



Public Engagement Feedback Report, Accessibility Consultations

In preparation for the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan

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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.

City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan

As outlined in its [Accessibility Policy](#), 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, facilities and information.

In keeping with the obligations of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), in the Spring of 2019, the City consulted with people with disabilities for the development of the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP). 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.

How we engaged and consulted with people with disabilities in Ottawa

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

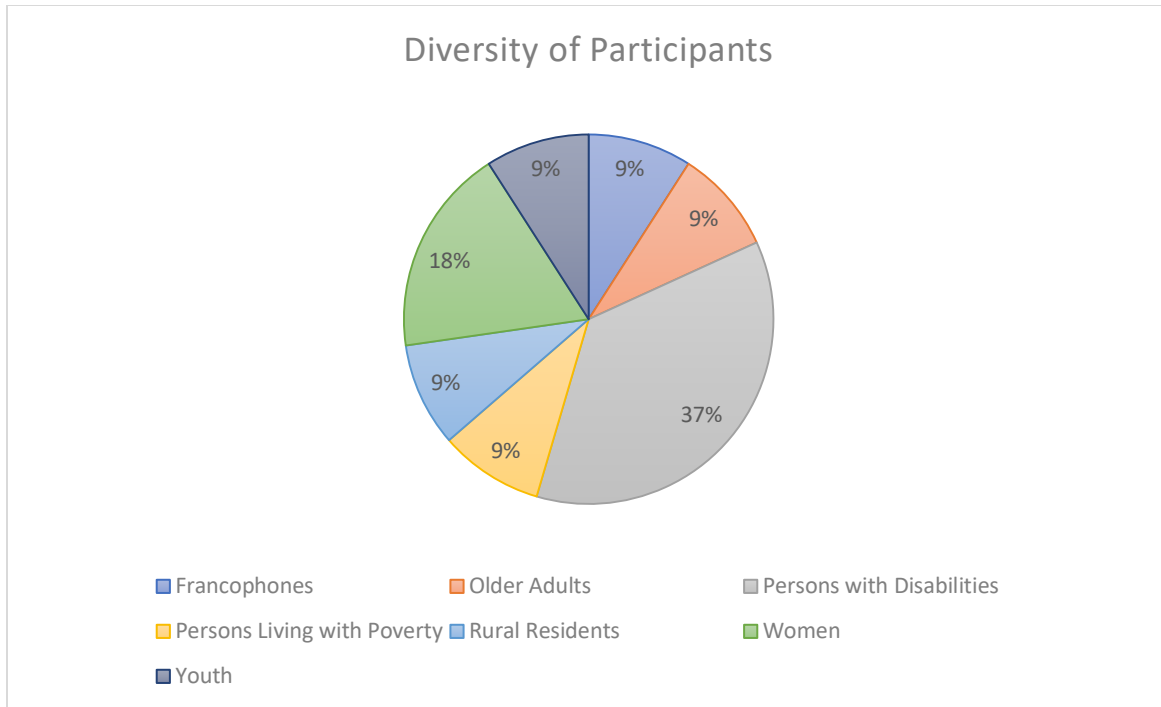
- An online survey;
- In-person consultations; and,
- A community toolkit, for groups/organizations wishing to host their own consultation without City staff present. This included a proposed process for hosting the consultation discussion, the consultation questions and a method for submitting feedback.

Ten in-person consultations were held across the City including west, south, east, central and rural locations. Consultations were held in the afternoon and evening to increase the opportunity for participation. City staff were trained to volunteer for the in-person consultations, allowing them to actively listen and solicit meaningful feedback. Information was shared with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee, 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 following a presentation regarding the consultations from the Accessibility Office. The consultation questions can be found in [Appendix A](#).

A total of 89 residents attended the in-person consultations. Two surveys were completed over the phone, at the participants' request. Though demographic information was not formally collected at the in-person consultations, a wide variety of ages participated, and a diverse range of disability was represented through the facilitated conversation, including physical/mobility, sensory, learning/developmental, and non-visible.

