



# McMaster Accessibility Council

## 2021 Annual Accessibility Activity Report

### MEMO

**DATE:** October 7, 2022

**SUBJECT:** McMaster Accessibility Council – 2021 Annual Accessibility Activity Report

**TO:** David Farrar, President

Susan Tighe, Provost and Vice President (Academic)

Saher Fazilat, Vice-President (Operations and Finance)

**FROM:** Anne Pottier, Chair, McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC)

Kate Brown, Accessibility Program Manager, Equity and Inclusion

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Please find enclosed, for your review, the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) annual accessibility activity report from the [McMaster Accessibility Council \(MAC\)](#), covering a period up until December 31, 2021.

The McMaster Accessibility Council, supported by the Equity and Inclusion Office Access Mac Program, is dedicated to advancing equity and inclusion for the diversity of persons with disabilities in our university community. The Council is responsible for ensuring the University's adherence to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

While it is encouraging that McMaster was found to be compliant across most measures in the last compliance reporting cycle to the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, there is still much work ahead to ensure the University meets updated compliance benchmarks set for 2025.

Over the last few years, efforts have been made to highlight the work done to shift culture and to establish strategic plans and frameworks related to accessibility, so specific compliance activities have not been the focus. This past year saw a re-introduction of compliance focus for certain levels of the university (senior leaders and directors), while we continued with culture shifting activities for managers, employees, students, and community members. Much work was undertaken to develop and administer an AODA Compliance Survey across all major areas of the University. The results of this

survey, as well as the AODA Website Audit, have provided the re-imagining of a roadmap to support working toward full compliance by provincial deadlines of 2025.

Furthermore, the MAC will be urging the University to continue to meet and move beyond compliance to realize more aspirational accessibility, equity, and inclusion goals, giving continued attention to:

- raising awareness
- ensuring accessibility in virtual environments which have become a staple for operational and academic excellence
- the need for additional resources to support all this work.

This year's report is being presented in a different format so that all the varied work related to accessibility being done on campus can be highlighted. The report is broken down into summarized sections of compliance-related activities that have taken place over the last year, with links and contacts for more information.

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# Part I: AccessMac Accessibility Program Annual Report 2020-2021

## Executive Summary

The [AccessMac Accessibility Program](#) within the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) has existed for over a decade. Its mandate is to form deliberate and strategic partnerships with faculty, staff, and students to create and maintain a culture of accessibility and disability inclusion on campus, to act as subject matter experts and provide consultation to the McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC), and to coordinate compliance obligations under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA 2005, S.O. 2005, c.11\)](#) on behalf of the University.

As reported in the [EIO's 2020-2021 Annual Report](#), the AccessMac Program has experienced substantial and unsustainable growth from 2018-2022. There has been increased demand and need for support with institutional strategic planning, project management and analysis, broad educational development and programming, disability community development and facilitated access, as well as individual / unit-level consultations. The Accessibility Program Manager has reported an increase of 177% in accessibility and disability inclusion-related consultations for McMaster community members over the 2018-2021 period, as well as a 25% increase in disability / support related consultations for students, staff, and faculty members with disabilities. Additional increases in educational programming, project, policy, and process development are documented in the 2020-2021 EIO Annual Report.

These increases can be attributed to several factors, including:

- the development of the EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Framework and Strategic Action Plan;
- the development of the Accessibility Program Manager Position;
- the increased focus on community-engaged and educationally focused strategies to underpin Program operations and approach;
- the overall rise in awareness of accessibility across the province and locally (rapidly increased by the shift to remote work/study environments due to COVID-19);
- web accessibility legislation requirements coming into effect this past January 1, 2021; and
- the ongoing development of the AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard.

The expectation of the Accessibility Program Manager is that consultations will continue to increase, with the rollout of the Campus AODA Web Accessibility Roadmap (co-sponsored by EIO and UTS (University Technology Services)) and the forthcoming movement of the [Post-Secondary Education Accessibility Standards \(PSEA\) Final Recommendation Report](#) into regulatory legislation in the coming months. Additional resourcing of the AccessMac Program is required to meet current programming capacity gaps, as well as to prepare the campus for the proposed PSEA Standard, comprised of approximately 185 new AODA recommendations (regulatory and non-regulatory) spanning all operations of the University, both academic and non-academic.

