



City of Ottawa 2020-2024 Municipal Accessibility Plan

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Message from Mayor Jim Watson

Accessibility is a part of our everyday business at the City of Ottawa, and we maintain our commitment to inclusion by removing barriers and enhancing accessibility for residents and visitors with disabilities. I would like to thank those who participated in the development of our 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) by providing feedback during the consultation period. Your contributions are invaluable as we increase accessibility in Ottawa.

COMAP highlights the City's goals and objectives through to 2024. This five-year plan outlines how the City will meet its legislated obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and work to continue to make our services more accessible to all. City Council's ongoing support and approval of the City's Retrofit Program for this Term of Council, represents an annual investment of \$2.5 million that is used to improve the accessibility of City facilities and our built environment.

The City continues to seek input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) as they help advise on accessibility in the planning of City projects, programs and facilities. Our 16th annual AccessAbility Day was held on May 30, 2019 and was themed "Service Animals – Lending a Helping Paw." The celebration provided the opportunity for residents to engage with City staff, and celebrate accessibility achievements, as well as provide feedback during our final in-person consultation for the development of our 2020-2024 COMAP.

By working together with sustained commitment, we will achieve our goals as outlined in COMAP. We strive to make Ottawa an accessible city for all and strive to become a leader as one of the most accessible capital cities in the world.

A Message from City Manager, Steve Kanellakos

The City continues to be a proud leader by making Ottawa an accessible city for all through its commitments under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

The City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) outlines initiatives that will improve accessibility in our services, facilities and programs. It reflects the City's commitment to the successful implementation of the AODA standards.

The City's Accessibility Working Group, a group of staff members representing each department within the city, ensures the advancement of accessibility initiatives throughout the corporation. This team also maintains and reports on departmental compliance with the AODA standards annually.

By removing barriers and ensuring that accessibility is part of our everyday business at the City of Ottawa, we will continue to improve the accessibility of our city, ensuring that it is an inclusive place for everyone.

Introduction

The City of Ottawa's [Accessibility Policy](#) states that, "The City of Ottawa is committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of City services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. This commitment extends to residents, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible, and permanent or temporary disabilities."

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005*, (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), require designated public sector organizations such as the City of Ottawa, to establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. The City is also required to review and update its plan at least once every five years. The 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) will replace the expiring 2016-2020 COMAP.

The City is strongly committed to meeting and/or exceeding the Standards of the AODA and fulfilling its purpose. The Province of Ontario states the following as the purpose of the AODA:

Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by,

- 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 on or before January 1, 2025; and,
- providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and of various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards.

2005, c. 11, s. 1.

The City's commitment extends beyond the AODA to Ontario's *Human Rights Code*. Under the Human Rights Code, every person has the right to freedom from discrimination and harassment based on 17 specified protected grounds, including disability. At its core, the Code's basic aim is to provide equal rights and opportunities without discrimination and create a "climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person so that each person feels a part of the community and able to contribute fully to the development and well-being of the community and the

Province”. These commitments are incorporated into the 2020-2024 COMAP and for the work to increase accessibility and inclusion at the City in the coming years.

Further, with the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act* in 2019, the Government of Canada has adopted the slogans, “Nothing about us without us,” and, “Nothing about us, because everything is about us.” The disability community has begun talking about inclusion using the simple slogan, “Nothing without us,” emphasizing that disability is an integral part of Canada’s diversity. The engagement of persons with disabilities in decision making, planning and design is critical for the City moving forward. The spirit of these slogans will be carried forward in the 2020-2024 COMAP, and the workplan of the Accessibility Office in the years to come.

At a meeting of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals, the Honourable David Onley, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, stated, “Compliance can be enforced, but not embraced. Inclusion needs to be accepted out of respect, not force.” Further, author Steve Krug writes, “The one argument for accessibility that doesn’t get made nearly enough is how extraordinarily better it makes some people’s lives. How many opportunities do we have to dramatically improve people’s lives just by doing our job a little better?”¹ These points serve as inspiration for the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan, and for the work of the Accessibility Office, in the coming years.

Persons with disabilities in Canada

An estimated one in five Canadians (or 6.2 million) aged 15 years and over had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities, according to new findings from the 2017 [Canadian Survey on Disability](#). This represents 24 per cent of Canadian women and 20 per cent of Canadian men with one or more disabilities, 13 per cent of youth aged 15 to 24, 20 per cent of working age adults (age 25-64), and 38 per cent of seniors (age 65+). Three out of four adults with disabilities report having more than one disability.