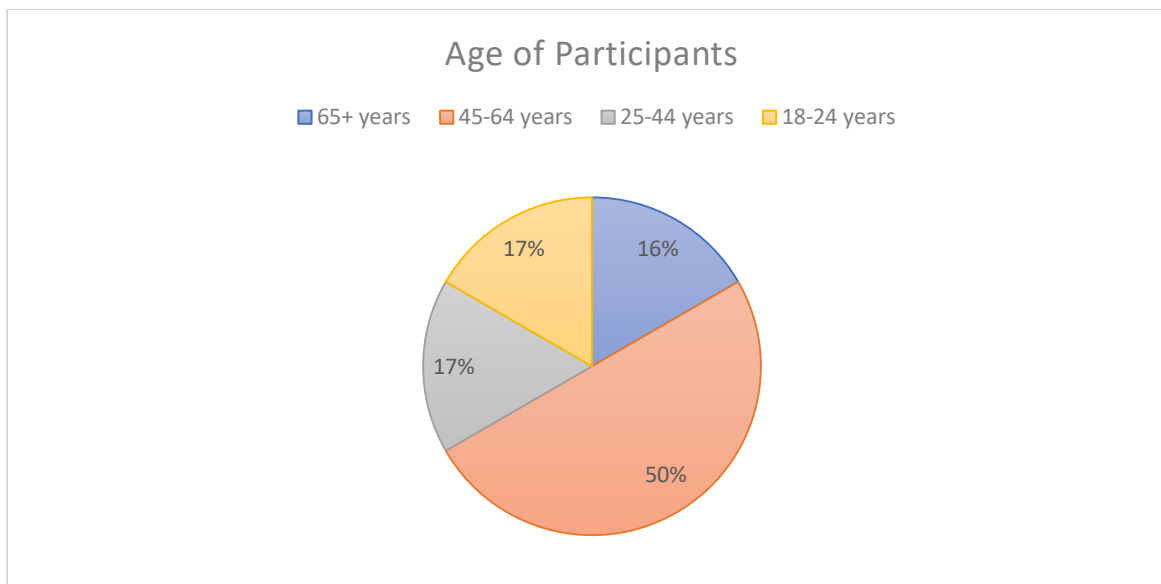
A total of 88 residents participated in the online survey. Additionally, there were 1200 visits to the consultation webpage on the Engage Ottawa platform.

Participants that provided feedback through the online survey were asked to register with the Engage Ottawa platform, though this was not mandatory. Of the participants who registered, 37 per cent identified as having a disability, 18 per cent identified as women, and 9 per cent identified either as Francophone, living in poverty, youth, a rural resident, or an older adult, respectively. The following chart illustrates the diversity of participants as described:



It should be noted that participants had the option to select more than one category under the diversity field.

Further, of those who registered, 17 per cent identified as being 18-24 years-old, 17 per cent as 25-44 years-old, 50 per cent as 45-64 years-old and 16 per cent as 65 years-old and up. The following chart demonstrates the range of ages of the participants as described:



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.

Outreach

A communication plan was developed to ensure wide promotion of the consultation. Posters and communications materials were sent to many of the City's facilities, including libraries and community centres. Takeaway slips advertising the consultations were placed on the Para Transpo fleet. The Accessibility Office called many disability organizations to provide consultation information, and an email was sent to many of the organizations that support persons with disabilities in Ottawa.

The consultations were advertised through the City's Public Information and Media Relations (PIMR) team, through weekly Public Service Announcement engagement bulletins. Due to Spring flooding, the ability to advertise through the City's social media sites was more limited than anticipated due to the state of emergency updates taking priority.

The Accessibility Office also advertised the consultations through the Accessibility Spotlight e-subscription, which is sent to approximately 1800 residents, and through the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

With support from PIMR, a video highlighting some of the accessibility initiatives from the 2016-2020 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan was created. The [video](#) was used to advertise the consultations, was included on the Engage Ottawa site, and shown at the beginning of the in-person consultations and AccessAbility Day, to share information on what the City has done to improve accessibility and frame the discussion for future improvements.

Diversity in consultations

The consultation process to develop the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan included considerations for outreach to groups that may be at risk for exclusion, using the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens. A rationale for each group follows:

- **Disability:** The Accessibility Office maintains a list of disability organizations located in the City, and information was sent to all of these groups. This includes all categories of disability: physical/mobility, learning/developmental, sensory, and non-visible. The Accessibility Office also hosted targeted in-person consultations with persons who are

Deaf/deafened/Hard of hearing, and the Alliance for Equality for Blind Canadians. Furthermore, the Accessibility Office promoted the consultations to the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee, which includes diverse representation from the community.