Additional AccessMac Program information, including full program data reporting and examples of notable successes and opportunities, is available from the [2020-2021 Equity and Inclusion Annual Report](#), beginning on page five (5).

## Part II: 2021 Accessibility Policy Review and Redevelopment

### Executive Summary

McMaster's Accessibility Policy has undergone continued and extensive review and redevelopment during 2021, including significant initial revising by the Associate Vice President (AVP) Equity and Inclusion, the Director Human Rights and Dispute Resolution Program, and the Accessibility Program Manager, in close consultation with the Chair and members of the MAC. The current draft focuses primarily on:

- Strengthening McMaster's commitments to accessibility as per the AODA and disability inclusion best practices, to facilitate both greater access and a sense of belonging for McMaster students, staff, and faculty members with disabilities.
- Formalizing policy review and reporting structures to strengthen cyclical reporting responsibilities and policy upgrades, as requirements under the [AODA's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#) continue to shift and evolve.
- Naming specific scope, roles, and responsibilities to facilitate a clearer understanding of centralized and distributed rights, expertise, and roles and responsibilities as they relate to current and future processes, policies, and units that operationalize AODA IASR requirements within a post-secondary context.
- Aligning the policy framework and definitions with other related campus-wide policies.

### Next Steps

From 2020-2022, various iterations of the Accessibility Policy Draft have been shared with all members of the MAC for authoring, consultation, and iterative integration of feedback to facilitate the development of a final draft to submit to the University Secretariat. The Accessibility Program Manager, in collaboration with Senior Human Rights Officers from the Equity and Inclusion Office and the MAC Co-Chairs, is coordinating with the Secretariat's Office to project manage and schedule public consultation for fall 2022. The Policy is expected to be presented to Senate and Board by late fall 2022 / early winter 2023.

# Part III: 2021 AODA Compliance Environmental Scan Survey

## Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

In preparation for the province's December 31, 2021, biennial AODA compliance reporting activities, McMaster Accessibility Council Co-Chairs co-sponsored in spring 2021 the development of an AODA Compliance Environmental Scan Survey. Institutional goals identified that the Survey sought to address included:

- (1) Facilitating the completion of the biennial 2021 Provincial Compliance Report with participation from all members of the MAC.
- (2) Identifying both central processes established, as well as distributed take up across units, of various accessibility policies and practices developed and facilitated to meet specific requirements under the AODA IASR.
- (3) Compiling and analyzing 2021 data to inform the ongoing development of McMaster's accessibility policy, accompanying multi-year accessibility strategy / plan, as well as future iterations of the Survey.

This self-reported data activity increased cross-institutional confidence when preparing and submitting the 2021 biennial report. However, a noted limitation has been identified in the collection and analysis of this data, primarily, that this was a Pilot year for the launch of the AODA Environmental Scan Survey and as such, unfamiliarity with the questions being asked as well as challenges in interacting with the tool itself were anticipated. Further iterations of this Survey and subsequent data collection will need to be refined and built into reporting cycles to ensure that the most accurate data is being collected and represented in future internal annual accessibility reports. An additional limitation should be noted that as the MAC is primarily comprised of administrative leaders across campus, academic leaders were excluded from participation in this Survey and were asked to focus their attention on participation in the AODA Website Audit Activity described in section four (IV) of this report.

This Survey was designed twofold as a campus-wide educational activity, and therefore incorporated communications, resources, and 1-1 support options for those participating when it was launched in fall 2021

## High-Level Results

The results are divided into Central Unit Responsibilities and Distributed Cross-Unit/Campus Responsibilities to better understand centralized process and policy development and cross-campus awareness and adoption of process/responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Please contact the Accessibility Program Manager at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca) for the full version of this report.

Please note that question fourteen (14)<sup>2</sup> from the 2021 compliance report related to web accessibility was excluded from this activity’s analysis and taken up solely through the AODA Website Audit and Reporting Project detailed in section four (IV) of this report.

## Central Unit Processes, Policies, and Responsibilities

Based on an 86% “Yes” response rate to **questions asked to and answered by five (5) central units<sup>3</sup> that oversee central accessibility processes and procedures**, McMaster University filed **“Yes, in compliance”** to questions listed on the 2021 Provincial Compliance Report that these units were able to answer in the affirmative. Further inquiry and analysis are required related to units reporting “I Don’t Know” and “Blank” (14% response rate), to discern if (1) the requirement listed as **centralized oversight / responsibility** fits better under the section of **distributed awareness / responsibility** and / or (2) the requirement requires a central process and / or mechanism for compliance evaluation to be put in place to meet the requirement and enhance future reporting confidence.

