



The Ottawa Hospital | L'Hôpital d'Ottawa

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# Accessibility Annual Report 2022



The Ottawa Hospital | L'Hôpital d'Ottawa  
Research Institute | Institut de recherche



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

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## **Message from Honorata Bittner, Executive Vice-President and Chief Strategy and People Officer**

On behalf of The Ottawa Hospital, it gives me great pleasure to share the 2022 Accessibility Annual Report. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in the next two years, 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, and we are committed to continue building on those successes.

Our work is ongoing, and so too is our determination to keep raising the bar in accessibility. We remain focused in our pursuit of making health care accessible, equitable and inclusive for all our patients, visitors, staff, volunteers, physicians, and family members. We also continue to be united in our vision to provide each patient with the world-class care, exceptional service, and compassion we would want for our loved ones.

The goal of accessible health care will continue to be the result of meaningful collaborations, determination and perseverance amongst our staff and our partners in the community. I personally invite you to read our 2022 Accessibility Annual Report and encourage you to join us on this exciting journey!

Honorata

## Accessibility Multi-Year Plan (2023 & 2024) and Proposed New Provincial Accessibility Standards for Hospitals

The Ottawa Hospital's new Accessibility Multi-Year Plan 2023 & 2024 was developed with assistance of the hospital's Accessibility Committee, leaders, persons with disabilities and agencies representing and supporting those living with disabilities.

As we wait for the introduction of the proposed new provincial accessibility standards for hospitals, The Ottawa Hospital will continue its strong focus on the elimination of barriers that may keep people from accessing goods and services at the hospital. If the new standards become law during this two-year period, the hospital will develop a new multi-year plan to meet the timelines of the new standards.

### Spotlight Story - A hospital for everyone: Building one of Canada's most accessible hospitals



Going to a hospital for care or to visit a loved one can be stressful. The Ottawa Hospital wants to make getting to, navigating and using the facilities at our new hospital and new hospital campus as easy and comfortable as possible for everyone.

"One of the priorities from the beginning as we plan the new hospital and campus is to

make it as efficient and as easy as possible for everyone to get where they're going," said Karen Stockton, Executive Director of Planning and Development at The Ottawa Hospital. "We want the new facility to be welcoming for people with a wide range of abilities and for patients and their families to be as comfortable as possible whether they're staying in hospital, visiting or here for outpatient services or clinics."

Well connected to public transit, and with easy to understand and predictable wayfinding, the goal is to make navigating and moving around the 2.5 million square foot facility efficient for everyone.

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## The New Campus Development

### *The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Consultative Committee*

The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Consultative Committee was established for phase three of the New Campus Development (NCD) in early 2022. This committee works very closely with the NCD project team and provides invaluable input on the space and equipment requirements for the new campus. Members of this committee, including individuals with disabilities, were selected based on their knowledge, expertise, and commitment to more accessible health care for all. Two of the TOH Accessibility Consultative Committee members are students from Carleton University and are part of the [Accessibility Institute](#), formerly known as the READ Initiative.

### *Public Forum on the New Civic Campus*

In June of 2022, the hospital held its first public forum for community members with disabilities and community agencies that provide services to people with disabilities. The town hall was co-hosted by The Ottawa Hospital and Marnie Peters from Accessibility Simplified, who is an expert on universal design and accessibility hired by the hospital to oversee the design of the new facility.

The town hall was an opportunity for people with disabilities in the community and agencies supporting people with disabilities to provide feedback and ask questions. The hospital will host more public forums on accessibility of the new campus as we move through the next phases in the planning and development of the new campus.

*(Continued from page 4)* The new hospital will be accessible by foot, bike, public transit, or car with ample parking spaces for cars and bikes.

Para Transpo, private vehicles, taxis and rideshare services can all drop patients off at the main entrance, and accessible bike parking will be available for people who ride adapted bicycles or tricycles. The four-storey parking garage will include 72 accessible spaces and 144 limited mobility spaces located close to elevator banks. Additional accessible spots will be located at the main entrance and at the emergency entrance, one floor below grade.



