



**City of Kingston**  
**Information Report to Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee**  
**Report Number MAAC-23-012**

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**To:** Chair and Members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

**From:** Jennifer Campbell, Acting Commissioner, Community Services

**Resource Staff:** Colin Wiginton, Director, Arts & Culture Services

**Date of Meeting:** September 7, 2023

**Subject:** Annual Accessibility Update, Arts & Culture Services

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: Corporate business

Goal: See above

**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide the members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) with an update regarding the work of the Arts & Culture Services Department as it relates to supporting accessibility in various forms that are intended to help remove barriers to participation in arts and culture as offered by the City of Kingston. In previous years, the work of the Department was reported on in tandem with Heritage Services as part of the Cultural Services Department, but following an internal reorganization that took place in May 2021 as outlined through [Report Number MAAC-22-008](#), this is the first time the work of the Arts & Culture Services Department has been reported on its own.

Accessibility and the removal of barriers to participation continues to be key to the mission and vision of the Arts & Culture Services Department that includes organizing and leveraging the resources, knowledge and experience of the City of Kingston, along with its partners, to build cultural vitality within the arts and cultural sectors and throughout the community. Accessibility is also something that is always considered in relation to the delivery of the Department's core services that include (1) asset management and development, (2) programming, (3) sector development and (4) cultural development.

This report includes updates related to work completed in 2022 as well as information related to work currently being pursued in 2023. In 2022, staff worked to respond to the pent-up demand for arts and cultural experiences that emerged as COVID-19 restrictions lifted while also continuing to complete the implementation of the relevant recommendations included as part of the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Staff also helped to inform the development of the 2023-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan approved by MAAC and by Council in November 2022, while also continuing to deliver on the Department's core services and anticipating how best to fulfill the new Strategic Priorities identified by Council following the 2022 municipal election.

**Recommendation:**

This report is for information only.

**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

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**Jennifer Campbell, Acting  
Commissioner, Community  
Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Major Projects & Strategic Initiatives	Not required
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

## **Options/Discussion:**

2022 was a year of change and transition for the Arts & Culture Services Department as government restrictions that had impacted the arts and culture sectors since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic finally began to lift. Where possible, alternative forms of access and programming had been developed and delivered throughout 2020 and 2021 as previously shared through [Report Number MAAC-22-008](#) but things changed in March 2022 when performing arts venues like the Kingston Grand Theatre were able to open. This meant participation in the arts and culture could resume with a certain amount of normalcy for the first time in two years.

Despite the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, staff continued to work to complete the implementation of the recommendations included as part of the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan while also helping to inform the development of the 2023-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan approved by MAAC and by Council in November 2022. This report includes an overview of the work pursued by the Arts & Culture Services Department in 2022 along with information about efforts to address accessibility issues and to remove barriers to participation in arts and culture in the first half of 2023.

### **Kingston Grand Theatre, Site Operations, 2022-2023**

The Kingston Grand Theatre was able to re-open again in a phased way starting on March 2, 2022, and returned at full capacity on March 21, 2022, in keeping with all Provincial guidelines and public health requirements. The venue rental program restarted at that time alongside the presentation of a Grand OnStage Mini Season between March and May that featured 12 shows and sold 6,774 tickets that provided positive indications audiences were keen to return to live, in-person performing arts events.

The summer season was also busy with a select number of local dance schools returning to present their year-end recitals and the Kingston Grand Theatre also hosted the return of the Fringe Festival and The Kick & Push Festival in July and August 2022 that included 121 performances, featuring work by IBPOC and Francophone artists. The first full, post-pandemic season of Grand OnStage also returned in September 2022 and targeted audience outreach was pursued that leveraged a combination of existing and new discount ticket programs, including a new 'artists and arts worker' pricing strategy, that helped to provide 796 people with access to the performing arts by removing financial barriers.

### **Fulfilling the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

#### **Customer Service**

The Arts & Culture Services Department continued to pursue multiple actions in 2022 to improve the customer service experience both directly and indirectly through partnership agreements with external organizations, where applicable.

## **Policies and Practices, Service Level Agreements**

Ensure all organizations who enter into Service Level Agreements with the City of Kingston comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

All partnership agreements continue to be vetted by the Legal Services Department to ensure the organizations funded by the City of Kingston meet AODA requirements. The primary partnership agreements in place that are managed by the Arts & Culture Services Department include the following:

- [Kingston Arts Council](#) that includes the administration of the [City of Kingston Arts Fund](#) and the [Kingston Theatre Alliance](#) that includes the annual presentation of the Kick & Push Festival along with multiple professional development opportunities throughout the year.