## Distributed Unit Awareness and Responsibilities

Seven AODA IASR requirements were selected based on their distributed nature (i.e., Cross-campus application and distributed take-up) and translated into statements to which respondents could answer “Yes”, “No”, “Not Applicable”, or “I Do Not Know”. **A total of forty-six (46) reports** were completed and returned to the Accessibility Program Manager by MAC-identified unit leads, who could choose to report as either **a single unit or as several separate units** reporting to the same MAC member / senior leader.

Table 1. 2021 AODA Compliance Environmental Survey Distributed Responsibility Statements

Statement #	Statement
1	Emergency procedures for my unit / area are accessible or able to be made accessible for persons with disabilities, upon request (e.g., if someone requests an accessible or alternative format).
2	All employees (including NEW employees) within my unit / area of responsibility have been made aware of existing University accessibility and accommodation supports available to them, including accommodation policies.
3	Accessible formats and communication support are provided for all employees with disabilities within my unit/area, when requested, to enable job and workplace understanding and responsibilities.

<sup>2</sup> As of January 1, 2021, do all of your organization’s internal websites conform to World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA (except for live captions and pre-recorded audio descriptions)?

<sup>3</sup> Equity and Inclusion Office, Facilities Services, Strategic Procurement, Human Resources Services, and McMaster Libraries.

4	My unit / area is aware of and enacting McMaster’s policy commitments regarding the Use of Service Animal and Support Persons On-Campus.
5	My unit / area is aware of and enacting McMaster’s Posted Notice of Temporary Disruptions of Service protocols where applicable.
6	Leaders, current employees, new employees, volunteers, and subcontractors within my unit / area are aware of and have taken McMaster’s central AODA and Human Rights Code training (approx. 30 mins to complete).
7	Where my unit / area provides feedback mechanisms to the McMaster / public, these mechanisms can be made accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request (e.g., provisions of alternative formats, communication supports, etc.).

Survey Quantitative Highlights

**1. Zero (0) statements provided yielded 100% “Yes, in compliance” responses**

- a. Three (3) statements yielded a “Yes” response of between 84-87%
- b. Two (2) statements yielded a “Yes” response of between 75-78%
- c. Two (2) statements yielded a “Yes” response of between 61-69%

Preliminary data might suggest a need for strategic planning and partnerships across campus to be strengthened or formed, to support both meeting distributed IASR regulatory requirements, as well as to support the maintenance of compliance once it has been met. Many of the IASR requirements that were translated into statements for this Survey have been regulatory for close to a decade and during the time that they were rolling into effect, policies, processes, and services may have been established to meet what may have been interpreted at the time as a **finite or time bound** requirement.

However, many AODA IASR requirements are not time bound and therefore require specific roles and maintenance plans to be established, as well as awareness around the requirements (rights and responsibilities) to be communicated on an ongoing basis. As an example, to support the completion of this Survey, the Accessibility Program Manager worked with specific unit leaders to create cross-campus communications explicitly stating requirements, and what employees and leaders could do to quickly come into compliance by / before the December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, provincial reporting deadline, increasing both unit-level and institutional confidence in responding “Yes” to questions on the 2021 Provincial Compliance Report. These communications were distributed to all MAC members, so that they could be further disseminated to all units under MAC members’ areas of responsibility. In future, these communications could be updated and recirculated across distributed units early in the year (January 1) preceding a provincial compliance reporting year (December 31 of that same year) for those requirements that simply require frequent reminders or awareness raised.

The following section will provide examples of qualitative themes and examples emerging from the 2021 Survey.



## Survey Qualitative Highlights

Thematic Analysis: Statement One (1) – “Emergency procedures for my unit / area are accessible or able to be made accessible for persons with disabilities, upon request”

Statement one (1) within the AODA Environmental Scan Survey was specifically analysed for common themes and quantitative responses, given the health and safety implications of this statement, in addition to conversations and consultations held with survey respondents prior to survey completion, indicating confusion and unawareness surrounding the requirement.

In total, 13 / 46 reports were returned to the Accessibility Program Manager with non “Yes, in compliance” responses, that is to say that **28% of participating units did not respond “Yes, in compliance” to Statement one (1)**. Additionally, out of the forty-six (46) reports returned, only three (3) provided specific plans detailing how the unit would provide emergency response plans in accessible or alternative formats, if requested by an employee with a disability(ies).

