

# City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2026)

## Background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) requires large public sector organizations, including the City of Ottawa, to establish, review, and update accessibility plans in consultation with persons with disabilities and, where an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) exists, to consult with their Committee. The 2025–2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) represents the City's fourth multi-year accessibility plan since this legislative requirement came into effect and constitutes the second annual update of the current plan.

In developing current COMAP, the Corporate Accessibility Office (AO) undertook extensive consultation in 2024 with persons with disabilities, caregivers, community organizations, the AAC, and members of the public. This annual update report was also shared with the AAC for review, and their feedback is reflected in the Advisory Committee Comments section of the accompanying Council report.

This document is the City's 25th annual accessibility report and provides an update on activities undertaken in 2025. It is organized into three sections.

The first outlines the City's compliance with the AODA.

The second highlights work completed in 2025 related to community partner engagement, training, professional networks, and events, which supports ongoing connection with the disability community and ensures that City services and training are responsive to community needs.

The third section summarizes City initiatives aligned with the five standards of the AODA: Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment), Transportation, Information and Communication, Employment, and Customer Service. A detailed overview of all initiatives is provided in Document 5. As many initiatives outlined in COMAP started on January 1, 2025, this annual report is the first to include a comprehensive update on all initiatives as part of the new plan.

The initiatives and improvements outlined in this report reflect the City's continued commitment to meeting the AODA's legislative requirements, while also advancing non-legislated accessibility measures that go beyond minimum standard, promoting the

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

Implementation of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)* of the AODA remains a priority for City Council, senior leadership, and staff across all departments and services. The City continues to work closely and collaboratively with the Government of Ontario, the AAC, and the community of persons with disabilities to implement and monitor accessibility legislation and to identify and remove barriers to City programs, services, and facilities.

In 2025, the AO continued to advance accessibility across the organization through strategic leadership, consultation, and cross-departmental collaboration. Through a new tracking mechanism, the AO provided accessibility-related guidance and support to more than 220 internal corporate projects and initiatives, and more than 90 external projects. This support ensures compliance with applicable standards and embedding inclusive design principles, not only across the City's programs, services, and facilities, but also through information sharing with colleagues and community partners across Ottawa and Ontario. In addition, starting in the Fall of 2025, the Office began formally tracking support provided to Members of Council, which included 12 occasions where staff provided subject-matter expertise, constituent support, and policy advice related to accessibility matters. This work reflects the Office's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible city for residents and visitors alike.

Although governed by separate boards, the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH) do report on AODA compliance through the City. The Committee of Adjustment, an independent tribunal appointed by City Council, also reports on AODA compliance with the City. However, the Ottawa Police Services is considered a separate large organization under the AODA and reports independently.

## Discussion

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

Data from the 2022 [Canadian Survey on Disability](#), released by Statistics Canada in December 2023, indicates that close to one in three Canadians aged 15 and older, which represents approximately eight million people, live with one or more disabilities that impact their daily activities. This accounts for 27 per cent of the national population.

Staff also utilize local data, which provides Ottawa-specific statistics to help inform our work. According to the 2024 Environics Analytics, released by Statistics Canada,

Community Life, over 300 thousand City of Ottawa residents aged 15 and older identify as having at least one disability. This represents approximately 30 per cent of the city's total population, well above the national average.

This analysis also included disability-specific data for this same population. For example, the study indicates that individuals who identify as having a pain-related disability represents the largest percentage of disability-specific data, with 20.69 per cent, while individuals who identify as having a mental health disability, as well as those who identify as having a mobility disability are the next highest in representation, with 10.66 per cent and 10.07 per cent respectively. These findings may be attributed to our aging population, comfort in self-reporting, as well as the consistent rise in mental health disabilities among youth and working-age adults.

Additionally, it is worth noting the increase of percentages of the city's population that identify as having more than one disability. While 13.7 per cent identify as having only one disability, 11.1 per cent identify as having two or three disabilities, while 7.5 per cent identify as having more than three disabilities. This data reflects the complex and intersecting barriers these individuals may face when accessing the City's programs and services, highlighting the importance of individualized accommodations. This may also reflect the increased complexity of feedback and service requests the City is receiving, which frequently involve complex accessibility considerations, resulting in increased staff time and navigation.

Findings from surveys and research of this nature inform the City's efforts to prioritize and support the community of persons with disabilities. This evidence-based approach is reflected in several COMAP initiatives, outlined in Document 5.

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.

## **Public Information about Accessibility Features in Parks - Update 2026**

As directed by Council's motion of November 13, 2024, regarding the 2025–2029 COMAP, staff have committed to improving the availability of information regarding accessibility features in city parks for residents and visitors.

Staff from the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS) department are in the process of assessing existing information, determining options for detailed data collection on accessibility features and how best to convey this information to the public.

### **Availability of accessibility information**

The City of Ottawa maintains approximately 4,572 hectares of parkland, with over 1,400 parks of various ages, amenities, and levels of accessibility. Park features are always built according to the accessibility standards applicable at the time of construction. However, information maintained on park accessibility features is inadequate to build a robust and complete public information database. The data on [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca) captures whether there is an accessibility feature within the park, with a “yes” or “no,” but it lacks specificity for each amenity or how it may be accessible.

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. 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. As such, information is lacking 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.

### **Project**

Given the significant inventory of parks in Ottawa, and the incomplete records on accessibility features, staff are developing a phased approach to capture and validate this information.

In the construction of new, or in the redevelopment of existing parks, the design process aligns with the City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards (ADS). Specific accessibility information for new amenities is captured in the project close out report at

the completion of each construction project. RCFS will work with Infrastructure and Water Services (IWS) department to create standardized criteria to classify accessibility attributes in a way that is informative and representative of park user needs. These criteria will be integrated into established project processes to ensure more detailed accessibility information about amenities is accurately captured on an ongoing basis into the future.

A multi-year project plan will be initiated to collect and validate park amenity information within existing parks, prioritizing assets based on their size, volume of use, and variety of amenities, in consideration of geographic location to ensure equitable distribution 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.

In consultation with the Geospatial Analytics, Technology and Solutions (GATS) branch in Planning, Development and Building Services, 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, within Digital Twin. Preliminary discussions on developing the database criteria and how to capture information have begun and will continue in 2026.

Staff will also explore the creation of a user interface (UI) solution for [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca). The creation of a UI 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 2025 public engagement survey will be used to help inform the requirements for the project.

The project team is working collaboratively with partner departments to determine appropriate methods for data collection and validation for each accessibility feature and amenity. It is anticipated that data collection will commence in 2026, with an initial focus on high priority sites. Updates will be provided to Council as timelines are finalized by way of this report.

