



2023 – 2025
**Multi-Year
Accessibility Plan**



Executive Summary

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), Ontario Regulation 191/11, as established by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), requires designated public sector organizations (including municipalities) to develop a multi-year accessibility plan and to review the plan at least once every five years. The accessibility plan is to outline the municipality's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and meet the requirements established under the Regulation.

The 2023 – 2025 Multi-Year Accessibility is the third plan created by the City of Kingston, following the [2013 – 2017 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) and the [2018 – 2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#). The 2023 – 2025 plan will build upon the foundation established by the previous two plans, which were focused on ensuring that the accessibility standards created for designated public sector organizations were met. With most deadlines having passed, the focus of this plan will be on removing barriers and improving access above and beyond the legislated requirements and ensuring accessibility considerations are incorporated into the day-to-day operation of the City of Kingston.

Legislated Background

In December 2001 the province of Ontario passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, (ODA) which required all municipalities to assist in the identification, removal, and prevention of accessibility barriers. The ODA's successor legislation, the AODA, was passed in 2005 with the purpose of developing, implementing, and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises. Contained within the AODA were several deadlines for compliance with accessibility standards, with deadlines varying dependent on the size and scope of an organization.

Five standards were developed under the AODA: Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, Design of Public Spaces and Customer Service. In 2011, these standards were combined into a single standard, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

Section 29 of the AODA states that every municipality with a population of not less than 10,000 shall establish an accessibility advisory committee and that the majority of members of the committee shall be persons with disabilities. Kingston established its

accessibility advisory committee, the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC), in 2003. The Committee consists of 15 members of the public, the majority of whom are persons with disabilities, and one member of City Council.

MAAC's duties as established by both the AODA and City of Kingston By-Law Number 2010-205, the Committee By-Law, are to:

- Advise Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and preparation of accessibility reports, including the annual Multi-Year Accessibility Plan update;
- Review site plans and drawings as described by Section 41 of the *Planning Act*;
- Provide advice to Council on the accessibility of a building, structure, or premise that the City owns, constructs, renovates or enters into a lease for;
- Provide advice to Council regarding the City's purchase of goods or services through the City's procurement process; and
- Consult with and advise City staff and Council regarding accessibility issues as requested.

Two working groups are established under MAAC to provide more detailed examination of priority areas of work for the Committee. The mandate of the Awareness & Education Working Group and the Built Environment Working Group can be found below:

Awareness & Education Working Group

- To enhance public awareness about accessibility through the development of educational campaigns, such as National AccessAbility Awareness Week;
- To advise MAAC on the requirements of IASR standards;
- To select the recipients of the annual Celebrating Accessibility Awards and host the awards presentation event as part of celebrations for the International Day for Persons with Disabilities; and
- To provide accessibility office staff with advice regarding the lived experience of persons with disabilities accessing City services and programs.

Built Environment Working Group

- To advise MAAC on the requirements of the IASR Design of Public Space standard;
- To review site plans and drawings as detailed by Section 41 of the *Planning Act*;
- To advise on the City of Kingston Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS); and

- To provide advice to City staff on matters related to the construction or renovation of buildings, structures, or premises that the City purchases, constructs or enters into a lease on;

In addition to the Working Groups, MAAC members serve on project teams as outlined in the Accessible Consultation Process Policy. Led by City staff, these project teams cover a variety of areas, including built environment, policy, and programming. MAAC members provide City staff with feedback and advice on accessibility aspects of City work but are not responsible for ensuring compliance with legislation.

Accessibility and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

In 2021 the City of Kingston hired a Manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, with the position responsible for the creation and execution of a multi-year work plan to address internal and external aspects of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for the City of Kingston.

Also in 2021, the first members of the City's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee were appointed by Council. The Committee is comprised of five community members who are part of a population that faces systemic barriers to employment, four community members who represent organizations or groups in a variety of EDI-related sectors and two members of City Council. The mandate of the Committee is to provide guidance to staff and Council in the development of policies, initiatives and programs aimed at reducing barriers in the workplace at the City of Kingston and fostering diversity and inclusion in all areas of the organization, both internal and external.

The EDI Office and EDI Advisory Committee maintain separate operations from the City's Accessibility Office and MAAC, however it is important to recognize that accessibility is a key component of EDI and vice versa. This relationship will necessitate the need for the groups to work together in partnership throughout the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and provides an opportunity for a greater holistic approach to accessibility and its intersectionality with the topic of EDI.