Further thematic analysis available from Appendix I of this report pointing to health and safety implications arising from the lack of awareness or misunderstanding of this specific requirement has resulted in a direct action to communicate results to McMaster’s Central Joint Health and Safety Committee via the MAC Co-Chairs, as well as Employee Health and Occupational Support Services via the Accessibility Program Manager, EIO. These groups have committed to developing and communicating a process to address Emergency Evacuation plans in the coming months.

### Additional Qualitative Themes Arising from Preliminary Analysis

The below section provides a snapshot summary of salient themes arising from additional context provided for “No”, “I Do Not Know”, “N/A”, “Partially”, and “Blank” responses to the question “Are you in compliance with these seven (7) distributed statements” included in the 2021 Survey and listed above. Qualitative responses provided for “Yes” responses were intentionally not included in this analysis to identify gaps more easily in awareness, process, and implementation of distributed AODA IASR responsibilities.

#### **Theme #1: Lack of disability representation and/or awareness in the workplace:**

Responses provided when responding “No” and “N/A” to distributed responsibility statements were at times related to unit leads stating that they had no employees with disabilities working in their unit (or that they were not aware of employees with disabilities working in their unit). Some units further indicated that should a request for support be made, action to put a process or plan into place, or to provide an alternative format, would be met.

This theme surfaced mostly in relation to statements that indicated a need for an employee with a disability to identify to their employer/manager a specific need for an accessibility support (e.g., accessible emergency response plan, accessible communication supports, workplace accommodation, etc.).

#### **Theme #2: Absence of accountability mechanism / procedure to validate compliance:**

Several units when responding “No”, “I Do Not Know”, and “Blank” (no response) indicated an assumption or belief that other units (i.e., not their unit) would or should be overseeing AODA compliance for their unit.

Other areas expressed not knowing who would be responsible for checking or validating specific compliance requirements to be able to confidently respond “Yes” or “Partially” on the Survey. Additionally, where a unit may have responded “I Do Not Know,” “Partially,” or “Blank,” responses indicate that the unit may have made staff **aware** of the requirement but did not indicate **how / if** they would be able to validate compliance with the requirement.

Overall, this theme surfaced most prevalently in relation to responding to distributed responsibility statement six (6): *Leaders, current employees, new employees, volunteers, and subcontractors within my unit / area are aware of and have taken McMaster’s central AODA and Human Rights Code training.*

**Theme #3: Lack of knowledge and/or confusion regarding AODA legislative compliance requirements:**

Units were provided team and leadership support by the Accessibility Program Manager in completing this Survey, where it was anticipated that there might be a lack of awareness of certain AODA requirements that had not previously appeared on a biennial government compliance report or had never previously been asked to campus community members broadly. This support helped to minimize the number of responses of this nature appearing on individual reports. There were, however, several responses provided that have identified several specific units as possibly requiring more targeted communication and implementation support efforts regarding distributed AODA IASR requirements.

Additional responses provided that are lacking in detail regarding **if / how** compliance is being achieved (either proactively or should the need arise) might also indirectly indicate that units could be experiencing confusion around understanding requirements, or the need for more training and unit-level planning regarding compliance requirements and distributed responsibilities.

**Theme #4: Appear to Comply, But Not Responding “Yes”**

Finally, and related to previous themes two and three, there were several qualitative responses provided that included thorough detail regarding how a given unit was taking steps or had taken steps to achieve compliance, but where the unit still replied, “I Do Not Know” or “No” to the question of “are you in compliance with XYZ requirement?”. There may be several reasons to explain a unit’s hesitancy in responding “yes” to compliance with institutional or unit-level confidence, including the newness of the requirement, a lack of compliance measurement mechanisms existing across the institution to validate compliance and/or a lack of full understanding surrounding the requirement itself.

## Conclusion

Participation across units under MAC members’ areas of responsibility was excellent with forty-six (46) reports to the Accessibility Program Manager in total, indicating a strong commitment and willingness to participate in AODA compliance-related activities across administrative areas of the University. It must be once again stated that this was the first time McMaster has conducted such an in-depth AODA compliance analysis, and as such, this activity will need to be carried out in future iterations to refine

self-reported data and interpretation. Preliminary data is already providing clarity regarding next steps in the development of a roadmap to meet updated AODA compliance benchmarks for 2025.

