



Accessibility Multi-Year Plan 2023 & 2024

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Message from Honorata Bittner, Chief Strategy and People Officer

On behalf of The Ottawa Hospital, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2023 & 2024. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) in 2025, we will soon reach the timeline outlined in the Act to provide a fully accessible Ontario by 2025. At The Ottawa Hospital, we are very proud of the progress we have made through our previous accessibility plans, and we are committed to continue building on those successes.

Our new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan covers a two-year period, as we expect the new Health Care Accessibility Standards will be approved and become law during that time. These new Accessibility Standards will require an update to the multi-year plan. Until then, this plan will serve as a bridge to the 2025 date set in the AODA to make sure we do everything possible to meet the needs of the patients, staff, volunteers and community we serve. While the plan may only cover a short timeline, it does not lack action. We continue to make improvements across all our campuses to remove barriers in our existing facilities.

With construction to begin on a new campus in 2024, and numerous construction plans across our campuses, we will ensure that the vision of the AODA remains our guiding light. In keeping with the AODA and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), this two-year plan was created in consultation with a number of stakeholders, including our Accessibility Committee, family members and community representatives with disabilities, as well as those that work with agencies supporting people with disabilities. A variety of internal stakeholders from across all member organizations were also involved in the multi-year planning process.

We are committed to providing people with visible or non-visible disabilities full access to the same services, in the same place and in similar ways as all others receive. And we will ensure we meet the hospital's vision of providing each patient with world-class care, exceptional service, and compassion we would want for our loved ones.

Honorata Bittner

Context

The Ottawa Hospital renewed strategic plan outlines four strategic directions:

1. Enrich the quality of care for patients
2. Ignite the power of people
3. Nurture our social responsibility
4. Accelerate discovery

Accessibility is at the centre of all four of our strategic directions, but it is most specifically addressed in nurturing our social responsibility.

This strategic direction to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility by addressing systemic racism, discrimination and inequities seen in the health-care system, contributes to the creation of a culture of belonging for everyone, and is reflective of the communities we serve. This two-year accessibility plan will play a key role in helping to guide the hospital in this strategic direction.

Summary of Objectives

The areas of focus for the two-year plan are as follows:

1. **Customer Service Accessibility Training and New Proposed Accessibility Standards for Hospitals:** Mandatory training for new hires at the hospital will continue, and focused training will be leveraged in key areas to continuously build awareness and improve our service to persons with disabilities. The focus will remain on the AODA regulations and an awareness of the proposed new provincial accessibility standards for hospitals.
2. **Employment:** Removing barriers to recruitment and employment through building community partnerships, focused recruitment and job accommodation (e.g., emergency plans for staff with disabilities).
3. **Information and Communication:** Focusing on accessible PDF documents, using clear language, following clear print guidelines and including persons with disabilities in the hospital's promotional videos/materials.
4. **Built Environment and New Campus Development:** Taking into consideration accessibility related designs, accessible washrooms, parking and sidewalk upgrades and wayfinding when upgrading existing facilities, and in the construction of the new campus.

Each area of focus has specific project objectives, timelines, and most responsible departments assigned to ensure the key deliverables are met. To view the plan in full, please refer to the Appendices starting on page 12.

Background

In 2004, the Ottawa Regional Cancer Centre was integrated into The Ottawa Hospital, followed by the Rehabilitation Centre in 2005. With more than 1,335 beds and multiple satellite locations, The Ottawa Hospital is now one of the largest academic teaching and research hospitals in Canada, and our three main campuses provide an essential resource for the communities we serve.

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute delivers world-class care to the hospital's cardiac patients.

With a combined workforce of around 16,000 employees, more than 1 million patient visits annually, and a broad range of academic, research and clinical specialties, the hospital is recognized as a leader in providing world-class care.

In 2017, The Ottawa Hospital received 'Exemplary Status' from Accreditation Canada, recognizing the hospital's commitment to patient care. This plan is an extension of that commitment with the objective of making its services and facilities accessible for persons with disabilities.

The Importance of Accessible Health Care

The last few years have shown that, for persons living with a disability, it is essential that our services and facilities be accessible. We saw new barriers arise across health care during the province's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While decisions were being made based on scientific evidence and following best practice guidelines, there was always the risk of creating new challenges to full access. Using the AODA as our main tool, the hospital is fully committed to providing the resources to eliminate barriers that may exist, as well as ensuring that our plans for the future do not create new barriers. Not only do we seek to meet the regulation, but we are always looking for ways to raise the bar. In doing so, we want to make sure that everyone who comes to the hospital, whether as a patient, a visitor, or a staff member, knows that the best accommodation was provided to them.