Public Engagement

Consultation with residents of Kingston is a vital component in the creation of this plan. In March 2022, residents were given an opportunity to contribute their ideas for potential inclusion in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan via a project page on the City of Kingston's public engagement platform, Get Involved Kingston. In the month-long period, 33 individual ideas were submitted; staff reviewed the ideas and coded them based on the

five IASR standards. Below is a table summarizing the number of ideas sorted by the standard to which they most related:

| Standard | Number of Comments Received |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Design of Public Spaces | 16 |
| Information & Communication | 6 |
| Transportation | 3 |
| Employment | 0 |
| Customer Service | 0 |
| Out of scope | 8 |

Design of Public Spaces ideas were primarily related to improving sidewalk plowing and snow removal and designing more intuitive pathways and walkways for pedestrians and cyclists. Other ideas received included improving visibility of road and street signage, lowering speed limits, the installation of universal change tables in all public City facilities and the establishment of ‘nap pods’ for those who experience altered consciousness (e.g., narcolepsy, epilepsy).

Information and Communication ideas included messaging regarding the rules and regulations for services dogs, providing seniors with basic computer training, providing closed captioning and ASL interpretation for City Council meetings, implementing accessible wayfinding throughout the City and creating a lending program for assistive devices such as wheelchairs or scooters.

Transportation ideas included adding Kingston Transit stops on the property of the VIA Rail train station and Providence Care Hospital, as well as the installation of benches at every transit stop.

Seven ideas were received that were categorized as outside of the scope of this plan. Some were related to the field of accessibility and public health (i.e., support for Universal Basic Income, improve communication opportunities between residents and medical professionals), while others were not related to accessibility as outlined by the standards of the IASR.

A summary of ideas received during this phase of engagement can be found on the [Get Involved Kingston website](#).

A second phase of engagement was conducted between June and August 2022. A first draft of the [2023 - 2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) was posted on Get Involved Kingston, with residents having the option to ask questions regarding the plan. A total of

10 questions were received, a summary of which can be found on the [Get Involved Kingston website](#).

Copies of the plan were also made available at City recreation facilities, with residents having the ability to leave comments on the Plan.

Below is a table summarizing the number of ideas sorted by the standard to which they most related. In some cases, comments contained multiple topics or topics that spanned multiple standards:

| Standard | Number of Comments Received |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Design of Public Spaces | 8 |
| Information & Communication | 1 |
| Transportation | 3 |
| Employment | 1 |
| Customer Service | 0 |
| Out of scope | 1 |

Staff hired Two Canes Consulting to conduct an arms-length review of the Plan, which included one-on-one and small group sessions designed to receive feedback from Kingston residents with disabilities. A full summary of their findings is included in Report Number MAAC-22-012, with a general summary of the main findings provided below:

- Training of staff and creating general awareness in the community regarding the prevalence of disability, categories of disability (permanent, temporary and situational) and non-visible or hidden disabilities. Emphasis was placed on assisting the business community in better understanding this area and the use of City-wide awareness campaigns to do so.
- Consider the diverse range of technology access and literacy when implementing accessibility solutions, keeping in mind the importance of alternate communications means that do not rely on technology.
- In designing public spaces, continue to identify options for improving seating, lighting, audio alerts and tactile walking surface indicators, as well as making the public more aware of accessible parking and public washroom locations.
- Keeping in mind that cost can be a barrier for persons with disabilities when seeking to access shows and performances in the arts and culture sector.
- Continue to work on instituting best practices with respect to accessible employment in terms of communicating policies during recruitment and hiring.

The consultation conducted by Two Canes also revealed that some accessibility initiatives that the City is already undertaking, such as providing discounted ticketing options for arts and culture performances, require greater promotion to make Kingston residents more aware of their availability.

It is important to note that it was not feasible to include all comments or suggestions received in the public engagement in the Planned Strategies section which begins on the following page. Restraints based on budget, Council-approved strategic plans, and service requirements from other levels of governments were factors in determining what strategies could be achieved by staff during the timeframe of this Plan.

An example of the above are suggestions received to increase service for sidewalk snow plowing/removal or to prioritize this service over road snow removal. Provincial regulations require that certain standards be met for snow plowing/removal on roads; this coupled with equipment and staffing limitations make it difficult to commit to an increased level of service. Staff will continue to work towards this goal where possible, bearing in mind the restrictions.

A list of these ideas can be found in Exhibit A – Strategies for Potential Future Implementation.

Planned Strategies for the Removal and Prevention of Barriers

In addition to meeting the standards as prescribed in the IASR, the City of Kingston has general guiding principles for each of the five standards. These five principles can be found at the beginning of each section to follow, along with goals to achieve greater accessibility and remove barriers within that standard.

Customer Service

The City of Kingston will ensure that interactions between City employees and residents respect dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for all people. Policies and procedures will be put in place to support this principle.

Goals

- Implement a new fare payment system for Kingston Transit that will increase the number of ways that passengers can purchase and obtain their transit fares. The new system will include options to purchase fares including multi-ride tickets and bus passes without having to visit a physical location.

- Kingston Transit and Kingston Access Services will explore a pilot program to allow Kingston Access Bus passengers to use their monthly transit passes interchangeably on both services at no additional cost to passengers.
- Examine the potential for integration of real-time ASL interpretation for City Council meetings as part of meeting management software upgrades.
- Implement technology solutions such as real-time video ASL interpretation and counter-loop systems at City facilities.
- Explore training opportunities for staff in a variety of areas related to accessibility including homelessness and mental health, unconscious bias, neurodiversity, inclusive language, and micro-aggression.
- Complete facility upgrades including improved contrasting between flooring and walls, installing accessible furniture and washrooms for residents, and making necessary accommodations to allow for on-site visits/appointments for medical services such as dental and audiology at Rideaucrest Home.
- Continue to improve access related to the patron experience at the Kingston Grand Theatre through ongoing staff training and based on industry best practices. Work to remove barriers related to accessing arts funding through the City of Kingston Arts Fund.

Information and Communication

The City of Kingston will communicate with residents using a variety of methods and techniques to ensure that information is available to all residents in the format that best suits their needs. The City will actively seek feedback regarding the accessibility of programs and services from all residents.

Goals

- Review and update the Corporate Accessibility Standards Policy and the Accessible Consultation Process Policy.
- Launch a new City of Kingston website, with a focus on improving user experience and presenting content in a more accessible format that is less reliant on PDF-based documents.
- Hire an accessibility coordinator to broadly examine digital accessibility across the Corporation.
- Continue to provide information on City programs and services using the widest variety of communications tools possible to ensure that all residents have an opportunity to stay informed.
- Continue to solicit, receive, and incorporate, where possible, suggestions from residents, in particular Kingston Transit riders, regarding accessibility improvements for bus stops and bus stop signage.

- Update priority seating policy and install new priority seating signage on buses consistent with priority seating signage used by other conventional transit providers in Ontario, an example of which is provided below.



- Update the Kingston Transit accessible services handbook.
- Conduct a public awareness campaign targeting residents and business owners regarding the rules and regulations for service animals.
- Continue to engage with businesses groups and organizations to share information and uncover opportunities to educate and inform businesses on the importance of accessibility. Staff will explore opportunities to work with businesses specializing in the field of accessibility for the provision of these education opportunities.
- Update and launch an interactive mapping tool based on the City website that highlights accessibility features at City facilities and parks.
- Provide multiple points of entry for residents related to arts programming and projects, including Grand OnStage and the installation of temporary and permanent public art projects.

Employment

The City of Kingston will support the recruitment of potential employees and retention of current employees by ensuring that policies, practices, and workplaces are accessible.

Goals

- Examine job requirements and minimum qualifications to reduce barriers to application for persons with disabilities and ensure only bona fide qualifications are listed.
- As part of grant funding secured in 2022, continue implementation of program aimed at instituting equity, diversity, and inclusion practices into employment practices. As part of Phase 2 of this program, successes of the program will be shared with neighbouring municipalities.

- Continue the use of the DiscoverAbility Network, a closed job board that allows employers to connect directly with persons with disabilities seeking employment.
- Seek out grants and funding sources from the federal and provincial levels of government to promote equitable and gainful employment through community programs.

Transportation

The City of Kingston will ensure that public transit and transit infrastructure is accessible to all residents through the prevention and removal of barriers.

Goals

- Implement touchless mobility securement systems on all new bus purchases allowing transit passengers using mobility devices to independently secure themselves.
- Continue to invest in the upgrading of bus shelters, stop infrastructure and connectivity to pedestrian access points such as sidewalks and pathways.
- Consult with the persons with disabilities, residents, and the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee on the availability of on-demand accessible taxicabs and report on the progress made towards meeting the need for on-demand accessible taxicabs via annual updates to this plan.

Design of Public Spaces

The City of Kingston will ensure that all newly constructed or significantly renovated public spaces, such as buildings and parks, are accessible to residents through compliance with the Ontario Building Code and the City of Kingston Facility Accessibility Design Standards.

Goals

- Continue inter-departmental collaboration between Public Works and Engineering Services to ensure that accessible features in parks and public space are installed and properly maintained. This includes but is not limited to tables, play equipment and rest benches.
- Complete redesign of the public recycling depot at the Kingston Area Recycling Centre to improve physical accessibility of waste bins and create improved access for persons using mobility devices.
- Continue to implement the Step Safe program, a public reporting process to identify sidewalk trip hazards requiring repair.

- Renovate the following City facilities accessed by the public. All improvements will comply with the accessibility requirements of the Ontario Building Code and FADS:
 - Design changes to physical layout of Council Chamber in City Hall;
 - Restoration of driveway and fountain at Frontenac County Court House;
 - Renovations and expansion for 610 Montreal Street, future site of Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest (KILN);
 - Repairs to front entrance pathways, ramp, and stairs at 1211 John Counter Boulevard;
 - Continue renovations of resident washrooms at Rideaucrest Home (see Customer Service for details);
 - Renovations to Isabel Turner Library Branch.
- Review potential incorporation of EDI principles connected to accessibility for inclusion in FADS.
- Continue to improve active transportation opportunities by connecting gaps in sidewalk connectivity throughout the city, and by adding and upgrading pedestrian crossings.
- Create a connected pedestrian corridor, including filling sidewalk gaps and constructing cycling facilities on Bayridge Drive along the five kilometre segment between Henderson Drive and Cataragui Woods Drive. This work will include upgrading the signals at 10 intersections to audible pedestrian signals and accessibility upgrades at Kingston Transit bus stops, including the installation of Kingston Transit stations.
- Install audible pedestrian signals as part of standard infrastructure upgrade programs, in addition to targeted replacements of aging signal infrastructure.
- Improve physical access related to the performance areas within the Kingston Grand Theatre (where possible).
- Continue to work with a dedicated MAAC Project Team to ensure accessibility related to temporary and permanent public art projects.

Conclusion

As Kingston embarks upon its third Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the goal of making City of Kingston programs and services accessible to all Kingston residents remains. Significant improvements to accessibility have been made since the passage of the ODA more than 20 years ago. The evolution of accessibility in Kingston is moving beyond meeting legislative requirements and into a phase of maintaining and including accessibility considerations on an operational basis. With the additional focus of an equity, diversity and inclusion lens, the ability to tackle accessibility needs from an intersectional perspective becomes greater.

The City of Kingston would like to express its thanks to the members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee, partner organizations in the field of accessibility, City staff, residents, and all who participate in the creation of this plan.

For more information regarding accessible municipal programs, services, and facilities visit the City website at www.cityofkingston.ca/accessibility. This document is available in alternate formats upon request, by contacting 613-546-0000 or contactus@cityofkingston.ca.

Glossary of Key Terms

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA) – provincial law that sets out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards.

Accessible Consultation Process Policy – the policy that sets out a process for City staff and Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee members to follow a clear consultation process which applies to City services and projects that fall within the definitions noted within the policy.

[Corporate Accessibility Standards Policy](#) – provides the overarching framework to guide the review and development of the City of Kingston policies, standards, procedures, by-laws and guidelines to comply with the IASR.

[Facility Accessibility Design Standards](#) (FADS) – the City of Kingston document that addresses accessibility requirements and the needs of persons with disabilities in the design and construction of new facilities, as well as the retrofit, alteration or addition to existing facilities, owned, leased or operated by the City.

[Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) (IASR) – establishes the accessibility standards for each of information and communications, employment, transportation, the design of public spaces and customer service; more details on each standard are provided below:

Information and communications standards – help organizations make their information accessible to people with disabilities.

Employment – helps make hiring and employee support practices more accessible.

Transportation – makes it easier for everyone to travel in the province.

Design of public spaces – helps organizations make new and redeveloped outdoor public areas accessible.

Customer service – helps remove barriers for people with disabilities so they can access goods, services or facilities.

[Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee](#) – a committee of Kingston City Council comprised of one Council representative and 15 members of the community, the majority of whom are residents with disabilities. The Committee reports to Council on accessibility issues faced by people with disabilities.

Appendix A – Strategies for Potential Future Implementation

The following suggestions and comments were received during the engagement for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. They are not included in the planned strategies for 2023 to 2025 due to budget or program constraints. It is valuable to maintain a record of them as they do represent strategies for improving access that may be considered for future implementation:

- Developing free therapeutic recreation programming/opportunities for those with disabilities and partnering those programs with information sharing for other relevant service programs.
- Increasing service levels for the snow plowing and removal of sidewalks and active transportation infrastructure.
- Providing free access to assistive devices such as wheelchairs or braces.
- Offering free parking in accessible parking spaces.
- Creation of safe public spaces for persons experiencing altered consciousness (i.e., narcolepsy, epilepsy) to rest and safely store their belongings.
- Improving accessible beach access within the Kingston waterfront.
- Providing conventional transit service in addition to specialized (accessible) transit service currently provided on-site at Providence Care Hospital.