## **Policies and Practices, Strategic Planning**

Consider and integrate accessibility to all new strategic initiatives that arise based on Council's Strategic Priorities and/or community needs.

- **Creative Industries Strategy:** The implementation of this Strategy continued to be led by the Arts & Culture Services Department in 2022 with the support of key partners in the community. The Strategy includes six main themes around which the work is structured that includes:
  - *Reinforce Diversity and Inclusion:* In 2022, this work included pursuing research and consultation to identify best practices and to establish commitments that support equity, diversity, inclusion and access related to the creative industries that includes supporting mixed abilities artists as well as artists and creatives from various equity deserving communities.
- **Kingston Music Strategy:** In 2022, staff started work to develop a Kingston Music Strategy. This was a multi-stage process, with various opportunities for public engagement, and a final draft Strategy is currently being developed that will be presented to Committee and Council later in 2023. The Strategy includes numerous references and connections to accessibility priorities and includes Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) as a Foundational Principle, which is a lens being applied to address issues such as the creation of accessible spaces and places for musicians to use and to improving access and inclusion by removing barriers for musicians and music workers through improved municipal supports.

## **Policies and Practices, Programming and Pricing**

Review best practices within the cultural and heritage sectors and identify community needs related to accessible programming and pricing for the performing arts and cultural programming, and make recommendations specific to the Kingston Grand Theatre, Grand OnStage...

### **Arts Programming**

Throughout 2022, programming developed and delivered by the Arts & Culture Services Department, often in collaboration with community partners, continued to be responsive to the needs of a diversity of residents. Some of that programming included the following:

- **Grand OnStage, Music Education Video Series:** This free Video Series was developed when the Kingston Grand Theatre was closed to reach students and educators and to engage them in performing arts programming during the pandemic. The Video Series features six local Kingston musicians who perform but also share their experiences and insights as local artists who have trained and are pursuing professional careers in music. A study and learning guide was created by a local teaching artist to accompany the Video Series and it continues to be made available to educators [by request](#) and, to date, 49 classes have registered to access the videos free of charge, totaling approximately 1,225 students.
- **Poet Laureate Mentorship Program:** In partnership with the Kingston Frontenac Public Library, the Poet Laureate Mentorship Program led by Jason Heroux, was offered free of charge for local area poets and is a program that fosters sector development, which is a core service of the Arts & Culture Services Department.
- **Summer Arts Programming:** Six artists from music and visual arts disciplines were contracted in 2022 to work with four care facilities to deliver targeted programs for participants at Fairmount Home, Extend-A-Family Kingston, Extencare Kingston and Rideaucrest Home. The program was designed to engage local professional artists to deliver safe, meaningful, high-quality arts experiences to community partner sites across Kingston whose residents and clients were most impacted by isolation throughout the pandemic and who had limited access to in-person engagement due to COVID-19 related public health protocols.
- **Artist Development and the Kingston Grand Theatre Local Arts Residency Program:** The [Local Arts Residency Program](#) returned to the Kingston Grand Theatre in July 2022, and again in July 2023, providing free space and technical support to local artists. Participants were paid an honorarium and were also provided space and technical support in-kind. Highlight videos were produced and hosted on the Kingston Grand Theatre [YouTube channel](#), with closed captioning, to provide insight and access into each residency experience. An open call for submissions is issued each year and

applications are assessed by an arms-length jury that includes artists who have been presented as part of Grand OnStage. The Local Arts Residency Program is open to artists of all abilities and its main purpose is to use the resources of the Kingston Grand Theatre to provide Kingston artists with the opportunity to experiment and create new work.

- **Mayor's Arts Awards:** The annual Mayor's Arts Awards was presented in hybrid form, and with American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, from Memorial Hall, Kingston City Hall, on November 9, 2022. Profile videos featuring each of the award recipients were created and posted online via the City of Kingston's [YouTube channel](#) with closed captioning in place to increase access.
- **Grand OnStage, Expanded Engagement:** The Grand OnStage 2022-2023 season featured expanded engagement offerings that built on an already robust program. 2,300 people participated in these programs that focused on contracting local artists to facilitate a variety of talks, workshops and master classes that highlighted the increasingly diverse range of work being presented by racialized, Indigenous, queer and mixed abilities artists in particular. Where possible, scripts related to Grand OnStage presentations were made available on request to patrons experiencing hearing loss.
- **Grand OnStage, School Performance Program:** This program returned in person in relation to the Grand OnStage 2022-2023 season and featured the best in professional theatre, dance, music, circus and Indigenous presentations from across Canada and around the world. All shows are selected because they connect with the Ontario curriculum and because they often offer access to live performances that highlight diversity and the experiences of equity deserving communities, with shows like ILL-Abilities International Dance Crew that features mixed ability artists from around the world. The ticket price for all school performances is also kept low at \$8 per student and 4,252 participated in the 2022-2023 season.