People who take transit or park in the parking garage can access the hospital through a direct, indoor walkway to the hospital accessible from the parking garage and the LRT station. The walkway is also accessible from street level through elevator banks and stairs located in two areas along the route. The route will be open and spacious with seating and rest spots and with large windows overlooking a park. Moving sidewalks will increase accessibility and overall mobility and help people to get to their destinations quickly and comfortably.

*Continued on page 7*

## *City of Ottawa Consultative Meetings*

In September of 2022, the hospital presented the current accessibility plans for the new campus to the Accessibility Advisory Committee of the City of Ottawa. The presentation included the current plans for the new campus and the accessibility considerations that have been included. As well, the Advisory Committee held a question-and-answer session that allowed members of the committee to ask about specific details and to examine some of the plans more in-depth.

## *Design Development*

As the planning for the new campus continues, accessibility is always top of mind, both in the design development user group discussions and in the development of the Project Specific Output Specifications, which will be used to guide the next phase of planning for the project. Universal Accessibility has been identified as one of the principal pillars of the NCD, and it has been at the forefront of the design and development decisions. It is a commitment of the hospital's NCD project team, and one that the hospital has made to the community at large.

The Ottawa Hospital has developed the following Universal Accessibility value statement for the NCD: *The Ottawa Hospital's 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.*

As part of the design phase of the NCD, the focus on Universal Accessibility of the site includes interior elements such as illumination, acoustics, information technology/audio-visual, as well as all elements related to furniture and equipment.

## **Accessibility Workplan Updates**

### *Employment/Community Partners*

To address the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities, the hospital has partnered with Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN), a community-wide initiative led by United Way East Ontario, including Ottawa, Lanark County, Renfrew County, and the united counties of Prescott Russell. The EARN initiative brings together employers and service providers with the goal of increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the region.

For the last several years, a member of our senior leadership team has been a member of EARN's leadership group, which is comprised of employers, service providers, and other interested stakeholders from our community. EARN's leadership group helps to plan and deliver on the goals set out by the Steering Committee to satisfy the overall mission of the network. It also supports mechanisms for additional EARN initiatives and activities that help to further advance EARN's mandate. The leadership group meets monthly.

In addition, the hospital's Talent Acquisition team continues to be an active member of EARN's quarterly job matching calls. The purpose of the calls is to provide employers and service providers with an opportunity to share information regarding current and upcoming available jobs and for service providers to highlight potential candidates. The goal is to match candidates to current and upcoming opportunities. In addition, the calls provide both parties the opportunity to ask questions related to employment and to follow up on any outstanding potential matches. We are always looking for opportunities to promote accessibility, accommodation, and awareness. Partnerships like the ones above are great ways for the hospital to make a difference as a member of this community.

*(Continued from page 5)* **Spotlight Story - Designing spaces that work for everyone**

We've all been there – late for an appointment, rushing to find a parking spot and frantic to find the elevator that will take us to the correct floor.

If the hospital isn't accessible, these feelings can be elevated for many people, says Marnie Peters, an accessibility expert working with The Ottawa Hospital on the new campus.

"Being in hospital can be inherently stressful," said Marnie. "And then, when the exam table is a little too high, or the bathroom isn't quite large enough, or the floor patterns give you a migraine – your experience becomes even more difficult."

With a focus on patient experience and as work to design the state-of-the-art new hospital moves ahead, The Ottawa Hospital is working with stakeholders and experts to ensure the hospital and the surrounding site is compliant with the goals and principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), to achieve a barrier-free Ontario by 2025.

And in many areas TOH is going above and beyond minimum code requirements to incorporate best practices of universal accessibility, a design approach that assumes people will come to the hospital with a range of abilities that will be accommodated by a wide range of accessible building features and equipment that is universally accessible and able to be used by everyone.