Current Status

For The Ottawa Hospital to achieve our vision to "provide each patient with the world class care, exceptional service and compassion we would want for our loved ones", access to our services is essential. We are committed to the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005) and are continually enhancing accessibility at the hospital. We do this by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for those we serve in our operational practices, policies, procedures and communications.

To help guide our actions, The Ottawa Hospital has ensured that accessibility remains a top priority and a key discussion point across the hospital. This is achieved by creating and supporting forums where issues around accessibility can be discussed and input, advice, and recommendations can be received.

The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Committee

The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Committee is made up of a broad representation of the hospital's community. The committee includes leaders, employees, members of the community with disabilities, and representatives from community agencies that work with and support people with disabilities. Co-chaired by the Officer, Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance, and the Manager, Wellness, Engagement and Recognition, the Accessibility Committee seeks the perspectives, beliefs and insights from patients, volunteers, physicians, medical students, residents, and staff who self-identify as a person with a disability. The Accessibility Committee is responsible for guiding, advising and making recommendations to advance accessibility at the hospital.

The activities of the Accessibility Committee include partnering with departments, such as Patient Relations, Communication, Planning and Support Services, and others. The Accessibility Built Environment Sub-Committee also helps with the planning and prioritizing of an annual list of maintenance and renovation projects to remove barriers across the hospital.

Annual Renovation and Maintenance Budget

To ensure that the recommended list of renovations and maintenance is completed, The Ottawa Hospital's Finance Department sets aside an annual renovation and maintenance budget controlled by the Chief Strategy and People Officer. These dedicated funds are used to remove barriers across all campuses and improve access for everyone who comes to the hospital.

The Ottawa Hospital Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council

Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance has a permanent seat at the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Council, and ensures the voices of persons with disabilities are brought to all EDI discussions. This council also helps ensure that all accessibility planning considers the realities and experiences of persons with disabilities from a diverse range of backgrounds, including economic status, gender identity, literacy and language, and race, to name a few. This helps guide the work of Accessibility Services.

Accessibility Training

Training and awareness across the organization remains the foundation of the work of the Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance team. Currently, all new staff, volunteers, students, and physicians receive training as a key part of their onboarding. All new leaders at the hospital complete "The AODA and You: A Manager's Guide to Accessibility" as part of their training program for their new role. As well, the team will provide additional training upon request through team meetings, rounds, retreats for board members, staff, or volunteers, lunch and learn sessions, departmental in-services and more.

2023 & 2024 Plan

Customer Service and the Proposed Provincial Health Care Accessibility Standards

In 2021, the Ontario Government began public consultations on the 22 recommendations proposed by the Health Care Standards Development Committee. While these recommendations have not yet been brought forward by the Government as new accessibility standards, The Ottawa Hospital sees these proposed standards as an unofficial benchmark to enhance accessibility services, which will in turn support our patient experience and customer service.

The Ottawa Hospital will complete a detailed review of all policies and procedures to ensure that we are compliant with the spirit of the new standards. We will review and update our existing learning modules at all levels to ensure that they are up-to-date and capture the knowledge and skills that the hospital requires to provide the exceptional service called for by our vision.

Key deliverables:

- Update and refresh all accessibility education and training offered at the hospital.
- Review our existing policies and standard operating procedures.
- Deepen our collaboration with the community and with persons with disabilities to inform our decisions.

To view the Customer Service and the Proposed Provincial Health Care Accessibility Standards Work Plan, please go to Appendix A.

Employment

The Ottawa Hospital is committed to creating an inclusive, welcoming, and barrier-free work environment that promotes a diverse workforce. We work hard to attract and retain workers with disabilities through an active recruitment process.

Working in partnership with organizations such as EARN (Employment Accessibility Research Network), The Ottawa Hospital Talent Acquisition team looks for ways to connect with and attract candidates and create opportunities to promote the benefits of working at the hospital. Internally, this team works with hiring managers across the organization to promote and encourage the recruitment of persons with disabilities.

Working in collaboration with clinical leadership throughout the hospital, we ensure that the hospital's Emergency Management Plan and the local unit emergency plans consider the unique needs of team members with disabilities. We ensure that each team member with a disability has their own up-to-date personal emergency plan in place.

Key deliverables:

- Deepen collaboration with external partners.
- Update external postings to include statements of inclusivity aligned with the EDI strategy.
- Educate the team of recruiters and hiring managers to promote the benefits of hiring persons with a disability.
- Track requests for accommodation during the recruitment process to ensure we are offering successful solutions to remove barriers to employment.
- Update and improve both the Corporate Emergency Management Plan and Personal Emergency Plans.
- Improve the Corporate Code Green Plan to ensure that all evacuation plans consider persons with disabilities.