Initial areas of focus will include enhanced elevation of disability awareness and presence of persons with disabilities on campus and specifically in the workplace; clearer and more consistent communication of unit-level compliance roles and responsibilities to be developed in consultation with and distributed to units via MAC members; as well as the establishment of anticipated cyclical AODA auditing and reporting activities to correspond with provincial reporting cycles. One positive outcome from this year's activity has been the preliminary establishment of a distributed network for compliance reporting, which is of utmost importance in preparing for the release of the upcoming AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard, as this standard will require a steep increase in government compliance reporting requirements. The coordination of a such a complex distributed network will require focused oversight and resourced support to maintain activity sustainability.

## Next Steps

- The MAC Co-Chairs and Accessibility Program Manager will facilitate connect-backs to relevant unit leaders to share raw data and discuss further opportunities for development and support for their units.
- The AODA Scorecard will be reviewed for usefulness in documenting internal levels of compliance across units indicated through this year's Pilot activity, particularly where the "Yes, in compliance" responses were below 75%.
- The MAC Co-Chairs, the MAC, and the Accessibility Program Manager will collaborate to discuss actions moving forward, exploring where strategic planning can be built into or aligned with the development of MAC members' current strategic plans and / or if the development of a specific Accessibility Strategic Multi-Year Roadmap and Action Plan is required.

## Part IV: AODA Website Audit and Reporting Results

### Executive Summary

McMaster University senior leadership endorsed and provided support for an institution wide AODA Web Accessibility Compliance Roadmap in 2021. The Roadmap has successfully advanced over the last two semesters with the first AODA Website Audit and Reporting Project. The report that was generated from this activity provides an update on key accomplishments and a summary of the data collected from the AODA Website Audit and Reporting Project, providing a benchmark on compliance to date as well as projected timeframes for meeting compliance across all areas of the institution. The full Web Accessibility Audit Report has not been included in this Accessibility Activity Report but can be accessed by contacting the McMaster Accessibility Council at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca). As a result of the reporting information gathered, McMaster has indicated a **Non-Compliance status** on web accessibility as part of its overall AODA Reporting obligations, in late 2021. Recommendations for next steps in moving forward institutional priorities and accompanying actions listed within the Web Audit Report are listed below:

## Next Steps

Given the report results, the following recommendations (non-exhaustive) have been developed for consideration and to inform the next project in the AODA Web Accessibility Compliance Roadmap, slated for Winter 2022. There will need to be discussion and endorsement of these activities before proceeding, with accountability at the Dean and AVP level, or above.

- Share the Web Audit report with all the AODA Website Audit respondents and accountable unit leaders
- Communicate to the campus community that the first phase of the AODA Website Audit Reporting Project has been completed and share high level findings and next steps (including communicating the imperative and timelines to achieve AODA compliance and aspiration beyond compliance, and the need for a networked leadership approach to achieve these goals through unit-level investment and implementation supported by central coordination and auditing responsibilities)
- The Web Accessibility Strategist will develop, in consultation with the Accessibility Program Manager, a Web Accessibility Resource Guide to support web developers, designers and content managers in the ongoing translation, implementation, and validation of currently regulated 2.0 AA compliance standards while aiming for 2.1 compliance levels where possible for future proofing
- Working with the Web Accessibility Strategy team and using a templated planning document provided by the team, unit leaders will examine challenges in achieving compliance by December 31, 2022, and develop a plan for accelerating compliance which includes resources needed
- Unit plans will be compiled by the Web Accessibility Strategy team and presented to the McMaster Accessibility Council for review and recommendation on how to resource implementation
- Include in the new Accessibility Policy an accountability mechanism for unit leaders to approve and sign-off on AODA compliance reports, including web accessibility audits
- Engage Communications and Public Affairs leads on the task of aligning brand standards with AODA Compliance requirements to ensure all centrally provisioned/designed/templated websites are consistent
- Ensure the continuity of the web accessibility priority by imbedding in strategic EDI and IT (Information Technology) plans and governance mechanisms.

## Part V – Campus Accessibility Action Plan Updates

### Executive Summary

The first Campus Accessibility Action Plan (CAAP) five-year plan was submitted and approved in 2012 and finished in 2017. Subsequently, [CAAP Phase 2](#) was approved in 2018 and we are in the last year of this plan.