As a means of improving public access to accessibility information in the short term, staff have launched a new [webpage on ottawa.ca](#). This page is intended to create a more user-friendly, centralized experience to help direct residents to existing accessibility information related to parks and specialized or sought-after accessibility amenities and features. This includes information on park accessibility, a listing of feature parks across the city that offer unique accessibility amenities, as well as

information on accessible pools and beaches, making it easier for residents to plan visits that meet their unique accessibility needs.

## **Accessibility Impacts Statements in Committee and Council Reports**

On October 13, 2011, Council adopted Motion FEDCO 10/1, directing staff to include a mandatory “Accessibility Impacts” section in all reports submitted to Committee and Council. This section requires staff to assess the report’s proposed actions or initiatives, in advance of Council consideration, for potential positive and/or negative impacts on persons with disabilities and older adults, as well as to outline measures taken to address any identified negative impacts.

On March 27, 2012, Council approved the first Accessibility Impacts Checklist to assist report authors in completing this requirement. Building on this foundation, the AO introduced an Accessibility Impacts Statement Workshop in 2022 to strengthen the quality of accessibility impact statements in Committee and Council reports, enhancing accessibility in City projects, and mitigating the risk of legislative non-compliance. Multiple workshop sessions were delivered throughout 2025, with participation details provided in the “2025 Accessibility Training” section of this report.

In addition, the AO continues to provide enhanced support to report authors by conducting weekly reviews of the legislative agenda and proactively offering feedback and recommendations on select reports. In 2025, more than 78 reports received this enhanced support to strengthen the Accessibility Impacts section. This number has been consistent over the last three years. As a result, several reports that had previously stated that there were “no accessibility impacts associated with this report” were revised to acknowledge barriers created or removed by the project, reference applicable legislation, and include strengthened commitments to consultation with persons with disabilities and the AAC.

This process continues to receive ongoing positive feedback from staff across all departments and has enabled the AO to build new and strengthen existing relationships across service areas, creating additional opportunities to advance accessibility throughout the organization. In recognition of its effectiveness, this practice was formalized as a Corporate Accessibility Multi-Year Plan (COMAP) initiative and will continue in 2026.

## 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 sent to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented, and tracked. While accessible feedback and resident inquiries are 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.

In 2025, the AO received and actioned a total of 169 accessibility related service requests in 2025. These requests are categorized into the five accessibility standards, as follows:

- 81 service requests (47.9 per cent), built environment
- 59 service requests (34.9 per cent), customer service
- 15 service requests (8.9 per cent), transportation
- 12 service requests (7.1 per cent), information and communication
- 1 service request (0.59 per cent), employment

Additionally, the AO received 1 request for an accessible format and communications support. While the number of requests received is consistent over the last three years, as noted above, the requests received are increasingly complex, requiring significant staff time to navigate multiple City programs and services, and often many responses before a service request is closed.

This year the corporation pivoted from tracking accessibility-related requests in Marval to Dynamics. The AO worked closely with the project team during the development and implementation stages to ensure that the application met the current and forecasted needs for accessibility service request tracking. Staff in the AO worked with the project team to create a tailored process document, which included specific instructions on how to perform the needed actions in the interface, in addition to guidelines for providing high quality responses to residents. The latter includes instructions to provide direct contacts to residents in case of further questions, resources to write responses in plain language and guidance to provide responses tailored to the needs expressed in the request. Onboarding departments to this new tracking process invited discussions around how to create more efficient ways to action requests, and in one department's case, has improved the response time and quality significantly.

The AO is also committed to increasing public awareness and engagement on accessibility issues. The AO regularly shares the ways that feedback can be provided during 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. It should be noted that many straightforward accessibility-related service requests are also handled directly by City departments through 3-1-1.

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. In 2025, the AO made approximately 11 courtesy calls and emails to local businesses and condo boards to advocate for improved accessibility, as well as to provide educational opportunities to private business of their duty to accommodate under both the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Where appropriate, staff in the AO collaborate directly with residents to write courtesy emails by sending them a draft prior to sending it to the private business. This inclusive and collaborative process ensures that the text reflects their needs and request accurately. 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.

In 2025, the AO collaborated with the Barrhaven BIA to produce a one-page resource that outlines the accessibility requirements for businesses and funding opportunities to increase their accessibility. This was distributed by their Executive Director to businesses in Barrhaven. This resource was also provided to a private developer who is working on improving their units' accessibility as they update their sidewalks and address clearance restraints.

Receiving 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

## Web Accessibility

Since 2015, and continued beyond 2021 when a higher standard came into effect, the City has reported non-compliance with Section 14 (4) of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* 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 last updated its Compliance Plan with the Province in May 2025 and at the Province's request, has continued to submit progress updates outlining steps made towards compliance, indicating the City's commitment to this goal. In 2025, the City Clerk was made aware that the Province would not be willing to enter into further Compliance Plans with the City related to this requirement. A report of full compliance is expected by the end of 2026, with increased pressure from the Province towards this deadline, including the risk of monetary penalties if the City does not comply.

Throughout 2025, upon request, the City Clerk submitted status updates compiled by the AO to Province in July, September and December. These comprehensive updates provided information on our progress and provided deadlines for the City's web assets to be remediated, removed or replaced. All assets are estimated to be remediated, removed or replaced by the end of 2026 (Document 7).

Additionally, due to the complexities of meeting WCAG 2.0 Level AA for all City web assets, and despite being a recognized leader in Ontario and beyond, it is unknown whether the City will be able to report full compliance in the future. While significant efforts continue, the City remains firm that WCAG compliance should be assessed in a manner that reflects these complexities, while remaining committed to the spirit and intent of the AODA and its regulation.

## Design of Public Spaces

In 2022, the City initiated the Accessibility Requirements in Construction (ARC) project, a comprehensive review of legislative obligations across all municipal construction

programs. The purpose of this initiative was to determine whether individual activities constitute maintenance or redevelopment under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR). With support from the Accessibility Office (AO) and Legal Services, programs were systematically assessed to confirm that appropriate accessibility requirements are embedded in project delivery.

As part of this review, it was determined that certain traffic control installations, including All-Way Stop Controls (AWSCs), Pedestrian Crossovers (PXOs), and Adult School Crossing Guards (ASCGs), may be classified as redevelopment when they introduce new features to an existing public space or substantially change its function. In these circumstances, projects must comply with the Design of Public Spaces (DOPS) standards and the City's Accessibility Design Standards. Specifically, intersections must meet the exterior paths of travel requirements set out in Sections 80.23, 80.26, and 80.27 of the IASR.

This clarification revealed that some traffic control measures installed since 2016 did not fully meet IASR requirements at the time of implementation. In several cases, intersections were missing key accessibility elements, such as curb ramps, depressed curbs, and tactile walking surface indicators, as required under the relevant IASR sections. The ARC project led to the development of a list of non-compliant traffic control locations, which is actively maintained to advance accessibility improvements and to monitor and document progress toward IASR compliance.