To view the Employment – Talent Acquisition Work Plan, please go to Appendix B.

To view the Employment – Emergency Management Work Plan, please go to Appendix C.

Information and Communication

Clear communication is critical to help our various audiences understand our messages, whether they are stories about advancements in research, instructions to patients, or information to keep our community well. This approach is especially important for patients when the information affects their access to or understanding of their own health care. That's why the hospital is committed to ensuring that all communication meets the highest standard of accessibility. We do this by making sure all PDF documents are accessible, using clear language, and clear print guidelines.

Key deliverables:

- Standardize public PDF documents.
- Improve readability and usefulness of hospital-created content through clear language.
- Ensure that all The Ottawa Hospital's digital platforms, including the main website, prioritize AODA compliance.
- Ensure that the language and all parts of The Ottawa Hospital Strategic Plan take accessibility into consideration.
- Ensure visibility of persons with disabilities when creating promotional materials for the hospital.

To view the Information and Communication Standard Work Plan, please go to Appendix D.

Built Environment and New Campus Development

The Ottawa Hospital remains committed to making improvements at all our campuses and removing physical barriers that affect access to care or create negative patient or staff experience. While the Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance team is always looking to identify barriers and remove them, we also work to respond quickly to any patient or staff member who identifies a barrier for us. All identified barriers are reviewed by the Built Environment Subcommittee of the Accessibility Committee, who provides guidance and recommendations to prioritize the removal of barriers.

Additionally, in the next two years, The Ottawa Hospital will begin the construction of the new campus (New Campus Development). This will be one of the largest hospital infrastructure projects ever undertaken in Ontario, and will create a world-class, state-of-the-art hospital unlike any other in Canada. To date, the hospital's Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance team, an accessibility consulting firm (Accessibility Simplified) and members of the accessibility community have been heavily involved in all areas of the planning and development of the new campus. Various public consultations were made to ensure that the design reaches the objective of making our new campus accessible to all, and that accessibility is at the heart of the design.

It is important to recognize that people with disabilities include all users of the building, such as patients, visitors, volunteers, physicians, staff, students, contractors, and members of the public. The Ottawa Hospital has developed the following Universal Accessibility Value Statement for the New Campus Development (NCD) project:

“The Ottawa Hospital NCD will be a model of excellence and a global leader in Universal Accessibility for a hospital and health-care facility of great community significance: a place where all people are welcome, and where everyone can safely access all of the facilities and services provided in a dignified, equitable, accessible, and inclusive way.”

Key deliverables:

- **Renovations:** Ensure accessibility is a key consideration in the planning/design of renovations of existing facilities and planning for the new campus.
- **Accessible Spaces:** Review suggestions and act on prioritized project requests to improve accessibility throughout all campuses.
- **Parking/Sidewalks:** Review and enhance accessibility features of sidewalks (or lack thereof), surface parking and parking garage.
- **Wayfinding:** Ensure all signage is easy to read/interpret, taking accessibility into consideration.
- **Consultation:** Deepen the consultation with persons with disabilities. Ensure full integration of accessibility expertise into all parts of the design phase.

To view the Built Environment and New Campus Work Plan, please go to Appendix E.

To view the Procedures for Preventative and Emergency Maintenance of Accessible Elements in Public Spaces, please go to Appendix F.

Communication of the Plan

As required by law, this plan is available on both the internal and external websites of member organizations: The Ottawa Hospital, the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, and the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute. The plan is available in alternate format upon request. Updates on the status of this plan will be posted annually on the hospital's websites.

Feedback and Barrier Identification Approach

The hospital has an [accessibility feedback form](#) on our main website. Feedback from patients, family members, and visitors is reviewed by Patient Relations and accessibility issues and concerns are shared with the Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance team for follow-up. In addition to the feedback form, there are many other ways to share feedback, including by phone, email, or by a scheduled appointment with a patient relations representative if appropriate. Interpretation services are booked as needed. The concerns are then directed to the appropriate person and/or department to address the issue.

The Accessibility Committee meets three times a year and all accessibility concerns are raised in this forum. There is time on the agenda for members to provide feedback that will help the hospital maintain the accessibility needs of the communities we serve.

Employees, physicians, and volunteers are also encouraged to provide feedback on accessibility issues by emailing accessibility@toh.ca.

Regular accessibility audits are another way the hospital's efforts are measured. This feedback is then used for planning and prioritizing accessibility projects.