### **Numerous CAAP projects were undertaken and completed in 2021-22:**

- Campus Services Building (CSB) Accessibility Upgrades Grant Application (Federally supported [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#))
- Accessibility audits for McMaster University owned buildings, which will be completed by fall 2022
- Water fountain / water refill audits and multi-year master plan for future installation
- Applied Dynamics Laboratory (ADL) - elevator installation
- General Science Building (GSB) - 3<sup>rd</sup> floor accessible washroom addition
- John Hodgins Engineering (JHE) - barrier free washrooms (south and north washrooms)
- Chester New Hall (CNH) - accessible washrooms B110 and B111 upgrades
- Hamilton Hall (HH) - accessible washrooms upgrades (all levels)
- Nuclear Research Building (NRB) - accessible washroom upgrades
- Ivor Wynne Centre (IWC) - barrier free washroom renovations
- Chester New Hall (CNH) - barrier free washroom 506A modifications
- General Science Building (GSB) – modifications to accessible parking and new accessible sidewalk to the main entrance door
- Psychology Building A 205 and A203 - barrier free washroom modifications
- Automated door operator in corridor to Smith Gym
- SAS (Student Accessibility Services) testing centre washroom – Automated Door Operator (ADO) installation
- Modifications to Mills Library – improvements to signage, barrier free washrooms, and stairs

### **The following projects are planned for the upcoming months:**

- Modifications to barrier free washrooms in Togo Salmon Hall (TSH) B119, B120 and 202A
- Spinal Cord Injury washroom accessibility upgrades.
- Upgrading all-genders washroom signage of all washrooms across campus to McMaster's new Barrier Free standard.
- Adding an additional all-genders barrier free washroom in Thode Library (205/B).
- Feasibility study for adding an elevator to make the sub-basement level of Burke Science Building (BSB) accessible.
- Campus Services Building accessibility project that will add a ramp, elevator, barrier free washrooms, accessible reception counter and accessible meeting room to the building (Project estimated at \$2M with \$1M coming from the Enabling Accessibility Fund).
- Water fountain upgrades

## **Next Steps**

Facility Services expects to complete accessibility audits of all McMaster University buildings by August 2022. The audit results and recommendations will form the basis for the CAAP Phase 3. The current funding level of \$337,000 per year is inadequate based on current estimates and CAAP Phase 3 will need additional funding to implement the recommendations laid out in the accessibility audits.

The approval of the Enabling Accessibility Grant for \$1M is the biggest grant Facility Services has obtained to date. Previously, Facility Services obtained \$50,000 each on two occasions from the Enabling Accessibility Fund. The Campus Services Building (CSB) and the Applied Dynamics Lab (ADL) were two important multi-level, highly trafficked, and physically inaccessible buildings on campus. To date, ADL has been fitted with an elevator - project completed last year - and is now elevator accessible. With funding from the Enabling Accessibility Fund, funding contributions from CAAP Phase 2, as well as additional monies from Facility Operating Capital, the CSB will become an accessible building.

## Part VI – McMaster Accessibility Community Updates

While the new reporting focus of McMaster’s Annual Activity Report has shifted to specific AODA-compliance related activities, one section of this report will continue to shed light on accessibility cultural and community development-related activities across the institution that have taken place within that given calendar year.

### McMaster’s Employee Accessibility Network

Established in 2017, the [Employee Accessibility Network \(EAN\)](#) was created for employees with disabilities at the University to connect, network, and collaborate. The Network was also developed to act as one of the main consultative groups to the McMaster Accessibility Council, and the University at large, in areas of:

- Disability inclusion;
- Accommodations;
- Legislative compliance; and
- Aspirational accessibility and disability-inclusion planning for Disabled employees / employees with disabilities.

Comprised of more than 100 list serve members and growing, the EAN also offers a lens of lived experience to institutional work carried out that may disproportionately impact employees with disabilities in the absence of consultation.

**This past year, the Network has worked together to consult and provide feedback in several areas, including:**

- Feedback on the disproportionately negative impacts of COVID on members of the McMaster community with disabilities – particularly those who are immune-compromised and/or experience communication barriers – was shared with the Associate Vice-President, Equity and Inclusion (AVP EI), as well as Return to Campus Planning committees, during summer 2021.
- Feedback on integrating critical accessibility and disability perspectives into the emerging Inclusive Excellence Guide for Researchers under the University’s [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategy](#).

