory Committees and Board meetings, continue to be offered through either virtual or hybrid meeting participation, further promoting accessibility to participate by both members of these Committees and the public.

Staff in Employment and Social Services (ESS), in the Community and Social Services (CSS) department continued to implement tactics to increase usage of the MyBenefits tool for Ontario Works recipients to support timely and simplified access to file information, to make changes to their file, and to connect with ESS staff through the two-way messaging feature of the tool. Tactics in 2024 included engaging other

municipalities on best practices, updating signage in the four ESS offices, providing communications to community partners, and signing clients up for MyBenefits at first point of contact with ESS. As a result, 7,780 Ontario Works recipients registered for MyBenefits, an increase of nine per cent compared to 2023.

Also managed by staff in CSS, the Snow Go and Snow Go Assist programs continue to be widely utilized by both persons with disabilities and older adults. The Snow Go program provides a matching service to those who need to find a contractor or community member for snow removal, while the Snow Go Assist Program provides people with disabilities and older adults on a low-income with financial assistance for snow removal services. In 2024, the City allocated \$147,565 to nine community agencies as part of the Snow Go Assist program, an increase of nearly \$2 thousand compared to 2023.

Within the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS) department, staff continue to offer numerous inclusive recreational programs that are tailored to participants with disabilities. As funded through the Canadian Tire Jump Start charities, the City offered numerous accessible sport instructional programs to children and youth with developmental and physical disabilities, including the I Love to Ski program, teaching children and youth with Autistic Spectrum Disorders to cross-country ski, and the I Love to Play Multi-Sport program, teaching children with physical disabilities how to play racquet sports.

Additionally, throughout 2024, staff continued to assess and revise recreational programming options to increase participation for persons with disabilities. This included increasing the number of Inclusive Recreation summer camp mentors to better support the increased number of camp participants with disabilities, as well as introducing Inclusive Recreation subsidized private swimming lessons for children who cannot participate in existing class formats. Both offerings will continue throughout 2025.

Finally, staff have begun the initial research required to develop guidance and a resource list for employees who support clients who are D/deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing who require sign language interpretation to participate in recreational or cultural programming. Staff continue to meet with local community and advocacy organizations for benchmarking.

## **Conclusion**

As described in the many initiatives identified in this report, the City remains committed to ensuring the accessibility of all programs, services, goods and facilities. The AO

continues to work closely with staff across the organization to provide expertise regarding the legislated requirements of the AODA, and to ensure an accessibility lens is incorporated into all City services, programs and facilities.

As noted throughout this report, the City continues to prioritize consultation with people with disabilities, including the AAC and other disability community partners. These relationships remain critical to ensuring all City programs, services, goods and facilities are accessible and free of barriers for residents, employees and visitors.

Additionally, the City continues to prioritize its professional relationships with provincial, federal and international networks to ensure Ottawa remains current on innovative approaches and best practice regarding accessibility, and promote and share resources, knowledge, and successes on initiatives where the City is a leader.

Finally, the AO will continue to provide transparent and accurate updates to the Province, Council, the AAC and the public on the status of the City's compliance with the AODA and the accessibility of its services, programs and facilities through these annual updates.