Every patient room will have extra space to allow patients or visitors who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids to move through the room easily. Patients can access their private washroom through double sliding doors that meet on a corner to allow for a direct route from the bed to the toilet or to the roll-in shower, and which can be fully closed to ensure privacy. *Continued on page 8*

- [Read more about how The Ottawa Hospital is planning the inpatient room of the future](#)

## Customer Service Standard Training

Training new employees and volunteers on the accessibility customer service standard continues to be a priority. In 2022:

- All of our 3,400 new employees completed the hospital's online "Accessibility in a Health-Care Environment" training module before their first day at work.
- 36 new leaders received specific training on their responsibilities under the AODA as part of their management onboarding program.
- 81 new clerks received customized training on accessibility.
- 123 volunteers completed an online module and were provided with a copy of The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Guide, which includes tips on interacting with persons with disabilities.

*(Continued from page 7)* Most outpatient clinics in the hospital will be in easy-to-find areas, intuitively located on the main floor, to reduce travel distances and times.

Rest areas and patient lounges with a variety of seating options will be located throughout the building so that no matter where they are, patients and visitors can find a place to rest when they need it. Handrails will be placed to provide support as people move throughout the building.



Washrooms throughout the hospital will go beyond building code requirements to be fully accessible for all users. While there will be a small number of multi-user washrooms in the building, in addition to being fully wheelchair accessible, all individual washrooms will be "All-Access." At least one washroom on every floor will have an adult changing table and accommodate a larger turning radius.

"We want to make washrooms for people," said Marnie. "The concept of an 'All-Access' washroom means anyone can use it regardless of gender identity or mobility. Everyone who comes into the hospital will be able to use a washroom without worrying about finding the right one for them or having to take an elevator to find one that is accessible."

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## Information and Communication

We recognize that removing barriers in communication benefits everyone and contributes to an overall better patient experience. As the largest hospital in the Ottawa region, we strive to meet the individual needs of our patients to ensure they have equal access to the care and information they need about their health, how and when they need it.

Here are some of the steps taken in 2022 to improve accessibility in communications at the Hospital:

1. Standardizing public-facing documents to make them more accessible for those requiring navigational aid.
2. Ensuring all new information uploaded to the external hospital website follow clear language best practices and is AODA compliant.
3. Using clear language in written communications both internally and externally.
4. Using inclusive graphics for communications materials, including clear fonts, and high contrast to support readability.
5. Integrating images of persons with disabilities when creating hospital or program promotional opportunities.
6. Providing guidance and best practices to staff and departments when responsible for providing content for patients and families, the website, social media, and other public channels.
7. Prioritizing accessibility in the planning process of TOH's website redesign to ensure it influences the design and usability of the new website.

### *Emergency Management*

The Emergency Management Program (EMP) continues to move forward in their efforts to improve accessibility.

EMP designed and introduced icons for all the emergency colour codes to support those with colour blindness. The icons are now included on all staff ID badges, the internal Emergency Management intranet site and on emergency code posters for distribution through the hospital.

The EMP continues to remind all staff at the hospital that Personalized Emergency Response Plans can be developed for any staff who require additional supports during emergencies, and where to find further information. This will become an annual reminder opportunity that the program will embed into its annual maintenance cycle.

And finally, the EMP has been working closely with the New Campus Development Team to plan the broadcast of emergency codes that ensure multi-modalities (for instance, audible and visually) for emergency code notifications.

### *Accessibility Improvements in the Built Environment*

As part of our overall strategy to increase accessibility in the built environment at The Ottawa Hospital, the following projects are completed, excluding the sidewalk/crosswalk updates, which are currently in progress and will be completed by October 2023.

#### **Civic Campus**

- Command Centre: automatic doors added in the main corridor to the new Contact Centre A-Wing.