- **Francophones:** The Accessibility Office worked with French Language Services (FLS) to develop a plan to reach out to the Francophone community. Supported by FLS, the Accessibility Office presented to the French Language Services Advisory Committee (FLSAC) to solicit feedback from the Francophone community. This diverse committee includes representation (self-identified) from Francophone and French-speaking men and women, LGBTQ2S+, rural residents, immigrants and racialized people, and residents with disabilities. The FLSAC provided a written report with feedback and recommendations. During the final consultation, as part of AccessAbility Day, five participants provided feedback in French. In addition, the Accessibility Office reached out to many Francophone organizations that work with clients with disabilities and a Francophone table was facilitated during the afternoon consultation at AccessAbility Day.
- **Immigrants:** The Accessibility Office called and sent information to organizations that support immigrants who may have disabilities, such as the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa, and others. The Catholic Centre for Immigrants Ottawa hosted three consultations using the community toolkit and provided feedback from their groups of immigrant seniors.
- **Indigenous:** The Accessibility Office worked with the City's Project Coordinator, Partner and Stakeholder Unit (Indigenous Services) to identify organizations and a method of outreach for the Indigenous community. An invitation to participate was sent to several Indigenous organizations, as per the recommendations received. The Accessibility Office continues to work to develop a stronger relationship with the Indigenous community, exploring the opportunity to connect with the Aboriginal Working Group and attend events.
- **LGBTQ2S+:** The Accessibility Office called and sent information to many organizations that work the LGBTQ2S+ community for participation. The Accessibility Office was contacted by Bruce House, which supports people with HIV, some of who belong to the LGBTQ2S+ community, to participate in the consultation.

- People living in poverty: The Accessibility Office called and sent information many organizations that work with people living in poverty to promote participation in the consultations, including ACORN, Salus, Options Bytown, and many others. Promotion materials were also sent to Ottawa Community Housing. The Accessibility Office also reached out to the Community Health and Resource Centres, who work with many low-income communities, to promote participation in the consultations.
- Racialized people: The Accessibility Office reached out to the Community Health and Resource Centres, who support many racialized groups, and the Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities for feedback.
- Rural: All rural Councillors were contacted about the consultations and offered an in-person consultation in their Ward. Two in-person consultations were held in rural areas. Two in-person consultations were cancelled due to flooding in the remaining Wards. However, these Councillors included information and links to the online survey in their resident newsletters to further encourage participation by rural residents.
- Seniors: The Accessibility Office provided information and posters to all of the City's seniors centres to promote the consultations, in addition to the Council on Aging and other organizations. A presentation was done by the Accessibility Office to a group of leaders from the Social Planning Council's senior ethnocultural groups to encourage participation. A number of these groups provided feedback through the community toolkit.
- Women: A request to participate was sent to DAWN, the DisABled Women's Network, to encourage participation in the consultations. The Accessibility Office also reached out to CAWI, the City for All Women Initiative, to promote the participation of diverse groups of women with disabilities. Crime Prevention Ottawa's Committee on Disability and Abuse, which works with many women's organizations, held their own consultation using the community toolkit.
- Youth: Promotional information was sent to several agencies that work with children and youth with disabilities. Many of the disability organizations that received promotion for the consultations support a wide range of ages, including children, youth, adults and parents/caregivers of persons with disabilities.

Many people participating in the consultations could identify with more than one group, which results in unique perspectives and interactions with the City (intersectionality).

Based on observations at both the in-person consultations and AccessAbility Day, the Accessibility Office is confident that a diverse group of people with disabilities provided feedback and ideas as part of the consultation process.

Accommodations

Accommodations were actively offered through the registration page for the in-person consultations on Engage Ottawa. Accommodations that were offered include:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Langue de signe Québécois (LSQ)
- Captioning Access Real Time (CART)
- Braille
- Portable FM Loop Listening Device
- Personal Support Worker
- Other (to be specified by participant)

ASL, LSQ and CART were all utilized during the consultation with the Deaf/deafened/hard of hearing community to facilitate discussion. A Personal Support Worker was provided at three of the in-person consultations. Other requests included providing materials ahead of time, ensuring access for wheelchairs and other mobility devices, and conducting the survey over the phone. All requests for accommodations and support were met.