To read more about the Network’s consultative and peer support work, please read the [Employment section](#) from this year’s [Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2020-2021](#).

## Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2020-2021

[The Annual Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update](#) is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of publication, collecting and highlighting accessibility and disability-inclusion related projects, activities, networks, research, and scholarship generation carried out by McMaster students, staff, and faculty in any given year.

This year's publication expanded its 2021 Call for Submissions into winter 2022 and was released to mark celebration and raise awareness for [McMaster's National Accessibility Week 2022](#). Containing more than seventy (70) updates from close to fifty (50) contributing individuals and units, the Update has been moved this past year into an accessible, open-source Pressbooks format and contains the following table of contents to learn more about incredible collective work being carried out across the institution in different areas:

- [Community Building and Engagement at McMaster](#)
- [Community Building Beyond McMaster](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Policies and Plans](#)
- [Scholarly Community-Engaged Publications and Research](#)
- [Spaces and Environments \(Built and Virtual\)](#)
- [Student Initiatives](#)
- [Student Support and Service Delivery Upgrades](#)
- [Teaching and Learning: Accessibility and Disability Inclusion in Research, Instruction, and Course-Level Enhancements](#)
- [Teaching and Learning: Accessible Online and Technology-Enabled Learning](#)

## December 3<sup>rd</sup>: International Day of Persons with Disabilities Programming 2021

The AccessMac Program (EIO) and the [Disability Inclusion, Madness, Accessibility, and NeuroDiversity \(DIMAND\)](#) Working Group (President's Advisory Committee for Building an Inclusive Community) collaborated to co-create three (3) consecutive days of programming commemorating and celebrating December 3<sup>rd</sup>: International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021, including:

1. **Critical Mad / Disability Flash Presentations (December 1<sup>st</sup>)** – A full day event of “flash” presentations to highlight Critical Mad and Disability Studies scholarship, with a focus on supporting new / upcoming scholars.
2. **The 3 Fs of Food (In)Accessibility Disability DIScussion (December 2<sup>nd</sup>)** – Led by [MSU \(McMaster Student Union\) Maccess](#), this talk focused on intersectional impacts of food inaccessibility for persons with disabilities and allergies, low-income people, and persons of faith.
3. **Assistive Technology – Lived Experiences and Uses (December 3<sup>rd</sup>)** – A panel discussion led by AccessMac and DIMAND, this event highlighted the expertise of fluent users of assistive technologies, with broader discussions facilitated around assistive technology experiences and use for accessibility testing and best business practice.

These events were wonderfully attended – spanning 50 – 100 participants per event / day – supporting the centring of intersectional Disabled voices in work, scholarship, and community. For more

information about these events, as well as goals and institutional recommendations put forth by PACBIC DIMAND members to the University for the upcoming year, please read [PACBIC's 2021-2022 Annual Report](#).

## Moving Forward

This past year saw an additional change to the composition of the McMaster Accessibility Council, with the addition of the office of the AVP, Research. This addition ensures we are communicating with all areas of the University which need to be involved in enabling our current Accessibility Plan and to participate as we start planning for the work to be done as part of the pending AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard.

The 2020-2021 academic year continued to see increased collaboration and communication around the many accessibility related initiatives which took place across campus, culminating in the development of the 4th annual [Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update](#). It was wonderful to read the more than 70 submissions which came in from 50+ units and to reflect on what inspirational and creative work is being in this area across campus. Additionally notable has been the increase in submissions from McMaster's academic community – researchers, faculty, course instructors, course designers, and Teaching Assistants – accounting for more than 1/3 of the entire 2020-2021 publication, across several Update categories.

This past year also saw the inaugural launch of the new AODA Compliance Environmental Scan Survey which provided a snapshot of where we are in terms of overall AODA compliance for our core administrative units on campus, as well as the completion of the initial AODA Website Audit and Reporting Project.

For the coming year we will be sharing the updated University's Policy on Accessibility, working on next steps related to institutional accessibility planning based on the past year's findings, working towards completion of the next phase of the AODA Web Accessibility Compliance Roadmap, and developing implementation plans related to the pending AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard legislation. Early work in all these areas indicates there will be a need for more resourcing and coordinated efforts across campus, something which will need to be monitored over the next several years.

We continue to be excited looking ahead to how accessibility and disability-inclusion flourishes in 2022.

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