## **2025 Compliance Status and Remediation Progress**

A subsequent review conducted in 2025 confirmed that six locations originally identified as non-compliant meet IASR requirements. During the same year, one additional location was discovered to be non-compliant, and ten locations were remediated. As of December 31, 2025, 74 of the 94 locations tracked on the list remain non-compliant. In 2026, staff anticipate advancing compliance at additional locations through design and construction of required accessibility retrofits. As previously communicated, all non-compliant locations will ultimately be remediated by the end of 2029. See Document 8 for the most current list.

In December 2025, the City submitted a revised Compliance Plan to the Province related to the DOPS, along with its Provincial Compliance Report. Updates will be provided to the Province as required and to Council through this annual report. Council has approved \$2 million in supplemental funding towards achieving compliance from the

2025 Road Safety Action Plan Program, in addition to the approved 2025 and 2026 Pedestrian Accessibility Intersection Ramping (PAIR) program budgets.

### **Sustaining Compliance and Preventing Future Gaps**

The City remains committed to delivering accessible infrastructure and will continue to prioritize projects that address urgent public safety needs while ensuring compliance with IASR requirements at the time of implementation. Any new traffic control measures will only be installed where compliance can be achieved. To help prevent future non-compliance, Public Works Department staff developed and internally distributed a reference guide outlining legislated accessibility requirements associated with minor modifications at existing intersections. The guide includes references to applicable legislation, along with scenarios and explanations, to clearly outline obligations under the AODA to upgrade accessibility features when pedestrian crossings are redeveloped. Work is ongoing to expand this resource for broader use across City projects.

The Accessibility Office continues to be actively involved in the planning and design of built environment projects throughout the city through both formal and informal consultations, including participation in Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings. This involvement helps ensure that projects not only meet legislated requirements under the Design of Public Spaces standard but also reflect leading practices in accessibility and incorporate feedback received from the disability community. Ongoing education and guidance from the Accessibility Office, in collaboration with Legal Services, supports staff in recognizing when regulatory requirements apply and in taking the necessary steps to ensure compliance.

### **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 included a member of the City's AO. The Province released the Committee's draft 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. The Committee submitted its final recommendations to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility in March 2025. These have not been made publicly available at this time.

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.

The City Clerk submitted feedback on behalf of the City in early February 2025. During the Spring and Summer of 2025, the Customer Service SDC met, with their final meeting taking place on June 30, 2025. At this meeting, the Committee reviewed the public feedback on the final set of recommendations and made amendments to the recommendations from the initial report to align with feedback. The Committee has voted on the final recommendations and have submitted them to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

During previous discussions with the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), Provincial staff stated that they will look to make comprehensive legislative changes, based on the recommendations of the various SDCs. It is currently unknown when the Province will make changes to strengthen the AODA, based on its previous reviews and recommendations, and the recommendations of the SDCs. The City continues to advocate that the Province make changes to strengthen the AODA legislation, to mandate the improvement of accessibility in Ontario.

## **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 *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA), through the Business Support Services (BSS), Accessibility Function governing document. All departments, including Ottawa Public Health and Ottawa Public Library, provide a representative from their BSS unit, or comparable service area, 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.

Overall, 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 as well as external webinars and professional development learning are frequently shared with the group by the AO. Some of the work supported by the AWG in 2025 included, but is not limited to:

- The development of the 2026-2029 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan
- Consultations with members of the public
- 2025 AccessAbility Day
- 2025 International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 2025 Corporate Compliance Attestation exercise and Provincial Compliance report
- 2026 Accessibility-related items as included in the Draft Budget
- 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 2025.

## **2025 Partnership Engagement, Training and Events**

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

The legislated Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) provides advice to Council and staff on accessibility matters affecting persons with disabilities and older adults in Ottawa. In addition to the City's legislated obligation under the AODA to consult with the AAC, staff must also consult with the Committee on items included in their Workplan, which aligns with Council Strategic Priorities, including the City's Master plans. Staff may also consider consulting with the AAC on:

- City-wide services, policies, and programs,
- Projects that have a large impact on the community of people with disabilities and older adults; and
- Projects of political significance that may be of heightened sensitivity to Council due to community interest and feedback.

AAC meetings are open to the public and include American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, along with an active offer of additional accessible formats and communication supports upon request. The AO also shares meeting details in advance with interested community partners through email, e-newsletters, and the City's website at [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca). Over the last two years, there has been an increase in public delegations at AAC meetings.

Staff engage with the AAC through a range of mechanisms, including email correspondence, working groups, site plan reviews, Environmental Assessment studies, and consultations related to revitalization projects. In addition, hundreds of projects are reviewed annually through the City's annual Duty to Consult meeting.

The AAC was consulted on approximately 14 projects throughout 2025 during its eight regularly scheduled meetings, and another 6 projects were consulted on via email. This total does not include the annual Duty to Consult meeting, which involves consultation on hundreds of planned capital projects for the year. Notable projects consulted on during 2025 include:

- E-Scooter Pilot Project
- Accessibility Features in Parks Project
- Older Adult Plan 2025-2030
- Urban Design Guidelines for Mid-Rise Buildings
- Transportation Master Plan Capital Infrastructure Plan

For projects that are politically sensitive in nature, the AAC also provides input in situations where accessibility considerations must be balanced with other competing priorities. When appropriate, Committee members have posed challenging questions to staff to ensure that accessibility for older adults and persons with disabilities is upheld, prioritized, and enforced. Members have also advocated for greater transparency in accessibility-related decision-making, enabling residents to better understand the rationale behind decisions.

AAC members may serve up to two terms, and approximately half of the previous members have returned for the current term. The time, knowledge, and lived experience they contribute play a vital role in advancing accessibility across the City. The current term of Committee will end in 2026 with the municipal election. Recruitment for the new term will begin once the election concludes. The AO will work closely with Council and Committee Services to promote recruitment efforts.

The City is deeply appreciative of the support and guidance provided by AAC members and extends its sincere gratitude for their valuable contributions. Their efforts assist staff and Council in promoting inclusion for persons with disabilities and in identifying and removing physical, social, and attitudinal barriers in municipal planning, design, and decision-making.

## **Community Partner Engagement**

During the development of the 2025-2029 COMAP, engagement with persons with disabilities was the primary focus and continues to be a priority for the AO. With collaboration from the AO, several other departments have also begun to develop collaborative relationships persons with disabilities through project-based consultation.

In 2025, 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 its member organizations, the Council on Aging of Ottawa, the National Capital Association of the Deaf (NCAD) and the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD). The AO recently updated its list of disability community contacts, which now includes over 180 organizations serving persons with disabilities and older adults. When appropriate, information on events and consultation opportunities is shared with this network to encourage engagement and awareness.

During consultations with community partners, 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 will inform priorities and COMAP initiatives in the coming years.