Achieving the vision of an accessible Ontario for all by 2025 is just the start. As The Ottawa Hospital continues to grow, evolve, and improve, we must ensure that accessibility is always an essential part of all efforts. All teams throughout the hospital are committed to improving access by regularly seeking ways to identify and remove any barriers that may exist. And they are just as committed to creating plans and designs to keep new barriers from appearing.

Review and Monitoring of Plan

To ensure that the Plan is closely monitored and measured against its deliverables, updates are provided at the regular meetings of the Accessibility Committee. The committee chair also provides updates to senior leadership as needed.

We'd Like to Hear from You

Do you have any thoughts or feedback on what has been accomplished so far? Or ideas on how plans or projects could be improved? We welcome your feedback. Please contact us with your questions and ideas at accessibility@toh.ca.

This report will be made available in alternate formats or with communication support, upon request. Please direct your enquiries to accessibility@toh.ca.

This publication is available on the following websites:

www.ottawahospital.on.ca

www.ottawaheart.ca

www.ohri.ca

Appendix A – Customer Service and Proposed Provincial Health Care Accessibility Standards Work Plan

	Description	Strategy	Timeline	Responsibility
Education update	Update and refresh all Accessibility education and training offered at The Ottawa Hospital.	Review all existing Accessibility training programs at the hospital and update to align with the recommendations.	2023-2024	Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance
Policy and standard operating procedures review	Review our existing policies and procedures.	Based on the proposed accessibility standards, do a full analysis of our existing policies and procedures potentially impacted by the standards and identify areas where improvement should be made. Provide support and guidance to those leaders to begin the process of improvement.	2023-2024	Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance
Enhance community relationships	Deepen our collaboration with the community and with persons with disabilities to inform our decisions.	Seek new networking opportunities in the broader community to deepen the hospital's ties with persons with disabilities within our community.	2023-2024	Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance

Appendix B - Employment Standard – Talent Acquisition Work Plan

	Description	Strategy	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote an inclusive workforce to attract and retain workers with disabilities through the recruitment process	Refresh external postings with statements of inclusivity as aligned with EDI Strategy.	Track the number of requests for accommodations received through the recruitment process. Postings should promote the partnerships we have with organizations that serve this population, as candidates may recognize these organizations as part of their network.	Ongoing/continuing	Talent Acquisition
	Educate team of recruiters by participating in Lunch & Learn sessions.	Ensure recruiters are prepared to educate leaders through the hiring process and promote the benefits of hiring an individual with disabilities.	Ongoing/continuing	Talent Acquisition
	Track the number of requests for accommodations received through the recruitment process.	Confirm that we are offering successful solutions to those that require an accommodation throughout any part of the recruitment process.	Ongoing/continuing	Talent Acquisition

Appendix C - Employment Standard - Emergency Management Work Plan

	Description	Strategy	Timeline	Responsibility
Emergency planning	Emergency planning must consider patient and staff accessibility needs.	Maintain current Emergency Management Program (EMP) Personal Emergency Plans for staff. Update EMP Corporate Code Green Plan to detail Unit, Building and Campus evacuation plans.	Ongoing Aim is to begin Code Green work in 2023-2024. Work plan is currently under review.	Emergency Management Program Manager
Emergency code notifications through multiple platforms	Emergency codes are broadcast audibly over the Fire Annunciation Panel and activated by the Contact Centre. Supporting visual notifications in areas where it's difficult to hear.	Create an Emergency Code Notification Guide and incorporate multi-modal emergency code notification to ensure visual and audible notifications.	Emergency Code Notification Guide to be approved in 2022-2023. 2023-2024, aim to include visual code notifications using EPIC, Teams or other.	Emergency Management Program Manager with support from IS IT and Telecommunications
Emergency code visual identity products (posters, badge stickers, job action sheets)		Incorporate icons to accompany colour-coded emergency code materials for staff who are colour-blind or partially sighted. Incorporate iconography in job action sheets.	Done Ongoing	Emergency Management Program Manager
External website	Improve general patient awareness regarding emergency codes in hospital.	Further develop current Emergency Code Patient Guide and post to external website.	2022-2023 to align with new emergency code visual identity update and deployment of new ID Badges.	Emergency Management Program Manager and Officer