In addition, to support ease of transportation, the Accessibility Office worked with Para Transpo to offer customers the opportunity to book their trip to a City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan Consultation up to 48 hours in advance.

What we heard

The following sections provide an overview of what we heard from the community. Some of the feedback received relates to accessibility initiatives that are currently planned or underway, which confirms that these priorities are responsive to the priorities of the community, and these will be incorporated into the new plan. Some feedback fell outside of the City's scope, and this feedback was shared with the appropriate organizations/authorities (such as the Province, Federal government, and National Capital Commission).

To inform the development of the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan, the following will be included:

- Feedback received through the consultation process;
- An analysis of disability and accessibility-related feedback from the public collected on an ongoing basis at the City;
- Best practice research (including feedback from the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals); and,
- An analysis of the 3rd review of the AODA (the Honourable David Onley, 2019).

The consultation data was grouped together by AODA Standard: Employment, Customer Service, Information and Communications, Design of Public Spaces, and Transportation. The data below does not represent all the feedback we received but does demonstrate many of the recurrent themes that emerged throughout the consultations.

Employment

This includes but is not limited to opportunities for employment and volunteering with the City of Ottawa, including the online application system.

What was heard:

- Consistent with Provincial and Federal data, people with disabilities deal with barriers to finding and maintaining meaningful employment.
- There are challenges to using the City's online application system. The system should be compatible with screen readers (such as JAWS) and voice recognition software, in both English and French.
- The City has made progress to recruit persons with disabilities, for example, by offering accommodations and by participating in the Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN). The City could do more work with agencies that support persons with disabilities for recruitment, such as the Canadian Hearing Society and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.
- Promote the City as an inclusive employer by advertising disability-related workplace accommodations. Raise awareness and promotion of diverse disabilities to act as a model for inclusive employment for other businesses and organizations in Ottawa.

- Transportation barriers result in challenges to acquiring and keeping meaningful, steady employment.
- Participate in or create mentorship programs for people with disabilities to gain meaningful experience and make connections in their chosen field of work. This also helps persons with disabilities to gain work references which can be a barrier for people with disabilities who have been unable to work.

Customer Service

This includes but is not limited to recreation and culture programs and services, health and library services, your local client service centres and 311.

What was heard:

- Participants shared many personal stories of positive customer service experiences with City staff, including 3-1-1, Client Service Centres, Elections, Recreation, Library, Accessibility Office and OC Transpo. In general, the feedback demonstrated that City staff are trained to be responsive and support persons with disabilities, for example, by providing information, displaying a positive attitude, and using features such as lowered service counters.
- There is a lack of general knowledge in the community of what services and supports the City provides. For example, the Hand in Hand program, which offers fee support to ensure that all residents have access to municipally offered recreation and culture programs and activities regardless of their ability to pay, was not well known among respondents.
- Provide more, specialized training for staff to support persons with disabilities. Work with organizations, such as the Canadian Association for the Deaf, to develop best practice for customer service interactions. More training for recreation staff on First Aid for different types of seizures.
- People who are blind or partially sighted require real-time support for transit or navigating around construction sites.
- Immigrants with disabilities experience multiple challenges and require an array of integrated services. Increase awareness of language capabilities at the City. Make better connections with immigrant and racialized persons with disabilities.

- Find creative ways to work with ASL/LSQ interpreters to support participation in recreation programs and camps. Collaborate with the community to find solutions. Hire students who are Deaf and can sign as camp counsellors.

Information and Communications

This includes but is not limited to technology and signage, websites, printed materials and other City correspondence, water and property tax billing, charts and maps, and public meetings, consultations and events.