In May 2025, staff in Infrastructure and Water Services, AO and contracted staff through Parsons met with staff from the National Arts Centre (NAC) to discuss accessibility-related feedback received regarding the exterior path of travel to the NAC, including along Elgin and on Mackenzie King bridge. Feedback from NAC staff was provided on the placement of TWSIs, audible signals and tactile delineators.

In the summer of 2025, the AO worked with staff in Planning, Development and Building Services, as well as City contracted staff through Parsons to organize a site visit of the ByWard Market with community partners. Participants who are blind or have low vision were invited to attend this site visit, including representatives from the CNIB and the AEBC. Participants provided recommendations on a design for the William and ByWard

Market Streetscape, including the positioning of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), the placement of TWSIs and the surface treatment in the proposed design.

Finally, in the fall of 2025, the AO organized a site visit based on feedback from a member of the public regarding accessibility during construction of the Stage 2 LRT west extension. The AO organized a site visit which included the Stage 2 project team, the contractor, the Ward Councillor's office and the resident. AO collaborated with the Councillor's assistant and Stage 2 staff to produce detailed notes and photos from the site visit. The feedback was compiled and sent to the contractor and a high-level list of accessibility improvements and timeline for completion was created and sent to the resident who participated in the site visit.

The AO also continues to explore new opportunities to build relationships with other community organizations, including those who represent Indigenous communities and newcomers.

Many of the representatives from community organizations are volunteers 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 addition to coordinating the group, City staff also coordinate Digital Subgroup of ONAP. As web accessibility continues to be a concern for many public sector organizations under the AODA, this allows City staff to share expertise and demonstrate

leadership in this field, as well as sharing resources and tools that support compliance with this requirement.

In 2025, the City supported two hybrid ONAP conferences, hosted by the City of Windsor and the City of Stratford. The AO continued to organize and facilitate sessions, as well as present and share resources. Both meetings were attended by senior staff from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, who spoke to developments within the Ministry and the Ministry's plans to continue to improve accessibility beyond the 2025 goal of the AODA. Additionally, the new Deputy Minister, Peter Kaftarian, attended and spoke at the Fall conference.

Through this network and beyond, the City continues to maintain a strong relationship with senior leaders and staff at the Ministry. The City also coordinated a meeting with the Association of Municipalities Ontario, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Ontario and Ministry staff to discuss ongoing compliance pressures within the public sector.

The City will continue to coordinate this group and its Digital Subgroup in 2026, as well as play a lead role in the facilitation of any future in-person conferences and virtual meetings. The City is currently leading an update of the network's Terms of Reference. Additionally, the Ministry has expressed a desire to strengthen its collaboration and engagement with the network in 2026, which will be explored further.

## **Canadian Accessibility Network**

During the City's AccessAbility Day event in 2021, the City announced a partnership with the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN). Now led by the Accessibility Institute at Carleton University, CAN is a national collaborative initiative focused on advancing accessibility for persons with disabilities through the following activities:

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

CAN promotes collaboration and knowledge exchange across sectors, disciplines, and industries to reduce duplication and leverage collective strengths and achievements in developing effective accessibility solutions. CAN is structured as a national consortium of collaborators representing a wide range of organizations across Canada, including

postsecondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, service providers, associations and foundations, as well as public- and private-sector partners.

The Advisory Council is composed of representative members from each of CAN's formal partner organizations. These members contribute a pan-Canadian perspective to the Network's efforts to advance accessibility for persons with disabilities. Advisory Council members from across the country provide advice and recommendations to the Governing Council on behalf of their respective organizations, with a particular focus on the following areas:

- 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 2025, the City continued its membership on the CAN Advisory Committee. In addition, all AO staff actively participated in CAN's Communities of Practice, including Education and Training, Policy and Research, and Design and Innovation.

The City continues to leverage this partnership to:

- enhance service excellence through innovation to better meet the evolving needs of the community
- support the professional development of current and future City leaders by engaging them as City representatives
- attract talent from across Canada by connecting with a diverse and adaptable network of professionals from post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, associations, foundations, and the private sector
- strengthen the City of Ottawa's national brand as an employer of choice
- advance safety, accessibility, culture, and the social and physical well-being of vulnerable residents, and
- promote accessible and sustainable design in the built environment to support the City's future growth and service delivery needs

This partnership provides the City with an opportunity to inform and advance the work of the AAC, AWG, departmental staff responsible for accessibility initiatives, and COMAP.

## **International Association of Accessibility Professionals**

The mission of the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP) 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.

All members of the AO are active members of the IAAP. Two members have also now obtained the internationally recognized Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC) accreditation, while another will be working towards this certification in 2026.

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, as it is a requirement to acquire a minimum number of professional development credits to maintain the CPACC certification, these learning opportunities provide access to global accessibility experts and best practice webinars and document that enhance accessibility efforts. As such, the City continues to take advantage of these learning opportunities through the IAAP to apply them to our work in advancing accessibility across the City.

## **2025 Accessibility Training**

Section 7 of the IASR states that organizations, such as the City, are obligated to provide training on the requirements of these 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 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 2025, training sessions 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 2026.

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, 2025, over 90 per cent of City employees have completed the Corporate-wide AODA: Accessibility for All training. This is a 2 per cent increase from 2024, and most departments (16 out of 18) at a 90 per cent or higher compliance rate. New staff are trained as soon as practicable, and compliance is monitored through the City’s Human Resources (HR) hubs to ensure training is completed. A total of 3,387 individuals completed the AODA: Accessibility for All training last year, including part-time and seasonal hires.

The breakdown by language was as follows:

- English: 3,332
- French: 55

Feedback is reviewed regularly, and the AO will use this feedback to make improvements by updating the course in 2027. 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, parental, and other leaves of absences. Non-compliance with the regulation is monitored on a quarterly

basis, and management, the City's HR 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, which included an intact session in December 2025 for managers and supervisors in Transit Services, as well as a session exclusively in French for Francophone employees. Additionally, tailored one-on-one training sessions were conducted with two new departmental General Managers, including the General Manager of the Planning, Development and Building Services department, and the General Manager of the Strategic Initiatives department.

In 2025, the AO facilitated six management training sessions, with a total of 204 staff in attendance across all sessions. Corporate and in-tact training sessions will continue to be offered in 2026 either virtually or in-person to meet the needs of staff, as well as in both official languages.

### **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.

While the AO did not specifically facilitate any Procurement Workshops in 2025, the team met with numerous staff to ensure they understood their legislative responsibilities in this area. Additionally, all internal processes and documents were updated in 2025 to reflect the updated Procurement Bylaw to allow for internal departmental purchases not exceeding \$25 Thousand.