## General Campus

- Fifth floor Medical Day Care Unit: automatic door operators installed.
- Morgue Expansion: automatic doors incorporated at the entrance to the cooler room and the main corridor in the existing morgue.
- The Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre: widening the doors (three complete).
- The Ottawa Health Sciences Centre: sidewalks and crosswalks, which includes the General Campus, Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, The Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre and the University of Ottawa (Smyth Road) site, have been reviewed. We have identified 31 priority areas that require accessibility upgrades to meet current AODA standards. These include installing depressed curbs with tactile plates, high visibility painting and signage and additional compliant pathways and crosswalks. This work began in late October 2022 and is expected to be completed by October 2023.

## Throughout TOH

- Signage improvements.
- External signage/wayfinding enhancements.
- Lift installation – various in-patient units.

### *(Continued from page 8)* **Spotlight Story - Accessibility is a priority across TOH**

As work on the detailed design of the new hospital continues, accessibility will continue to be a priority for The Ottawa Hospital as a whole. The hospital’s internal Accessibility Office works to create an accessible environment at The Ottawa Hospital and ensure compliance with the AODA by raising awareness, training staff members, and identifying and removing barriers to accessibility. The office is closely involved with planning the new hospital and reviews designs at every stage of planning.

“Our accessibility team remains deeply committed to and engaged in the process of planning the new campus, while at the same time working to ensure all our sites are meeting requirements – and going beyond them wherever we can,” said Manon Laliberté, the manager responsible for TOH’s Accessibility Office. “The new campus gives us such a great opportunity to build in accessibility from the beginning of the planning process, and to create a great experience for our patients, visitors and staff.”

TOH has also established an accessibility consultative committee dedicated to reviewing new campus development project updates and providing feedback. TOH has presented to the City of Ottawa’s Accessibility Committee and held a public town hall on accessibility at the new campus in June 2022.

## **New Accessibility and Accommodations Policy for Physicians with Disabilities in the Department of Medicine**

All physicians with a documented disability are entitled to reasonable accommodations that will assist them in achieving excellence in their practice and patient care. Following up on their position statement from last year, Dr. Camille Munro, Dr. Michael Quon and Dr. Kathleen Gartke participated in the development of an accessibility and accommodations policy for physicians with disabilities in the Department of Medicine. This policy was approved in June 2022.

The policy states that the Department of Medicine will aim to provide reasonable accommodation to physicians with a documented disability through a barrier-free environment and with supports and services within the limits of available resources. It outlines in-detail the process and steps required in the recruitment and provision of reasonable accommodations, involving the Division Head and the Department of Medicine Human Resource Manager.

The policy also applies to physicians who have been absent due to disability and are on a return-to-work plan. Accommodation-related expenses up to a given amount will be covered by the department and division.

Finally, this policy ensures that physician leadership will explore possible ways that a physician can make a meaningful contribution to the department if they are no longer able to practice clinically due to their disability.

This is the first policy of its kind nationally and has generated significant interest from other leadership in this work. Dr. Quon is hopeful to continue building on this policy work in the year ahead in collaboration with one of the lead US researchers in this field, and with the support of his colleagues.

- Dr. Camille Munro, Dr. Michael Quon and Dr. Kathleen Gartke

## **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council**

The Ottawa Hospital Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Council (EDI) was formed with the purpose of influencing and impacting the implementation and operation of the hospital's strategic priority of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Specifically, the hospital is striving for a diverse and inclusive culture where staff, patients and the community feel welcome, respected, safe and valued in our environment.

This year, the EDI Council has been on a fact-finding mission, to gather people's feedback and ideas on how to make the hospital a more diverse and inclusive space. They've conducted more than 40 interviews, facilitated 16 hours of anonymous focus group sessions and received hundreds of comments and ideas.

The ideas and suggestions received formed the foundation for the EDI Council work plan, which includes the following nine initiatives:

1. Create an educational program.
2. Build an engagement campaign.
3. Support employee resources groups.
4. Integrate an incident reporting pathway.
5. Revise policies and procedures.
6. Assess the impact of council initiatives.
7. Propose an ethical data collection approach.
8. Engage with patients and the community.
9. Participate in review of protective services.