What was heard:

- The City has made great improvements in these areas. Braille signage is good. An option for Tele Typewriter (TTY) is important. The Accessibility Spotlight e-newsletter is a good way to receive accessibility information from the City. The procedure to request accessible alternative formats and communication supports is effective and the use of ASL/CART/FM Loop systems at events and meetings is helpful when provided.
- There are challenges to using Ottawa.ca. These include challenges when using a screen reader and difficulty using the search function/finding information. Consider having a “bot” on Ottawa.ca to ask/answer questions.
- Translate French text in plain language (i.e. at a grade 7 level or comparable). Ensure Braille signage is also available in French Braille, and that upon request, documents are translated to Braille in a person’s language of choice.
- The community is generally unaware of how to provide accessibility-related feedback to the City. Educate the public about how to complete a disability-related service request.
- Share more accessibility information over the City’s social media, including AccessAbility Day and accessibility consultations. There was a desire for further, ongoing accessibility and disability-related consultations and public engagement.
- Universal accessibility icon used by the City does not accurately represent all disabilities. Adopt the graphic being used by the Federal government which is more inclusive.
- Adopt Video Relay Service as an option when a person calls in. Provide Video Relay Service stations in City facilities to receive information.

- People with environmental sensitivities and multiple chemical sensitivities face numerous barriers when accessing public spaces. More signage in City facilities (including recreation centres, libraries, etc.) to discourage the use of scented products. Educate the public on the effects of scented products. Create scent policies for City facilities.

Design of Public Spaces

This includes but is not limited to City facilities, sidewalks, pathways and roads, and City-operated social housing, long term care and emergency shelters.

What was heard:

- There has been much work done by the City to ensure physical accessibility. City facilities are accessible. Renovations to facilities are improving accessibility. Curb cuts and Accessible Pedestrian Signals have improved.
- Accessibility of crosswalks can continue to be improved. Curbs still present barriers. Potholes in roads and sidewalks present safety issues for people with disabilities. Accessible Pedestrian Signals may be blocked by trees, lampposts, snow or bushes, or installed on the grass off the sidewalk.
- People continue to face barriers in the winter relating to snow removal. Bus stops are not always accessible in the winter and snow banks may prevent Para Transpo access. Sidewalks may be cleared but snow prevents access from Accessible Pedestrian Signals.
- Educate the public on accessible parking spaces, particularly wider, van-accessible spaces that are newly legislated. Encourage the public to not misuse accessible parking spaces.
- Increase monitoring of construction sites to ensure accessibility. It is appreciated when the contact information for a construction site's Project Manager is available.
- There is a lack of available, accessible housing units. City housing staff should have more disability-related training including the duty to accommodate and communication supports for residents with disabilities.
- Private businesses, while falling outside of City authority, are not accessible. Work with businesses to promote accessibility and best practices. Work with the StopGap Foundation to improve accessibility.

Lobby the Provincial government to mandate the accessibility of private businesses to provide incentives and grants.

- Construction of multi-use pathways (MUPs) and cycling paths should be standardized and consistent. MUPs should have better signage, including allowed users, so there is no confusion.
- Keep working towards washroom accessibility. Ensure accessible washroom stalls can accommodate a person, their support person or service animal and a mobility device. Many people noted that gender neutral washrooms are good as a person may have support from a family member or spouse. Ensure washroom stalls are large enough to accommodate a person with a service animal or provide space to secure the animal. Accessible, bilingual signage is important.

Transportation

This includes but is not limited to Para Transpo specialized transit, OC Transpo conventional transit (bus and O-Train), accessible parking, City-licensed taxis and Private Transportation Companies.

What was heard:

- Accessibility improvements that have been made are generally effective, i.e. ramps, next stop announcements, priority seating.
- People are grateful for Para Transpo service, despite challenges.
- Accessibility features on conventional transit needs to be monitored and maintained to ensure they are turned on and working.
- There needs to be an online booking system for Para Transpo, like Uber. Call wait times for reservation and drop off/pick up are an ongoing issue.
- In some people's experiences, private taxi companies, such as Uber and Lyft, do not accept service animals.
- Taxi coupons should have an option for pre-filling a person's information. They are not accessible for people who are blind or partially sighted, or many other disabilities.
- Need more accessible seating on conventional transit. There isn't always space for people with mobility devices on busses.
- Create an app that shows which busses are coming up to the stop. Allow people with disabilities to send a signal to drivers in advance for boarding.