Using the one in five statistic, it can be estimated that 200,000 people in Ottawa have one or more disabilities. The number of people impacted by disability increases this number further. When we include family members, friends and coworkers of a person with a disability, we find that most people are impacted.

¹ Steve Krug. (2013) *Don't Make Me Think, Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*. (Third ed.). San Francisco, California: New Riders Press.

The City defines disability as per Section 2 of the AODA and the Human Rights Code as follows:

- a) “Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) A mental disorder, or
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

However, in accordance with the City’s [Equity and Inclusion Lens](#), the Accessibility Office also takes a broader view of disability to include consideration of other social factors that may intersect with disability and effect a person’s experience with City programs, services and facilities. These factors include gender, age, language, sexuality and culture. An intersectional view on disability allows us to consider an individual’s experiences, rather than viewing disability and the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities as a universal experience.

Additionally, seniors are one of the fastest growing population groups in our communities and for the first time, the share of seniors, at 16.9 per cent of the population, exceeds the share of children, at 16.6 per cent of the population, in Canada. According to the 2016 census from Statistics Canada, 144,140 seniors (aged 65 and over) reside in the City of Ottawa, making up 15.4 per cent of the total Ottawa population and it is expected that by the year 2031, more than one in five residents living in Ottawa will be over the age of 65. Though many people with disabilities are not seniors, and many seniors do not identify as a person with a disability, accessibility has impacts on both of these groups.

Statement of commitment

The City of Ottawa is committed to providing equitable treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of City programs and services. By enabling accessibility for all, the City seeks to identify and remove barriers to accessibility and prevent the creation of new barriers. The City is working to provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all Ottawa citizens, our employees and visitors. The City of Ottawa is dedicated to ensuring that it meets its AODA legislated obligations in a timely manner and that compliance with these standards is maintained.

Methodology

In keeping with the obligations of the AODA and the IASR, in the Spring of 2019, the City consulted with people with disabilities to develop the 2020-2024 COMAP. The engagement of persons with disabilities in the development of the 2020-2024 COMAP was critical to ensuring the plan adequately addresses the barriers and discrimination that people with disabilities face in their daily lives.

This plan serves as a multi-year strategy of initiatives that will increase accessibility of City programs, facilities and services. People with disabilities, agencies that support people with disabilities, their caregivers, friends, family members and the general public were invited to provide disability-related feedback.

The purpose of these consultations was:

- To record experiences with City programs, services and facilities, and;
- To inform the City about gaps and barriers that currently exist for people with disabilities and provide ideas on how to reduce and/or eliminate them.

Note: A barrier to accessibility is anything that limits or prevents a person from being able to receive and access information, services and goods, and access space or activities.

There were three methods to provide feedback for the COMAP consultations. These methods included:

- An online survey;
- In-person consultations; and,
- A community toolkit, for groups/organizations wishing to host their own consultation without City staff present. This included a proposed process

for hosting the consultation discussion, the consultation questions and a method for submitting feedback.

Ten in-person consultations were held across the City. Information was shared with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), to encourage participation at the in-person consultations or to complete the online survey. In addition, the French Language Services Advisory Committee was asked to provide feedback on matters affecting francophones with disabilities.

89 residents attended the in-person consultations. Two surveys were completed over the phone, at the participant's request. 88 residents participated in the online survey. Eight community toolkits were sent upon request, with four groups submitting feedback. 23 residents participated in the consultations through the community toolkit. A total of 202 residents participated in the consultation.

The consultation process included considerations for outreach to groups that may be at risk for exclusion, using the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens. Based on formal and anecdotal data, we are confident that we received feedback from a diverse group of residents with disabilities.

Full details on the consultation process, including what we heard, can be found in **Document 3**.

Scope

This plan describes initiatives that ensure all applicable clauses for which the City has met compliance within the AODA are maintained.

This plan includes the accessibility work of all City departments including the Ottawa Public Library and Ottawa Public Health. This plan excludes the Ottawa Police Service which is deemed a large organization and, as such, reports to the Province separately.

As Transit Services and the Rail Implementation Office provide services that are federally or independently regulated, the services they provide do not fall under the AODA. However, they remain committed to the spirit and intent of the legislation and as such their accessibility initiatives are included in this plan.

Implementation strategy

The City of Ottawa supports the goals of the AODA to make the Province of Ontario accessible by the year 2025. As such the City Clerk recommends Council approve the following approach and supports to fulfill the City's requirements.

Leadership

City Council has supported accessible City services to help improve inclusion to benefit all residents, visitors and employees. Staff shall report on the identification, prevention and or potential creation of barriers within all reports going to Committee and Council.

The 2019-2022 Term of Council Priorities describes a strategy for Ottawa to remain one of the best places to live in Canada in the next 10 years. This strategy states, “Our city is made up of vibrant, distinctive, connected and safe neighbourhoods, is economically diverse, strong, and affordable, has accessible and sustainable transportation, embraces our diversity, social and cultural activities, and is a leader in environmental stewardship.” COMAP, which aims to create an accessible, inclusive City for all, reflects the City’s Term of Council Priorities in this way.

Structure and governance

The overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the Plan falls within the Office of the City Clerk. This ensures that the decisions regarding accessibility are made in concurrence with the City’s Strategic Plan. Accountability for implementation of the various clauses within the AODA and its regulations is a shared responsibility with operational departments. The Office of the City Clerk has oversight responsibility for coordinating compliance efforts at the corporate level and operational departments retain the accountability for ensuring that their respective clauses are executed according to legislative requirements pertaining to the service they deliver. For example:

- Emergency Clauses are led by Emergency and Protective Services;
- Accessible Taxis are led by Emergency and Protective Services;
- Web-based product compliance is led by Innovative Client Services Department;
- Employment requirements are led by Innovative Client Services Department;
- Information and Communication Support is led by Innovative Client Services Department;
- Procurement and Kiosks requirements are led by Innovative Client Services Department; and
- Library requirements are led by Ottawa Public Library.

General clauses are initiated by the Office of the City Clerk through the work of the Accessibility Office and guided by the corporation’s Accessibility Working Group with representation from each department and the AAC. Responsibilities of the Accessibility

Office include; but are not limited to, the development of the corporate-wide accessibility plan, supporting the implementation of the legislative consultation process, working with other municipalities and the province on accessibility-related issues, developing and reviewing policy, creating training modules and materials, reporting on progress to senior management, AAC, Council, and working with the City Clerk on all compliance reporting to the Province of Ontario.

Status of AODA legislated requirements

When implemented in 2005, the goal of the AODA was to create a barrier-free Ontario by the year 2025. In his report entitled, “2019 Legislative Review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*,” the Honourable David Onley, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, outlined the province’s challenges to becoming fully accessible and found that the deadline for achieving an accessible Ontario by 2025 would not be achieved, stating “the promised accessible Ontario is nowhere in sight.” However, he also noted that public sector organizations such as municipalities had expressed “strong support” for accessibility and a commitment to a barrier-free Ontario. The City is proud of its commitment to meeting the requirements of the AODA, while recognizing that barriers continue to exist and that there is still much work to be done to achieve full inclusion. This plan incorporates Mr. Onley’s Review of the AODA as another source of information to understand the work that remains in our goal to become fully accessible.

Moving forward, the City’s 2020-2024 COMAP will focus on maintaining compliance with the IASR and on the continued progress in meeting the final outstanding IASR standard section 14, Accessible Websites and Web Content. The plan also contains many non-legislated initiatives that will be implemented to address issues brought forward by the public during ongoing consultation activities and through service requests and other feedback mechanisms. A full listing of initiatives that make up the 2020-2024 COMAP can be found in **Document 3**.

With regards to maintaining obligations under the AODA, all new City staff continue to be trained in the requirements of the standards, where they exist: Customer Service; Information and Communications; Employment; Transportation; and, Design of Public Spaces.

The City will continue to provide training to strengthen the understanding of legislated requirements as operationally feasible. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Accessible Procurement Workshop;
- Responsibilities of Managers and Supervisors under the AODA;

- Individualized Workplace Emergency Information; and,
- Construction of the built environment.

The remaining legislated deadline under the IASR pertaining to websites and web content includes the following requirement:

- 1) By January 1st, 2021, all content must conform with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, unless where otherwise exempted by legislation.

To assist departments in meeting this requirement:

- In 2018, the City implemented a Web Accessibility Policy, which outlines the corporation's responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.
- City departments have Web Leads to ensure accessibility standards are implemented, and some are creating Digital Services Coordinator and Officer positions to support this work. Additionally, the City currently has staff dedicated to web accessibility testing and a Web Accessibility Coordinator.
- Training for staff to create accessible documents is widely available, in addition to a course on Digital Accessibility and a course on WCAG-EM reporting for IT staff. The City has also created a Quality Assurance Centre of Excellence to support City employees with the knowledge, tools, processes and technical support required to achieve accessibility compliance for business applications, web sites and documents.
- User testing continues to be encouraged for new projects. The City has also created a robust process framework that supports efforts to achieve accessibility compliance for business applications and web pages.
- In 2019, the City completed a standing offer for accessibility services to streamline the acquisition of accessibility resources to complete WCAG-EM reports, remediate documents and provide on-going business support.
- Many initiatives have been undertaken to support the procurement of WCAG-compliant goods and services.

The Accessibility Office will continue to monitor and report compliance with this standard to the Province.

Legislated goals

General requirements

Meet and maintain compliance with the AODA's Integrated Regulation general requirement by:

- Reviewing relevant City of Ottawa by-laws, policies, procedures and guidelines to reflect the requirements of the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation;
- Continuing to ensure the procurement of City goods, services, facilities and kiosks include accessibility criteria and features; and,
- Continuing to provide training on the AODA Integrated Accessibility Regulation and the Human Rights Act to all new employees, volunteers; all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City of Ottawa.

Customer service

Maintain compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Standard and continue to identify customer service requirements to improve the client experience by:

- Providing accessible Customer Service training to staff, volunteers and notifying third parties of their training obligations;
- Acting in accordance with our Accessibility Policy regarding service animals and support persons;
- Receiving and responding to feedback regarding the manner in which goods or services are provided to persons with disabilities; and,
- Providing notice of service disruptions.

Employment

Continue to ensure the City of Ottawa's employment policies and practices are inclusive of people with disabilities by:

- Ensuring all employees and successful applicants with disabilities are informed of available supports and accommodations;

- Ensuring applicants with disabilities are informed of available accommodations during the recruitment, assessment and the selection processes;
- Consulting with employees to provide and arrange for accessible formats and communication supports;
- Providing to employees, upon request, individualized workplace emergency response information;
- Maintaining a return to work process and provide individual documented accommodation plans for employees with disabilities when required; and,
- Ensuring the needs of the employees with disabilities are taken into account for the purposes of performance management, career development, advancement and redeployment.

Information and communication supports

Continue to provide accessible information and communication to residents, visitors and employees by:

- Ensuring City processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to people with disabilities;
- Provide and arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports;
- Providing upon request timely accessible feedback and communication supports in consultation with the requestor, that takes into account the person's accessibility needs for all City documents including emergency plans and public safety information;
- Ensuring all City of Ottawa websites and web content conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA in accordance with the timelines set out by the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation; and,
- Informing the public of the availability of emergency plans and policies and providing accessible materials where they exist and communication supports upon request.

Design of Public Spaces

Increase the accessibility of new and existing City facilities by:

- Continuing to audit and implement an annual retrofit plan based on approved budgets; and,
- Continuing to utilize the City Accessibility Design Standards for all new and redeveloped City owned and operated spaces and facilities to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to everyone.

Accessible taxi services

Ensure accessible taxi service is available to the public within the City of Ottawa by:

- Consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the public to determine the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs required in Ottawa and demonstrate progress toward meeting that need;
- Ensuring that no person with a disability is charged additional fees or is charged a fee for storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices;
- Ensuring vehicle registration and identification is visible in accordance with Provincial legislation and is available in accessible formats for passengers with disabilities; and,
- Conducting a Taxi and Limousine Regulation and Services Review.

Non-legislated goals

In addition to the legislated goals under the AODA, the City of Ottawa is committed to additional operational initiatives that help the City in our efforts to remove barriers.

The Accessibility Office currently coordinates the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals, which includes members from designated public service organizations from across the Province. This group 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.” The group is very active over email and meets twice per year. The Accessibility Office will continue to participate in the informal Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals and will report on progress related to this group.