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 2025, 50 staff were trained to produce accessible documents using Microsoft Word. An additional 20 staff were trained to produce accessible Portable Documents (PDF). Additional guidance is available to ensure staff are supported in the creation of accessible 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 2025, the AO facilitated three sessions with staff across the organization. A total of 22 staff were trained, and participants provided positive feedback on the content. They also indicated they had a better understanding 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 processes. In 2025, 208 new volunteers completed this training. Their training consists of general training on all five standards of the IASR, as well as accessible customer service training specifically, which is an online module administered through the Provincial Government.

### **Procurement**

The Corporation remains committed to ensuring that accessibility considerations are incorporated into all City procurements in accordance with section 5 of the IASR. Wherever feasible, accessible design, criteria, and features are integrated into procurement processes, regardless of the value of the purchase.

In 2024, Supply Services awarded 1238 new contracts, including optional extensions, with a value exceeding \$25 thousand under delegated authority, representing a total contract value of approximately \$1.8 billion. In accordance with section 5 of the IASR, accessibility criteria were incorporated into 99 per cent of all new procurements by dollar value, after excluding procurements where accessibility requirements were not applicable. Due to timing constraints in data collection and reporting, this information does not align with the reporting period of this report and is therefore reported one year in arrears.

Most departments document accessible procurement valued under \$25 thousand through monthly procurement tracking. Departments that track accessible procurement by exemption are encouraged to remind staff of their obligation to include accessibility in all purchases. Departments that track by exemption primarily procure items identified as non-practicable under the regulation. By consistently incorporating accessible design, features, and criteria into all City purchases, the City helps ensure that goods, services, information, and public facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. The AO continues to support staff through training, guidance, and resources to promote informed and accessible procurement decisions.

## **AccessAbility Day Event**

On May 29, hundreds of dignitaries, staff and members of the public gathered at City Hall to celebrate the 22nd annual City of Ottawa AccessAbility Day, which takes place annually during National AccessAbility Week. National AccessAbility Week started in 1988 to celebrate Canadians with disabilities and to raise awareness about accessibility and inclusion. This annual observance was inspired by Rick Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour. In 2025, the City welcomed Rick Hansen as the keynote speaker the event which coincided with the 40th anniversary year of the Man in Motion World Tour. The theme for the City's 2025 AccessAbility Day was *Reflecting on history: building an accessible future together*.

The event began with welcoming words from the Program Manager of the Corporate Accessibility Office. Attendees were also welcomed by Algonquin Elder Annie Smith St-Georges, who spoke to her lived experience as an Indigenous person with disabilities and the complexities of navigating this intersectionality. Following the opening, Deputy Mayor Carr proclaimed May 30 as AccessAbility Day in Ottawa, and City Manager Wendy Stephanson gave opening remarks, highlighting the City's commitment to meeting and exceeding accessibility legislation. Members of the AAC spoke to the Committee's goals and recent achievements.

As keynote speaker, Rick Hansen took the podium for his keynote and shared stories from the Man in Motion World Tour. He emphasized his vision for sport as a vehicle for social change and a more inclusive world. Rick's words were profound and inspiring for all in attendance. The opening ceremony and keynote were livestreamed to the City's YouTube channel.

As part of the event, it was announced that Ādisōke, the new Ottawa Public Library and Library and Archives Canada joint facility, had recently achieved pre-construction certification through the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program. This milestone recognizes that accessibility was integrated from the very earliest phases of design and planning. Further, the project team will also seek to achieve post-construction certification, which will ensure that accessibility is verified and maintained once the building is complete.

The event was a success thanks to staff across each City department, who volunteered their time to greet attendees, assist at the registration table, and help attendees with parking and wayfinding. Most departments were represented at the resource fair, which showcased accessibility-related projects and initiatives across the City. Some of the highlights included the new Para Transpo minibus, a traffic signals display with Accessible Pedestrians Signals push buttons and information about Inclusive Recreation programs, including integration and day programs.

AccessAbility Day 2025 was a celebration of the collective efforts and action of Council, staff, the AAC and community advocates with lived experience who work tirelessly to identify and remove barriers throughout the City of Ottawa.

## **Treat Accessibly Halloween event**

The 17<sup>th</sup> annual Trick or Treat with the Mayor event took place at City Hall on October 25, 2025. 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.

To ensure the event was accessible, the Office of Protocol offered non-edible treat options, provided wheelchair-accessible queues and entrances, and reduced sound levels and lighting effects. The initiative was promoted through social media and other external channels, including Accessibility Spotlight. "Treat Accessibly" lawn signs were also displayed at the event, and attendees received lawn flags to take home and use to support the initiative on Halloween night.

Additionally, Stittsville hosted a Treat Accessibly Halloween village, creating a safe, accessible and fun experience for all at which Mayor Sutcliffe also delivered the Proclamation of “Treat Accessibly Preparation Day.” Canadian Tire has championed 28 Villages in nine cities since 2021 to ensure that Halloween is accessible and inclusive to families with disabilities.

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

On December 3, members of the disability community, Councillors, members of the Senior Leadership Team and City staff joined Mayor Sutcliffe at City Hall to celebrate the 2025 International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which included the second annual flag raising. In addition, Mayor Sutcliffe presented the annual Accessible Ottawa Awards to two recipients, a historic first for the City of Ottawa. This award was created in collaboration with the Office of Protocol to fill a gap in community recognition of the efforts of Ottawa’s businesses, organizations and individuals who are dedicated to advancing accessibility in our city. The awards included a trophy for the individual, a plaque for the organization, as well as a plaque featuring the names of the award winners will be added to each year and will hang at City Hall.

The Program Manager of the Corporate Accessibility Office opened the event and introduced the award before handing things over to Mayor Sutcliffe for its presentation. The individual award category was presented to Kyle Humphrey. Kyle acknowledged the people who have influenced and contributed to his advocacy journey while accepting the award. The organization category was awarded to Whimble, an Ottawa-based care tech platform transforming how people with disabilities access on-demand personal care. Emma Brown, the founder of Whimble, accepted the award on behalf of the organization.

Following the presentation of the awards, Mayor Sutcliffe read the proclamation and presented it to the two award winners before guests made their way to Marion Dewar Plaza for the flag raising to conclude the event. In a reminder of the importance of collective action in the movement towards greater accessibility and disability inclusion, Mayor Sutcliffe raised the flag of the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities with Emma and Kyle.

The event highlighted how crucial our collective responsibility is to overcome barriers together to create a world that is inclusive for all. The AO would like to thank all staff, community members and Council who helped make this event a success.

## **2025 Departmental Accessibility Initiative Achievements**

Highlights of various accessibility initiatives and actions undertaken across City departments and service areas throughout 2025 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 2025. However, a full listing of the 2025 accessibility initiative outcomes is available in Document 5.

## **2025 Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment) Initiatives**

The City of Ottawa is considered a leader in the accessibility of public spaces and regularly shares best practices and resources with other municipalities. However, staff recognize that in a city as widespread as Ottawa with a diverse mix of urban, suburban and rural settings, improvements to the City's infrastructure to meet current accessibility standards is incremental, and many barriers continue to exist for people with disabilities.

The accessibility of the Lansdowne 2.0 project generated much discussion last year, including media coverage. Following Council's approval of the Lansdowne 2.0 project, the first phase of construction on the new event centre began in December 2025.

The new space will follow universal-design principles, with accessible entrances, elevators, expanded accessible seating, more accessible washrooms, and gender-inclusive dressing rooms tailored for professional women's sport. The renewed north side stands, beginning construction in 2028, will feature significantly improved accessibility, including wider concourses, additional accessible washrooms, and greatly expanded accessible seating. Construction-phase notices issued in late 2025 also affirmed the City's commitment to maintaining accessible routes through and around the site during construction, as well as providing accommodations upon request as construction works begin.

Progress on Ādisōke, the new central library, also continued in 2025 and maintains its accessibility-by-design approach. In May 2025, Ādisōke received Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Gold for its preconstruction/design phase. This distinction confirms that the building's design demonstrates meaningful access across multiple user needs and is recognized as meeting one of the most rigorous accessibility benchmarks in Canada. The RHFAC Gold rating is tied to specific, planned features supporting barrier-free access throughout the building, including

gender-inclusive washrooms, interior ramps for continuous, accessible circulation, sensory rooms to support neurodiverse users and central glass elevators offering intuitive vertical mobility. These elements demonstrate a commitment to creating a facility that is welcoming and functional for users with diverse physical, sensory, and cognitive needs.

Numerous City parks were also constructed or received accessible upgrades in 2025. Staff ensure that all new or redeveloped City parks meet or exceed AODA requirements, and the City's Accessibility Design Standards. In 2025, Father Richard Ward Park in Orleans was redeveloped to include accessible play features, an accessible swing, rest areas, accessible surfacing under the equipment and accessible paths of travel. Bluegrass Park in Kanata, Cedardale Park in Gloucester, Frank Ryan Park in Queensway Terrace, Lexington Park in Fisher Heights and Jeanne D'Arc Park in Orleans also received accessibility improvements, including accessible seating, paths of travel and play structures.

Additionally, Isaie Savage Park in Navan received accessibility-related enhancements including the installation of an accessible spinner with a fully rubberized safety surface, designed in direct response to meet the needs of a neighbourhood family. This investment reflects staff's ongoing commitment to creating inclusive, barrier-free public spaces for all residents.

Many new and redeveloped projects are also in the design or consultations phases and will meet or exceed minimum accessibility standards. New and redeveloped parks projects are posted on Engage Ottawa for public feedback.

Various City-owned facilities also received accessibility upgrades in 2025. This included both the Alta Vista and Hazeldean Library branches which received full universal washroom renovations, including the installation of adult change tables. Additionally, the parking lots at the Orleans and the Centennial Library branches were redeveloped, resulting in an increase in the number of accessible parking spaces and providing an accessible path of travel to the facility's entrance.

Under the City's Barrier-Removal program, eight accessibility audits were completed in 2025. This program also supports accessibility upgrades to City facilities, including:

- An accessible viewing platform and modernization to the elevator platform at the Navan Memorial Arena
- Upgrades to the accessible pool changerooms at the Ray Friel Recreation Complex

- Installation of an accessible ramp at the Ottawa West Community Support Centre
- Accessible changerooms upgrades at the Brian Kilrea Arena in the Canterbury Recreation Complex

Under IWSD Directive ISD-2014-04, deviations to the City's Accessibility Design Standards (ADS) are subject to a review process, documented and reported to Council by way of this annual update. The City's deviation process for infrastructure projects is overseen by the Standards and Quality Management branch. The AO is 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. Consultation with the AAC may occur for these projects. There were ten deviations to the ADS recorded in 2025. These included:

- Hilda Street and Manchester Avenue sidewalks: Due to the narrow width of the Right of Way, adjacent structures to property lines, and a minimum 4.2 metre asphalt roadway requested by Road Operations for winter maintenance vehicles, staff proposed that the existing sidewalks be reinstated to their current width of 1.5 metres, instead of the required 1.8 metres to meet the specifications in the ADS. This width meets AODA requirements.
- Grant Carman Drive and Meadowlands Drive Intersection: As Grant Carman Drive was slated for asphalt resurfacing in 2025, it was identified that the project at Meadowlands Drive could address accessibility-related concerns, including a median curb depression. To accommodate this improved pedestrian crossing, one Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) pole was relocated closer to the curb depression to meet current AODA distance requirements. However, the existing APS hardware could not be upgraded due to the older underground wiring at this site, and to ensure that it would still work in conjunction with the remaining untouched poles at the intersection. As a result, the hardware on the relocated pole does not include the "vibro-tactile" component of the push signal. It was determined by all internal staff involved, including the AO and Legal Services, that this minor deviation still resulted in a significant accessibility improvement. In the future, when the entire intersection is redesigned, the remaining three quadrants will be constructed to meet current standards.
- Jim Durrell Arena Accessibility platform: The existing arena has a seating capacity of 920 seats, requiring a minimum of 27 accessible seating spaces to meet the three per cent seating requirement outlined in the ADS. However, due to space constraints and potential major impacts to the building structure, including the

change rooms and other functional areas beneath the bleachers, the design included seven accessible seats on the renovated platform.

- Walk-through metal detector at City Hall: When the new security screening process was introduced at City Hall in 2025, a walk-through metal detector was procured to facilitate this process. This device does not meet the required minimum clear width as defined in the ADS; however, despite extensive searches, alternative products do not currently exist on the market to meet these width requirements. Alternative ways to be screened, including the use of a hand wand, are permitted for those that cannot pass through the current device. To mitigate potential barriers, accessibility training was delivered to all security staff.
- Trainyards and Belfast Road intersection: Due to an existing storm sewer, and to accommodate winter maintenance vehicle requirements on the sidewalk, the Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) pole was shifted to the back of the sidewalk, resulting in it being located 1.8 metres from the curb, instead of the required 1.5 metres. This is considered an exemption to the AODA requirements.
- Limebank Road and Blanca Street protected intersection: Due to site constraints and the requirement to ensure sufficient space to accommodate winter maintenance vehicle requirements, the signal pole with the integrated APS button will be installed at 1.8 metres from the curb face, instead of the required 1.5 metres.
- Walter Baker Park stage: Due to site constraints and to minimize impacts to the surrounding park features, the installation of this outdoor stage required the deviation of several accessibility-related features, including the ramp slope and the design and placement of the handrails.
- 230 Queen Street: The redevelopment of the 230 Queen Street transitional housing site required deviations from the ADS on several design components:
  - Clear floor space requirements and approach: The hallway width was not wide enough to accommodate both an accessible route and accessible approach to a water fountain. Since the hallway could not be widened as it would require eliminating sleeping space needed to meet required facility capacity, the path provided meets accessible clearances, and fountains were located at the end the hallway. However, each floor is also equipped with another fully accessible drinking fountain.
  - Multiple occupancy washrooms: While the ADS recommends providing multiple occupancy washrooms in higher capacity facilities, this was not possible as the existing floor drains were located to provide adequate slope on existing

concrete slabs. As such, single stall universal washrooms are available onsite instead, and can be accessed by all residents.