Appendix D - Information and Communication Standard Work Plan

	Description	Strategy	Timeline	Responsibility
Standardize public PDF documents	<p>Standardize the layouts and requirements of various PDF documents intended for the public website.</p> <p>Ensure all PDF documents posted meet accessibility guidelines.</p>	<p>Create a process for various PDF documents on the public website to meet clear print and accessibility guidelines.</p> <p>Provide guidelines for staff to follow when using templates.</p>	Ongoing/continuing	Communications
Visibility of persons with disabilities	Increase the participation of persons with disabilities when creating hospital or program promotional opportunities.	Find organic opportunities to capture a better and more complete representation of people in our workforce and use these promotional materials.	Ongoing/continuing	Communications
Clear language	Improve readability and usefulness of content created by the hospital for a public audience of varying abilities.	<p>Provide guidance and best practices to staff and departments when drafting content for the website or other public channels through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 clear language coaching by request • Larger group training by request 	Ongoing/continuing	Communications

	Description	Strategy	Timeline	Responsibility
Digital experience	Ensure major upcoming projects (website, intranet, social media) prioritize AODA compliance.	<p>Insist that every organization/agency we engage with complies with AODA standards and makes accessibility a priority in web development.</p> <p>Create social media document on tips on how to make posts more accessible across all platforms.</p> <p>Ensure we are complying with all AODA requirements.</p>	2022 - 2024	Communications
Strategic Plan	Ensure language and all pieces in the strategic plan addresses and considers accessibility both internally and externally.	Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance team to engage with Strategic Planning and Communications team on how to effectively incorporate accessibility into the strategic plan.	2022 and ongoing	Communications Accessibility

Appendix E - Built Environment and New Campus Work Plan

The Ottawa Hospital has a new process in place to review project requests that identify physical and/or architectural barriers for persons with disabilities. The hospital's Accessibility-Built Environment (A-BE) Committee now has an opportunity to review, prioritize and approve minor accessibility related renovation projects. With a dedicated budget for this purpose, projects will be assessed with our patients' experience and safety expectations in mind.

	Description	Strategy	Timeline	Responsibility
New Campus Development	Review accessibility features/design of the new campus.	Involve Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance, TOH Accessibility Consultative Committee and members of the community in the design phase and take into consideration best practices and AODA standards/guidelines.	Ongoing	Planning
Renovations with accessibility related designs	Ensure that accessibility is a key consideration in the planning/design of renovations of existing facilities.	Bring people with expertise in accessibility into the design process for feedback and input on new build/renovation designs. Ensure new builds/renovations are compliant with current standards and best practices.	Immediately/ Ongoing	Planning/A-BE Committee
Accessible spaces	Review suggestions and prioritize project requests to improve accessibility throughout all campuses.	Review conducted regularly and prioritized by A-BE Committee.	Annually	Planning/A-BE Committee
Parking / sidewalk	Review and enhance accessibility features of sidewalks (or lack thereof), surface parking and parking garage.	Annual ongoing repairs and restoration.	Annually	Facilities – list provided annually
Wayfinding	Signage – easy to read/interpret, taking accessibility into consideration.	Update signage, other forms of notification at time of renovations and ensure any new signage follows established guidelines.	Immediately/ Ongoing	Planning/Wayfinding

Appendix F - Preventative and Emergency Maintenance of Accessible Elements in Public Spaces (Addendum)

Pursuant to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (section 80.44) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, TOH has procedures in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in its public spaces. These elements include but are not limited to automatic door operators, accessible parking spaces, accessible washrooms, elevators and exterior paths of travel such as ramps and walkways.

Temporary service disruptions happen when services that persons with disabilities rely on are temporarily unavailable.

TOH's procedures include the following:

- The Facility team responsible for maintaining accessible elements in TOH's public spaces, in conjunction with appropriate personnel, will develop preventative maintenance schedules, as required, to keep the elements in good working order or restore them to their original condition when necessary.
- To the extent possible and where a ready solution is not available, notice regarding any disruption to accessible elements due to planned maintenance or repairs impacting customer accessibility will be posted in advance.
- TOH personnel will conduct regular inspections of applicable accessible elements that are available for use by the public. Any elements that are found to have defects or need maintenance will be identified so they can be addressed. Typically, a work order will be generated and sent to the Facility team and, upon review, arrangements will be made to correct the defect(s) or perform the necessary maintenance.
- In the event TOH receives third party information that an accessible element needs maintenance or repairs, the information will be sent to the Facility team, so the element can be inspected and appropriate action taken, as noted above.
- In cases where it is determined that emergency maintenance or repairs to an accessible element are required, the element will be taken out of service and the necessary repairs will be assessed and addressed as a priority.
- To the extent possible, TOH personnel will ensure steps are taken to divert individuals from accessible elements that are not in working order or pose a danger to safety, and to provide information regarding any alternate useable elements that exist. Steps taken may include putting in place barriers and temporary wayfinding signage, and/or posting notices.
- TOH has procedures in place for managing temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order.