The EDI Council's respective working groups and key stakeholders will work to further develop and support the implementation of these initiatives, so we can continue to address inequities, under-representation, and discrimination at The Ottawa Hospital.

### **Interpretation Services**

As the pandemic continued to affect how our patients interact with their health-care team, interpretation services continued to work on ensuring services would not be interrupted due to in-person interpreter shortages. This work was done by rolling out five additional Mobile Interpreters (Mobis) which are now stationed at the Admitting/Patient Registration desks at the Civic, General and Riverside campuses and are available to all inpatient units for use.

Our Mobis, consisting of an iPad attached to a mobile stand and a Jabra speaker, support services for spoken languages as well as Sign Languages (ASL and LSQ) by connecting patients and their health care team to our primary virtual service vendor, Proprio, and secondary virtual service vendor, MCIS.

These five additional Mobis, along with the previous seven dedicated Mobis, have provided an essential service to our patients and their health care teams in emergency situations, or when an in-person interpreter was not available, or necessary.

For more information about the Mobis, or any of The Ottawa Hospital's interpretation services, please reach out to [interpretation@toh.ca](mailto:interpretation@toh.ca).

### **Providing Excellent and Compassionate Care for the Deaf at TOH**

The Ottawa Hospital's Deaf Patient and Family Advisory Council co-designed the "Providing Excellent and Compassionate Care for the Deaf at The Ottawa Hospital" Microsoft Sway site. This tool is to educate staff and increase their knowledge about providing care to the Deaf and hard of hearing population to provide a better patient experience. Some important facts on the site include how to access interpretation services at the hospital, myths and assumptions, information on Mobis, information on the Ottawa Deaf Health Care Team and more.

## Pro Vision 3000 Face Mask

Ordinary face masks make it very difficult for people with hearing loss or deafness because the mask blocks their ability to read lips. To overcome this communication barrier, Pro Vision 3000 clear face masks were added as a regular supply item at the hospital in early 2022. These face masks were approved for use in non-surgical environments. Internal communications were sent to all staff explaining that those who work directly with the public should have a supply of these masks, including screening tables (entrances), admission and clinical reception desks, emergency departments, in-patient units, units/services with staff members experiencing hearing loss and volunteer stations. Wearing a mask with a clear window greatly improves communication between staff and patients and reduces the risk of misunderstanding, improving both safety and patient experience. The communications also reiterated the hospital's duty to accommodate patients with deafness or hearing loss.

## Closing Remarks

The goal of a fully accessible Ontario by 2025 remains the guiding force of The Ottawa Hospital's commitment to accessibility. From the continued improvements being made at our existing campuses, to our engagement toward building a new, world-class hospital facility demonstrating global leadership in Universal Accessibility, we remain fully committed to removing the barriers that impact the lives of our patients, their families, and our colleagues.

As reflected in this report, 2022 was a year of progress for the Accessibility team, and we are excited to continue to build on these successes. As we look forward to 2023 and beyond, we see a growing and exciting field of opportunities including:

- Launching a new multi-year plan with clear, motivating, and impactful goals.
- Continuing to make necessary accessibility-related renovations at the three main campuses, including the completion of sidewalk and crosswalk updates.
- Further collaborating and growing our relationship with members of the community and stakeholders to inform the design of the new campus as we enter new phases of the planning and development process, including hosting additional town halls.
- Continuing to foster our unique partnership with the Department of Medicine, which will continue to grow, making The Ottawa Hospital an even better place to practice for all health-care professionals.

These are just some of the commitments and opportunities that the hospital will be engaging with to reach our accessibility goals and continue to raise the bar in accessibility. We are proud to lead the way on accessibility locally and provincially, and we are engaged in our quest of making the health-care sector equitable and inclusive for all our patients and their family members, staff, volunteers, and physicians living with disabilities.

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