- Accessible water closet stalls: Along the same lines as above, given the nature of the site, it was anticipated that installing accessible water closet stalls would result in alarms often being triggered unnecessarily, which would be highly disruptive to others staying at the site overnight/24 hours a day. Regular washroom checks are a standard operating procedure at this facility. Additionally, universal washrooms are available onsite, which include the required emergency call system and can be accessed in place of multiple occupancy washrooms.
- Food displays and service lanes: The public serving tray slide is mounted at a height to match the kitchen servery working/ serving counter heights. Food trays are prepared inside the kitchen servery and slid onto the tray slide for clients to collect. If the servery counters and public tray slides were different heights, it would create an operational obstacle. As such, staff are available onsite to assist clients with collecting food as needed and/or bring to the dining room facilities.
- Tabor Stairs: Due to the site constraints, the sloped area at the bottom of the stairs is unable to meet the maximum slope requirements without extensive renovations to the adjacent path of travel. As this pathway was outside the scope of work to the stairs, the existing slope of eight per cent, instead of the maximum five per cent, remained untouched.

Regarding the Accessibility Design Standards (ADS), an update was added in April 2025 via a technical bulletin aligning with 2024 edition of the Ontario Building Code (O.Reg. 163/24) on the new barrier-free design requirements, construction-site pedestrian control guidance and parking space requirements. This update was flagged by the Standards and Quality Maintenance branch during the publication of the updates to the City's Standard Tender Documents for Unit Price Contracts to industry colleagues and was published on [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca).

As shared in the 2025 update report, following changes to the City's Traffic and Parking By-law, the AO and staff in Public Works continue to collaborate on a pilot project to introduce designated on-street accessible parking spaces at specific locations across the city. In consultation with staff in Traffic Services and Parking Services, six locations have been identified as part of this pilot project. Feedback from residents and AAC members was considered, and neighborhoods with a high concentration of shops, restaurants, and services were prioritized, including the ByWard Market, Centretown,

Little Italy, downtown, and the Glebe. Construction of these spaces is expected in 2026, and evaluation and monitoring of the spaces' occupancy will begin afterwards. Updates will continue to be provided to Council by way of this annual update.

In 2025, the Public Works department installed four new pedestrian crossovers at locations across the city, allowing all pedestrians, including persons with disabilities and older adults, to cross streets safely at locations where no crossing previously existed. Additionally, a new pedestrian crossing was installed on CentrepoinTE Drive in late fall of 2025, across from Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School. The design included an oversized button to improve accessibility at the crossing for neighborhood residents and students who use mobility devices. Upon recommendation from a group of the high school's students who identified difficulty accessing the button due a curbed median, the button was extended by approximately one foot than the standard to allow pedestrians with disabilities to reach the button easily and independently.

Finally, by the end of 2025, approximately 91 per cent of the City's signalized networks are now equipped with Pedestrian Countdown Signals hardware, which includes the upgraded audible, visual, tactile, and vibro-tactile signals.

## **2025 Transportation Initiatives**

By-law and Regulatory Services (BLRS) continued to support accessible transportation by providing financial contributions to Transit Services (TS) for the delivery of transportation options for persons with disabilities and older adults in rural areas. This support included \$164,011 allocated to taxi vouchers and an additional \$92,010 for discounted taxi vouchers.

In 2025, Transit Services also distributed \$856 thousand, which includes funding to community agencies to support the delivery of complementary transportation services for persons with disabilities and older adults living in rural communities. Of this total funding amount, \$200 thousand was sourced from the Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Levy Fund, which is funded through a surcharge applied to ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft.

The wait time for riders has significantly decreased in many cases. In part, these improvements are a result of the new central dispatch process which shares the request for an accessible taxi across multiple companies, rather than keeping the request with the company which received it. Additionally, there are currently roughly 80 accessible taxis across Ottawa, many of which are available 24 hours a day.

## **2025 Information and Communication Initiatives**

Staff in the AO publish a monthly e-newsletter, “Accessibility Spotlight” which features articles on accessibility in City services, events, programs, and initiatives across all City Departments. The aim of this e-newsletter is to inform residents and other subscribers about accessibility and disability-related programs, events and services from all departments at the City.

There were 12 regular editions as well as 5 special editions of the newsletter published in 2025. In December 2025, the English edition was sent to 5363 subscribers (an increase of 202 since 2024) and the French edition was sent to 305 subscribers (an increase of 35 since 2024). The AO is committed to sharing updates and information regarding accessibility-related initiatives with the public and will continue to promote subscribing to the newsletter at all available opportunities. The AO is dedicated to keeping the public informed and continually seeks new ways to grow the newsletter’s audience. In 2025, some of the featured articles included:

- OC Transpo 2026-2029 Accessibility Plan Consultations
- Snow Removal Programs
- Rental Renovation Licence By-law Review
- New Accessibility Features at Ray Friel Recreation Complex
- Equity and Inclusion in the Arts Fund
- Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Review
- Ottawa Alert
- 2025 Osgoode By-election
- Transportation Master Plan consultations
- AAC Updates
- Trick or Treat with the Mayor
- Save the date for International Day of Persons with Disabilities

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

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities Invitation
- Nominations open for the 2025 Accessible Ottawa Award
- Register for the 2025 AccessAbility Day Event and reminder
- Public Information about Accessibility Features in Parks
- How to stay cool in extreme heat

In collaboration with staff across the organization, the AO ensured sign language interpretation was provided upon request. In addition, AO staff encouraged staff across the corporation to include other accessible supports in events, whether individuals request them directly or not. The AO published an In the Loop article regarding Accessible Equipment and Accommodations to remind staff of the City's Accessibility Policy and the Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure. For in-person events organized by the AO, sign language interpreter is provided in both ASL and LSQ. Sign language interpretation in ASL is also provided at all AAC meetings. The AO will continue to actively offer and provide sign language interpretation upon request for accessibility-related events in 2026.

In 2024 and 2025, staff in the AO participated in the Climate Equity Engagement Working Group, led by staff in Strategic Initiatives. The purpose of the group was to develop communication materials and engagement strategies for equity-denied and at-risk populations about climate hazards. AO staff provided recommendations during meetings and in the Climate Change Master Plan, ensuring that accessibility was considered throughout. Recommendations included ensuring communications and engagement activities consider multimodal communications, sign language and Easy Read formats. In addition, staff from Strategic Initiatives participated in the City's 2025 AccessAbility Day resource fair to solicit input from the event's participants on their concerns with climate hazards.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) secured \$632,400 in Federal funding through HealthAdapt (2025–2028) to implement three initiatives that support health equity. The HealthAdapt projects builds on OPH's 2024 findings from the Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (CCHVA) related to extreme heat. They prioritize equity and community engagement, seek to strengthen community resilience, improve cooling access, and reduce health risks during heat waves. These initiatives' primary goals include:

1. Equity-focused climate change communication and engagement: collaboratively developing inclusive outreach strategies to ensure climate messaging is accessible, culturally relevant, and actionable.
2. Fire hydrant water fountains with misting features: Accessible cooling to provide immediate relief during heat waves.
3. Cooling options analysis for social housing: Conducting a feasibility study of cooling options for social housing.

These initiatives will help deliver safe and accessible cooling during extreme heat events, reduce health risks for vulnerable residents, and build stronger, more resilient

communities. This work also reinforces the Climate Resiliency Strategy (priority two of the Climate Change Master Plan) and the Resilient Communities Program under Climate Ready Ottawa, ensuring Ottawa is better prepared for future climate challenges.

## **2025 Employment Initiatives**

In 2025, departments pursued initiatives that considered the different phases of the employee journey. To increase representation from equity-denied groups, including persons with disabilities, staff in HR participated in the City of Ottawa's 2025 AccessAbility Day to promote the accommodation process available to candidates during the hiring process. HR staff also attended career fairs and networking events with the CNIB. In March 2025, the AO met with the Chief Human Resources Officer and CAN WIN, an organization that helps employers create accessible and inclusive workplaces by providing free recruitment, retention, training, and consultation services, to learn about the organization and discuss potential partnership with the City. Following this meeting, the AO arranged for CAN WIN to attend an AWG meeting. Members of HR were also invited to learn about the various free services that are offered. In 2025, the City, in partnership with Performance Plus Rehabilitative Care Inc. (PPRC), a fully bilingual, Canadian-owned rehabilitation company, arranged for three job seekers with disabilities to be mentored by staff in Community and Social Services and ServiceOttawa. Two matches were conducted in French. The AO is working with PPRC to discuss opportunities to continue this work.

Staff in the AO collaborated with HR to provide training for all HR staff in October at an all-staff event. The training focused on defining the responsibility of HR in relation to the duty to accommodate, the importance of integrating accessibility from the start and the identification of barriers during the hiring process, with a focus on two detailed case studies. The training was co-developed over the course of several meetings with staff in the Learning Centre. Training materials used multiple strategies to engage different learners in the group, incorporating Universal Design for Learning principles.

In collaboration with HR, the AO published information through internal communications regarding how employees with disabilities can create an Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Information (IWERI) plan, as well as how their manager can provide support. Additional resources, including a fillable PDF template and separate instructional videos for both employees and managers were recently updated to include new Employee Service Centre contact information. The AO is in the process of updating IWERI training resources to ensure they include the most up-to-date information.

## 2025 Customer Service Initiatives

In 2025, Children's Services advanced work on its five-year service system plan to better support child care for children with disabilities and their families. Key initiatives included the development of a dedicated web resource on [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca) to help families and service providers more easily navigate community information and access inclusive, quality child care. Children's Services also created and piloted the Municipal Child Care (MCC) Inclusion Pedagogist program across the City's ten Municipal Child Care Centres. The pilot provided on-site coaching, professional learning, and hands-on support to frontline educators, embedding expert guidance, targeted child observations, and practical tools into daily operations. Completed in 2025, the pilot demonstrated strong outcomes, including increased educator confidence and capacity, enhanced inclusive practices, improved individualized supports for children with exceptionalities, and strengthened collaboration with families and community partners. The successful pilot established a strong foundation for continued implementation within MCC and for broader system-level expansion across the early years and child care sector in 2026.

Employment and Social Services (ESS) in the Community and Social Services (CSS) department continued to support increased awareness and use of the MyBenefits online tool, as the Province advanced a "digital first" approach for social assistance recipients. Provincial enhancements implemented in 2025 included improved table design and navigation, accessibility-focused bug fixes, and the introduction of multi-factor authentication to strengthen security and protect personal information. As a result of ongoing provincial improvements and local efforts to promote the tool, 72 per cent of Ontario Works recipients are currently registered for MyBenefits. ESS staff continue to support uptake by assisting clients with registration at the start of their Ontario Works intake. In addition, ESS began developing a local strategy for implementation in 2026–27 that will establish MyBenefits as the default communication tool for Ontario Works recipients, while maintaining alternative communication methods. This strategy aims to increase convenience and flexibility through secure 24/7 access to file information, electronic document delivery, and streamlined two-way communication with caseworkers, with staff support available to address barriers and ensure equitable access.

In 2025, Recreation, Culture and Facility Services (RCFS) expanded access to inclusive programming by increasing Shared Care (1:1) support capacity for summer camps. One additional Shared Care staff member was added in each of the City's four districts, creating approximately 32 additional weeks of 1:1 support for families, along with an

additional relief Shared Care staff to support operations. An additional Mentor position was also added to strengthen oversight of integration efforts across multiple camp locations. In Fall 2025, the Variety Walter Baker Therapeutic Day Program transitioned to an Enhanced Support Day Program following a service review, introducing a model better aligned with participant needs. The enhanced program provides a 1:3 staff-to-participant ratio and operates for 40 weeks through the year and an additional 4 weeks in the summer, which maintains access to respite, engagement, and accessible services for adults with disabilities.

The Para Transpo Service Design Guidelines are currently in development to provide customers with a clear overview of Para Transpo and to support their understanding and use of the service. This work also includes proposed service improvements aligned with the Transit Services Five-Year Roadmap, with service changes under review and planned for phased implementation beginning in 2026.

## **Conclusion**

As outlined through the initiatives detailed in this report, the City remains committed to ensuring that its programs, services, goods, and facilities are accessible to all. The AO continues to collaborate with staff across the organization, providing guidance on AODA legislative requirements and supporting the consistent application of an accessibility lens in the planning and delivery of City programs, services, and facilities.

Meaningful consultation with people with disabilities remains a key priority for the City, including ongoing engagement with the AAC and other disability community partners. These partnerships are essential to identifying and removing barriers, and to ensuring inclusive access for residents, employees, and visitors, remaining true to the principle of “nothing about us, without us.”

The City also continues to strengthen its professional relationships with Provincial, Federal, and international networks to remain informed of emerging best practices and innovative approaches to accessibility, beyond minimum standards. These connections support the exchange of knowledge, resources, and lessons learned, and provide opportunities for Ottawa to share successes in areas where it demonstrates leadership.

Lastly, the AO will continue to deliver clear, accurate, and transparent reporting to the Province, City Council, the AAC, and the public on the City’s progress toward AODA compliance and on the accessibility of City programs, services, and facilities through these annual updates.