The City of Ottawa is considered a leader in accessibility across the Province and openly shares with others our policies, procedures and practices that have demonstrated success in reducing and/or eliminating barriers. Staff at the City regularly answer requests for information from public sector staff across Ontario and the Country. Of note, staff in ServiceOttawa have shared Ottawa’s leadership and expertise in increasing web accessibility. Staff have also shared information with staff from the

Federal government who are supporting the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

Customer service

Enhance the City's Customer Service practices to meet the everyday needs of our community by:

- Host an annual AccessAbility Day event for the community to celebrate accessibility achievements;
- Equity and Inclusion Lens training will be offered to all City employees by way of in-class training and e-learning format;
- Continuing the Snow Go program which directly assists low income residents with disabilities, including seniors, to access a matching service and provide financial assistance if needed;
- Public Policy and Development Branch and Community Safety and Well Being group commitment to have ASL/Closed Captioning/FM loop and French interpretation at public engagement events;
- Enabling Para Transpo customers to book their trips more conveniently; and,
- Continue to assess and revise Parks Recreation and Cultural Services programming options to increase participation in recreational programs that accommodate individuals with special needs.

Employment

Increase the quality and quantity of accommodations to employee and applicants by:

- Developing communications products for staff and managers on the benefits of diversity hiring;
- Enable staff to communicate with accessible formats with the continuous roll out of Office 365 including accessibility tools; and
- Promote the City of Ottawa as an inclusive employer through a number of tactics identified to increase representation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Public engagement, information and communications

The Accessibility Office has committed to finding new and innovative ways to connect and consult with people with disabilities. This includes the continuation of the e-

newsletter, Accessibility Spotlight, and a commitment to exploring ways that the City can utilize this as a method of receiving feedback from the community. Ongoing informal consultations will be scheduled with disability organizations as required, to engage in continuous feedback and service improvement.

As a result of the 2020-2024 COMAP consultations, the City regularly meets with stakeholders from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Council for the Blind and the Alliance for Equality for Blind Canadians to receive feedback and discuss ways in which the City can become more accessible for persons who are blind and partially sighted. The City has begun to foster stronger relationships to ensure we take steps to increase accessibility for residents who are Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing. Our engagement with these stakeholders will continue to be reported on in future COMAP Update Reports.

The Accessibility Office is strongly committed to using the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens to explore new connections with people with disabilities in diverse communities, including Indigenous, Black Immigrant Persons of Colour (BIPOC), immigrant and refugees and the LGBTQ2S+ community. Understanding the disproportionate number of Indigenous persons with disabilities, including mental health disabilities, the Accessibility Office would like to develop stronger relationships with Indigenous organizations as part of our commitment to an inclusive accessibility plan. The Accessibility Office will work with other City staff to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of people with disabilities who belong to other equity-seeking groups.

Public Information and Media Relations is working to ensure that all City public engagement activities are inclusive and accessible for all residents.

The Accessibility Office is committed to working with the inter-departmental Accessibility Working Group to increase knowledge across the City about the importance of engaging with persons with disabilities in our planning and decision making. We will draw inspiration from the slogan, "Nothing without us," to engage with both the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the broader community. Beyond the duty to consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, there are many examples where the City will benefit from including the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities. People with disabilities must be consulted from the outset of our planning and decision making, and consultation should take place regularly, directly and meaningfully.

Transportation

Provide more transportation options for residents and visitors with disabilities and increase the accessibility of existing transportation options by:

- Continuing facility improvements to enhance the universal design of transit stations and facilities;
- Committing to enhancing the accessibility of Stage 2 LRT to ensure that services are working to better meet the needs of people with disabilities through consultation activities;
- Introduction of the Para Transpo online booking form for the public;
- Provide persons with disabilities and all customers with information on emergency procedures on public transit through various channels including website, social media and public service;
- Installation of Pedestrian Crossovers, access for pedestrians to cross streets safely as pedestrians are given the right of way over vehicles and cyclist; and,
- Continued compliance monitoring of the Next Stop Interior Announcements Systems hardware reliability and performance, internal policies and procedures.

Design of Public Spaces

Ensure that all City built environment projects meet or exceed the provincial Design of Public Spaces Standards by:

- Enhancement of pedestrian and cycling facilities in communities with a focus on links to schools, recreation centres and major transit stations;
- Increasing the number of Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS) that use audible, tactile, vibro-tactile and visual signage to assist all pedestrians; and,
- Enhance Accessibility elements of facilities and parks including providing additional rest areas.

Compliance monitoring

The Accessibility Office shall monitor progress of this plan and shall coordinate and report on progress annually to Senior Management. The Accessibility Office shall report annually to Committee and Council through the COMAP Update Report.

The Office of the City Clerk is responsible to report on City compliance to the province, as per the provincial schedule.