## Pricing

- Removing financial barriers to the performing arts and cultural programming continues to be a priority for the Arts & Culture Services Department. Since 2017, the Kingston Grand Theatre has participated in the [Municipal Fee Assistance Program](#) (MFAP). For the 2022-2023 Grand OnStage Season, 22 of the Season's performances had MFAP transactions, which is approximately 44% of the Season's shows, with the top MFAP show being *The Nutcracker*. Other discount programs offered in relation to Grand OnStage includes the Impact program (for youth under the age of 30), the Newcomer's Access Pass through Kingston Immigration Partners along with additional youth and military discounts and discounts with a Kingston Transit Pass. In 2022, renewed efforts were made to build awareness of these discount programs and to rebuild consumer

confidence and participation in the arts and culture as facilities and programs come back online more fully after a two-year gap. That included building increased awareness of the 'artists and arts worker' pricing strategy and the introduction of a Dance School Discount Pilot Program that provided local dance schools with access to \$5 tickets to Grand OnStage dance performances.

### **Clear and Accessible Communications**

The Arts & Culture Department continues to pursue actions to ensure the delivery of clear and accessible communications:

- **Public Art Signage:** Continue to consult with the MAAC Public Art Project Team to review options for onsite public art signage.

A Public Art Project Team has been established through MAAC and staff responsible for facilitating the Public Art Program continue to engage with them on various public art projects and programs, including the development of onsite signage.

### **Enhancing Accessibility of Our Public Spaces**

The Arts & Culture Services Department is pursuing actions to enhance the accessibility of the venues it manages:

- **Infrastructure Planning and Projects, Public Art:** Ensure all public art projects comply with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment and align with Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS), where possible.

No major, new capital public art projects have been installed since 2021 and staff have been focusing on temporary public art projects that engage local artists.

### **Initiating Work Related to the 2023-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

In 2022, staff also began work to address the actions identified and approved as part of the 2023-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, with a focus on removing barriers and improving access above and beyond the legislated requirements and ensuring accessibility considerations are incorporated into the day-to-day operation of the City of Kingston as stated.

The community feedback received and reported by Two Canes Consulting, in response to the Draft Accessibility Plan, has also been reviewed and continues to be considered as part of the day-to-day operations of the Arts & Culture Services Department. Therefore, what follows is high level information outlining the work being pursued by Arts & Culture Services specific to the key standards identified that relate to the work of the Department.



## Customer Service

Continue to improve access related to the patron experience at the Kingston Grand Theatre through ongoing staff training and based on industry best practices. Work to remove barriers related to accessing arts funding through the City of Kingston Arts Fund.

- **Kingston Grand Theatre:** As reported last year, through [Report Number MAAC-22-008](#), accessibility-related enhancements were made to the Kingston Grand Theatre starting in 2021 that were completed in 2022. Those enhancements were prompted by a brand refresh launched in October 2021 and elements of that refresh were also integrated as part of the interior building design. The primary purpose of that integration was to engage patrons as part of the brand refresh, but it also provided an opportunity to improve accessibility as patrons returned to the facility once pandemic-related restrictions were lifted. Those enhancements relate to light levels in the main lobby as well as in relation to colour contrasts to the walls, floors and doors. Detectable warning surfaces were also added to the interior staircases and improved stair nosing has also been installed in accordance with the 2019 FADS.
- **Review of the City of Kingston Arts Fund:** In 2023, staff issued an Invitational Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Consulting Services for a Review of the City of Kingston Arts Fund. This is a long-standing strategic project that will reassess the needs and opportunities facing the local arts sector and make recommendations on how the City of Kingston Arts Fund can evolve and continue to be responsive. Within the Invitational RFQ, it was noted that the work required is expected to be rooted in community and involve broad public consultation and will be done from a place that prioritizes equity, diversity and inclusion and applies the City of Kingston's IIDEA lens to all phases of the work required, and especially as it relates to any recommendations to be made. This is further stated as part of the Public Engagement and Consultation section of the RFQ, requiring that the consultants make a focused effort to speak with artists, arts workers and residents who are part of the following equity deserving groups: Indigenous, Black, other racialized individuals, Francophone, recent immigrants, Deaf and disability, and the LGBTQ2S+ community, and that budget for participation fees must be provided for engagement with any equity deserving groups. Additionally, the RFQ names the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee as a Committee to be engaged and consulted with as part of the Review process.

## Information and Communication

Provide multiple points of entry for residents related to arts programming and projects, including Grand OnStage and the installation of temporary and permanent public art projects.

- **Grand OnStage and the Grand OnStage School Performance Program:** The Arts & Culture Services Department has more control over these programs in terms of

addressing accessibility issues and the removal of barriers. That differs from what is generally possible in relation to the Kingston Grand Theatre itself, which primarily hosts community and commercial rentals over which the City of Kingston has no control. That means the Arts & Culture Services Department is able to leverage Grand OnStage and the Grand OnStage School Performance Program to present content, offer engagement opportunities and to build community-based relationships that put accessibility front and centre. The upcoming Grand OnStage 2023-2024 season includes performances that highlight Indigenous and mixed abilities artists and that also explores issues related to neurodiversity, OCD, autism, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. These presentations are always well received, and the quality of the programming often creates opportunities to partner with organizations that serve specific communities. For example, each season, Grand OnStage welcomes adult day program participants and care providers from Ongwanada, a local non-profit organization supporting people with developmental disabilities, who attend education performances. Staff are also working with Autism Ontario, the province's largest collective voice representing the Ontario autism community, to bring a group of 120 young people and their families to see a presentation of the play [\*It's Okay to be Different\*](#) in November 2023.

- **Summer Arts Programming:** Staff were able to expand this programming in 2023 to reach children and youth through summer camps in partnerships with the Boys & Girls Club (Rideau Heights Community Centre) and the YMCA (Rideau Heights Community Centre and Wright Crescent) as well as to reach seniors through continuing partnerships with Fairmount Home, Extend-A-Family Kingston, Extendicare Kingston and Rideaucrest Home. That meant the number of community partners increased from 4 to 7 in 2023 and the number of participating artists also increased from 8 to 16. A highlight of the 2023 summer arts programming also included a special, fully accessible performance with Erin Ball and Kingston Circus Arts on August 31, 2023 for residents of Rideaucrest Home.
- **Public Art Projects:** Starting in 2023, phased work will begin on three large-scale public art projects including public art as part of the Waaban Crossing, the Rideau Heights Community Centre and the East End Community Centre. The Public Art Project team will be re-engaged in a more sustained way to collaborate on the public art process to ensure accessibility is being prioritized throughout all phases of these projects, including opportunities for public engagement and conversation, juries, location of the public artworks and signage.
  - As momentum around the Public Art Program continues to build, accessibility and the removal of barriers are key to ensuring equitable access to all public artworks. All projects are completed in compliance with the Ontario Building Code requirements related to accessibility and they also align with the 2019 FADS, where possible.

- **Leveraging Partnerships:** Through the Service Level Agreements with the Kingston Arts Council, Kingston Theatre Alliance and at City-owned arts spaces, including the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, it's identified that these organizations provide services on behalf of the City that are in alignment with arts and culture strategies and priorities, as well as broader municipal priorities including Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities that includes advancing IIDEA in the corporation. This has resulted in the partner organizations delivering equity and accessibility-based programming, professional development and opportunities for residents of Kingston. For example, the Tett Centre recently launched a call for a Tett Artist Residency for local emerging artists and they are holding dedicated residency space for an artist from an equity-deserving group.

### **Design of Public Spaces**

Improve physical access related to the performance areas within the Kingston Grand Theatre (where possible).

- **Kingston Grand Theatre, Accessibility Audit of Performance Spaces:** As shared last year, through [Report Number MAAC-22-008](#), staff worked with the firm +VG Architects, along with DesignABLE Environments, to complete an accessibility audit of the performance spaces within the Kingston Grand Theatre. That included both the Regina Rosen Auditorium as well as the Baby Grand. The results of that work were summarized for MAAC previously and staff within Arts & Culture Services have worked with staff from Facilities Management & Construction Services to determine which of the projects identified could be implemented. At this juncture, it has been determined it should be possible to convert the existing women's washroom adjacent to the Baby Grand to an accessible dressing room/washroom. Those costs have been incorporated as part of the 2024 capital budgets and the plan is to start the planning process required in late 2023 with construction to follow in 2024. Members of MAAC will be engaged in the planning work required when the time comes.

### **Existing Policy/By-Law:**

None

### **Notice Provisions:**

None

### **Accessibility Considerations:**

None

**Financial Considerations:**

None

**Contacts:**

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**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

Danika Lochhead, Manager, Arts & Sector Development, Arts & Culture Services

Dianne Zemba, Manager, Grand Theatre, Arts & Culture Services

**Exhibits Attached:**

None