- People using wheelchairs have their backs towards digital next stop signage on conventional transit. Audible announcements may not be loud enough for people with hearing disabilities.
- More training needed for Para taxi drivers on handing mobility devices and accessible customer service for customers with disabilities.
- Identify French language capabilities of conventional transit operators, so Francophones with disabilities can request and receive information in their own language.
- Perception that Para Transpo is not available in rural areas. Para users are not able to travel rural-to-rural and the increased cost for rural residents is a barrier.

Evaluation

An evaluation was conducted at the in-person consultations. The feedback received was positive based on the three following questions:

- I was able to voice my opinions today
- I feel that my feedback was valued
- I am confident the City will consider my recommendations

All participants who completed the survey indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied in these three areas. One participant noted, “I felt heard. I felt it helpful to be able to express my struggles and opinions”. Many indicated that they would like the City to continue consulting with the public regarding accessibility on a more regular basis. Anecdotal feedback received further demonstrated that participants felt the consultations provided an opportunity to provide feedback and engage with City staff in a meaningful way.

Conclusion

Findings from these community consultations play an important role in the development of accessibility initiatives in the 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan, which aims to reduce barriers for persons with disabilities within City programs, services and facilities. Specific concerns and priorities from equity-seeking groups and those with diverse disabilities, as presented in this report, will continue to be included in the development and implementation of the plan.

The Accessibility Office would like to thank all those that participated in or supported these consultations.

For more information on this report or the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan, please contact accessibilityoffice@ottawa.ca or visit Ottawa.ca/accessibility.

Appendix A

City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan Consultation Survey

We need your help to make City of Ottawa buildings, services and programs more accessible for people with disabilities!

The purpose of this survey is to record your experiences with City programs, services and facilities, as we create the next City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP), as part of our commitment to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The answers you provide today will help inform the City about gaps and barriers that currently exist for people with disabilities and provide us with ideas on how to reduce and/or eliminate them.

Watch the [video](#) for some of the things we have done, so far, to make the City more accessible for people with disabilities.

For accessible survey formats or communications supports (paper, large font, audio, Braille, phone survey), please contact accessibilityoffice@ottawa.ca or (613) 580-2424 ext. 12752.

1. Customer Service- This includes but is not limited to recreation and culture programs and services, health and library services, your local client service centres and 311.
 - a. What is the City doing well in this area?
 - b. What barriers do you, your clients, family members or friends face in this area?
 - c. What could be done to improve accessibility in this area? *Please rank your ideas by importance, with 1 being the most important*
2. Information and Communications- This includes but is not limited to technology and signage, websites, printed materials and other City correspondence, water and property tax billing, charts and maps, and public meetings, consultations and events.
 - a. What is the City doing well in this area?
 - b. What barriers do you, your clients, family members or friends face in this area?
 - c. What could be done to improve accessibility in this area? *Please rank your ideas by importance, with 1 being the most important*
3. Employment- This includes but is not limited to opportunities for employment and volunteering with the City of Ottawa, including our online application.
 - a. What is the City doing well in this area?

- b. What barriers do you, your clients, family members or friends face in this area?
 - c. What could be done to improve accessibility in this area? *Please rank your ideas by importance, with 1 being the most important*
 4. Built Environment (Design of Public Spaces)- This includes but is not limited to City facilities, sidewalks, pathways and roads, and City-operated social housing, long term care and emergency shelters.
 - a. What is the City doing well in this area?
 - b. What barriers do you, your clients, family members or friends face in this area?
 - c. What could be done to improve accessibility in this area? *Please rank your ideas by importance, with 1 being the most important*
 5. Transportation- This includes but is not limited to Para Transpo specialized transit, OC Transpo conventional transit (bus and O-Train), accessible parking, City-licensed taxis and Private Transportation Companies.
 - a. What is the City doing well in this area?
 - b. What barriers do you, your clients, family members or friends face in this area?
 - c. What could be done to improve accessibility in this area? *Please rank your ideas by importance, with 1 being the most important*

Remember, you can [request accessible formats](#) of City public documents and we welcome your [comments](#) on the accessibility of our services, programs and facilities through the following channels:

- by phone at 3-1-1 and TTY (613-580-2401)
- by e-mail at 311@ottawa.ca
- in person at any of the [City's service locations](#)

Other comments: