



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee - Meeting Agenda
April 29, 2021 – 5:30p.m.

In-Person Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS

Agenda is subject to change due to additions that may not be able to be reflected until after the meeting.

1. Call to Order

2. Attendance

Voting: Debbie Francis, Denise Long, Jordan Stephens, Roseanna Boyd, Mike Colter, Jennifer Davison, and Michael Bourgeois.

Staff Support (non-voting): Mark Phillips, Saira Shah, Bekah Craik, Troy Burgess, Shelleena Thornton.

3. Approval of the Agenda (including additions or deletions)

4. Approval of Minutes – March 18, 2021

5. Unfinished Business

- a) Terms of Reference adoption (attached)
- b) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair (attached)

6. New Business

- a) Presentation(s)
 - i. Carla Bezanson, Program Coordinator for the Accessibility Directorate (attached)
- b) NS Accessibility Toolkit Information (attached)
 - i. Accessibility Plans of other Municipalities (East Hants, Lunenburg, Wolfville) (attached)
- c) Experiential Learning Planning (verbal)
 - i. Committee information gathering
 - ii. Experiential learning community experience
- d) 2021/22 Accessibility Committee Resources (Budget) (attached)
 - i. Accessibility Consultant Discussion
 - ii. Experiential learning budget impact

7. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee - Meeting Agenda
March 18, 2021 - 1:00 p.m.

In-Person Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS

Agenda is subject to change due to additions that may not be able to be reflected until after the meeting.

1. Call to Order
2. Attendance / Introductions
3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
4. Approval of previous meeting minutes – None
5. Unfinished Business – None
6. New Business
 - a) Presentation(s)
 - i. Accessibility Introduction – Planner Saira Shah (attached)
 - b) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair (attached)
 - c) Draft Terms of Reference (attached)
 - d) NS Accessibility Toolkit Information (attached)
 - e) Accessibility Consultant Information (verbal)
7. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Accessibility Advisory Committee – Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2021 - 1:00 p.m.

In-Person Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS
& Virtual Meeting via Zoom & Facebook Live

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 1:02 pm

2. Attendance / Introductions

Debbie Francis, Councilor, District 5	Troy Burgess, Mgr., Public Works Operations
Jennifer Davison, Resident Member	Bekah Craik, Active Living Coordinator
Jordan Stephens, Resident Member	Roseanna Boyd, Resident Member
Denise Long, Resident Member	Michael Bourgeois – Resident Member
Mark Phillips, CAO	Saira Shah, Planner
Shelleena Thornton, Admin Supervisor	

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

No minutes to approve.

4. Unfinished Business

No unfinished business.

5. New Business

a) Accessibility Introduction – Overview of accessibility in Nova Scotia, provincial commitment, Accessibility Act, related statistics, Municipal expectations

Discussion Points

- Department of Justice (DOJ) responsible for accessibility.
- Groups addressing accessibility (1) the built environment; (2) education.
- Committee’s responsibility is to address built environment, not education.

- Expectation to incorporate accessibility / inclusivity through review of municipal infrastructure (facilities, sidewalks, trails, parks, signage, etc.).
- Education links in presentation.
- Comprehensive accessibility plans already drafted (Town of Kentville, Town of Wolfville and Municipality of the District of Lunenburg), worthwhile to circulate for review.
- Opportunity to align our plan, considering all aspects of our unique region.
- Plan can be more detailed if the expectations within the Act are met.
- Work with other groups to incorporate accessibility from the beginning.
- Look for opportunity to link with other funding / grant applications.
- Active Transportation Plan, Active Living Strategy and Strategic Plan for the Municipality provide opportunities for synergies.
- Request to call the committee the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee
- Use Municipal social media platforms to inform and promote accessibility grants and other funding opportunities.
- Does DOJ offer an accessibility presentation, package, or representative who could visit with the committee to help understand goals and responsibilities? To be investigated.

b.) NS Accessibility Toolkit - Why are we here; where do we come from; what are we thinking? What is your current experience of accessibility in West Hants? What is working / not working?

Discussion Points

- Assessing public facilities and costs, understanding legislation.
- Meeting standards in a way that benefits residents.
- Advocating for residents with disabilities who struggle with access.
- Considering sidewalks, installation of tactile plates, looking at buildings, developing awareness through NS Public Works Association (NSPWA).
- Exploring training opportunities (Rick Hansen Foundation).
- Consider accessibility when setting budgets.
- Consider accessibility with rebuilds (elevator at Brooklyn Arena).

- Assisting local businesses, groups with becoming accessible.
- Opportunity to promote funding, find some room in budget.
- Offering welcoming, holistic, inclusive and diverse programming.
- Focusing on adaptive equipment for all abilities, indoors and outdoors.
- Accessibility has evolved over 30 years, from designated parking spaces to the creation of comprehensive standards manuals.
- Causeway trail one area where accessibility is an issue.
- Advocating for inclusion and integration.
- Challenging / conquering participation limitations in sports and activities, requiring perseverance, community support, fundraising, volunteers.
- Focus on sporting venues, playgrounds, schools, camps, local events.
- Steps, sidewalks, curbs, stores, offices, washrooms – barriers exist.
- Pandemic makes accessibility difficult; people forget about disabilities.
- Tables in front of counters for social distancing, impossible to use debit.
- Frustrating when newer buildings constructed with poor accessibility.
- Need to account for people with vision loss and hearing loss.
- Making good strides, empathy and inclusion are recognized.
- What about other stakeholders and community groups? Do programs exist? Is there representation? Education? Awareness? Supports?
- West Hants residents and businesses have been amazing.
- Accessibility has not always been well-thought out.
- When Community Services moved, accessibility was not well-considered. The issue was fixed after being brought to their attention.

Round table on short (low-cost), and long-term (potentially costly) measures, not necessarily municipally funded.

Short-term Measures

- Increase education.
- Promote funding opportunities.
- Connect qualifying people, groups and businesses with available programs and funding, and ensure programs are utilized.

- Hand-held, cordless debit machines in stores.
- More accessible taxis.
- Ensure businesses are accessible for all.
- Offer adaptive equipment for loan.
- Bring thoughts of accessibility and inclusion to the forefront, consider existing biases.

Long-term Measures

- Have accessibility be one of the first things considered for new builds.
- Invest in adaptive equipment that would help as many people as possible.
- Install sidewalks everywhere (e.g. New Boundaries to the sportsplex).
- Create accessibility standards for infrastructure design.
- Combat systemic and community biases.
- Create accessible outdoor spaces, water access, parks and trails.
- Initiate active transportation gap analysis.
- Offer accessibility for everyone with no barriers.
- Move from compliance to integration and understanding.

c.) Draft Terms of Reference (TOR)

The TOR were reviewed.

d.) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Elections deferred to the next meeting. Chair cannot be a staff member – either a councilor or resident member.

6. Next Meeting Date / Action Plan

The committee will meet next month, leading into budgets. Staff to consider resources and budget.

A list of action items was created:

- Reach out to the province for accessibility presentation or package.
- Consult community stakeholders or a municipality that has been through the process (best practice).
- Prepare budget.
- Research closed captioning, signing capabilities for meetings.
- Mentally travel a common route through the lens of accessibility.
- Contact organization such as CNIB to provide an accessibility exercise.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:25pm.

X

Chair

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Official Name

The official name of this committee is the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

2. Members/Composition

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will consist of seven (7) members. At least half of the members must be people with disabilities or represent organizations that represent people with disabilities, in accordance with the *Accessibility Act*.

The members of the Committee will be appointed by Council, in accordance with Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy as follows:

- One (1) Council member for a two-year term
- Four (4) resident members for a two-year term
- Two (2) resident members for a three-year term

Resident members will not be members of Council or employees of the Municipality.

If a member vacates the Committee for any reason at any time before that member's term would normally end, Council will promptly appoint a new member to the Committee until the end of the term which was vacated.

3. Goals

The goal of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to provide advice to Council on identifying, preventing and elimination of barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives and facilities.

The Committee aims to play a pivotal role in helping the Municipality become a barrier-free community and ensuring obligations under the *Accessibility Act*.

4. Deliverables

The Committee will deliver the following:

- a) Advise Council in the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of its accessibility plan. In accordance with the Act, the plan must include:
 - A report on measures the Municipality has taken and intends to take to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
 - Information on procedures the Municipality has in place to assess the following for their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities:
 - i. Any of its proposed policies, programs, practices and services, and
 - ii. Any proposed enactments or bylaws it will be administering; and
 - Any other prescribed information.

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- b) Advise Council on the impact of the Municipality's policies, programs and services on persons with disabilities;
- c) Review and monitor existing and proposed Municipal by-laws to promote full participation of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Act;
- d) Identify and advise on the accessibility of existing and proposed municipal services and facilities;
- e) Advise and make recommendations about strategies designed to achieve the objectives of the Municipality's Accessibility Plan;
- f) Receive and review information directed to it by Council and its committees, and to make recommendations as requested;
- g) Assist in monitoring Federal and Provincial government directives and regulations; and,
- h) Host community consultations related to accessibility in the Municipality.

5. Jurisdiction

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is created as required by Section 44 the Accessibility Act, 2017 and is an advisory committee of Council in accordance with Section 24 of the Municipal Government Act, 1998, c.18. The Committee has been established as a permanent committee of Council by the *Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy*.

6. Resources/Budget

The Municipality will appoint a staff member as the Accessibility Coordinator to support the work of the Committee in developing an accessibility plan; monitor implementation progress; and coordinate concern, complaint and suggestions about the plan.

Additional staff of the Municipality are available to assist the Committee with the creation and implementation of accessibility plans. The Accessibility Coordinator and other staff appointed are not voting members of the Committee.

Resident members of the Committee will be paid in accordance with the *Council Remuneration Policy*.

All budgetary considerations for the Committee will be included in the approved annual budget or approved by Council if outside the budget.

The *Procurement and Tendering Policy* and the *Hospitality Policy* will be followed as required.

7. Governance

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will meet no less than six times per year and may meet more often if required to fulfill the duties as outlined.

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

A quorum for Accessibility Advisory Committee will four (4) members.

Each year members of the Committee will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair.

The Committee may receive presentations from the public upon approval of the Chair.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee may establish Working Groups to explore specific issues related to the accessibility plan and/or to other responsibilities.

Members of the Working Group may consist of additional members of the community.

A member of the Committee will be Chair of the Working Group(s).

8. Communications

Accessibility Advisory Committee members and staff will communicate with each other at meetings (in person or electronic), by telephone or by email.

Draft minutes of Committee meetings will be available to the public and be approved at the next meeting.

All Committee meetings are open to the public, except as specified in Section 22(2) of the Municipal Government Act.

A contact list will be circulated to the Committee members and updated as required.

Meeting invites and agenda packages will be circulated by email a minimum of three days prior to each meeting.

9. Related Policies, Procedures and Legislation

Accessibility Act, 2019

Municipal Government Act, 1998 as amended

Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy, RCOGE-003.00

Hospitality Policy, RCOFN-001.00

Procurement and Tendering Policy, RCOFN-003.00

Council Remuneration Policy, RCOHR-001.00

Approved by: _____
 Committee Chair

Adoption	
Notice to Council:	Not Applicable
Approval:	<i>Date</i>
Description: Initial approval of the Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.	

Section**8. Council and Committee Chair Duties**

8.2. The Chair of a Committee of Council will be the Councillor or resident member elected and, in their absence, the Vice-Chair elected.

8.3. It will be the duty of the Chair to:

- a) open the meeting by taking the chair and calling the members to order and announcing the business before Council or the Committee of Council;
- b) ask members to declare any Conflicts of Interest;
- c) receive and put to a vote all motions presented and announce the results;
- d) decline to put to a vote a motion which infringes upon rules of procedure established by this Policy;
- e) restrain Councillors when engaged in debate, within the rules of conduct established by this Policy or Robert's Rules of Order;
- f) protect the rights of those attending the meeting and enforce the rules of order; preserve order, and decide on point of order;
- g) call by name any Councillor or resident member persisting in a breach of this Policy, and thereby ordering them to vacate the meeting room;
- h) permit the CAO to speak on any point upon request;
- i) permit staff and invited guests to speak when appropriate on the agenda and at the request of Councillors and/or CAO;
- j) permit proper questions to be asked through the Chair of any Councillor, CAO, staff member, or invited guest in attendance relevant to the issue under discussion in order to provide information to assist debate;
- k) declare a meeting dissolved if no quorum has been achieved;
- l) adjourn to another place and/or time without ending the meeting with the consent of Council;
- m) adjourn the meeting when the business is concluded and a motion to adjourn has been approved by the majority vote; or
 - i. adjourn the meeting when an adjournment time has been set and approved by majority vote or consensus, when the time has been reached except when it is extended by unanimous consent; or
 - ii. adjourn the meeting at the Chair's sole discretion due to inclement weather conditions to a time and date set by the Chair.

Access by Design 2030

Creating an Inclusive Province for Nova Scotians

Accessibility Directorate, 2020

Accessibility Act Essentials - Poll

What percentage of people in Nova Scotia are currently living with a disability?

9.5 %

17 %

30 %

(Source: Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, Statistics Canada)

Accessibility Act Essentials

- Accessibility is a human right
- Almost 1 in 3 people in NS have a disability
- An accessible Nova Scotia by 2030
- Prevent and remove barriers with respect to:
 - ▶ Built Environment
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Information and Communications
 - ▶ Employment
 - ▶ Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services
 - ▶ Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure



Access by Design 2030

Access by Design 2030 provides a framework for how the province will achieve our goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030 and identifies priorities for this work.

- Standards Development
- Awareness and Capacity Building
- Collaboration and Support
- Compliance and Enforcement
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- GNS – Leading by Example



Accessibility Act Essentials

- A disability is defined as “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society.”



Accessibility Act Essentials

- A barrier can be physical, technological, attitudinal, or can be a policy or practice that limits a person's participation within society.



Accessibility Act Essentials

➤ Examples of Barriers

Type of Barrier	Example
Information or Communication	Print is too small to read Signs that are not clear or easily understood
Technological	A website that doesn't support screen reading software
Attitudinal	Assuming a person with a disability can't understand you

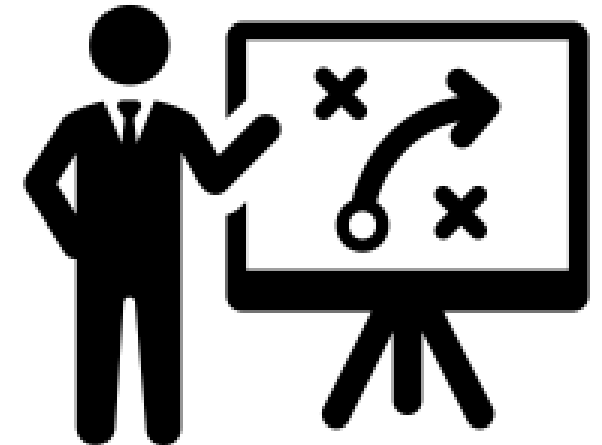
Accessibility Advisory Board

- Appointed to advise the Minister of Justice on accessibility
- Up to 12 members
- Majority are persons with disabilities



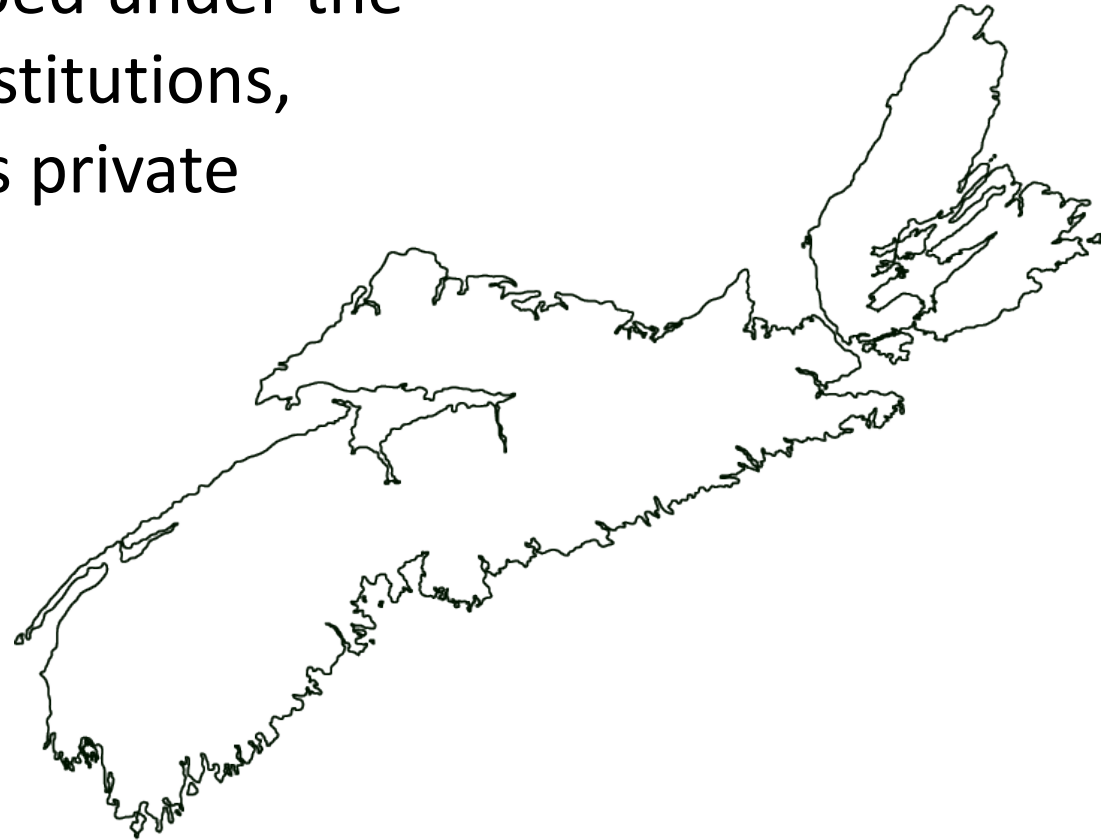
The Accessibility Directorate

- Office within the Department of Justice
- The Directorate is responsible for administering the Accessibility Act and advancing accessibility issues within government
- Works collaboratively with persons with disabilities, municipalities, businesses, post-secondary institutions, and others



Accessibility Act Essentials

- Accessibility standards will apply to the Government of Nova Scotia, public sector bodies prescribed under the Act (such as post-secondary education institutions, municipalities) and other entities, such as private businesses.



Accessibility – Standards Development

Built Environment

- ▶ Making public buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible to all.



Education

- ▶ Making the education system accessible to all students, from early childhood to post-secondary



Accessibility – Standards Development

Employment

- ▶ Making workplaces accessible, and supporting people with disabilities in finding meaningful employment



Goods and Services

- ▶ Ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services



Information and Communication

- ▶ Ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information they need



Transportation

- ▶ Making it easier for everyone to get where they need to go



What are the key timelines?

- GNS was the first public body prescribed, in 2017.
- Under the Accessibility Act, Nova Scotia's universities, NSCC, Libraries and Municipalities were prescribed as public sector bodies effective April 1, 2020.
- Prescribed Public Sector Bodies must have their plans developed and committees established one year from their prescription date.



What actions are required of Public Sector Bodies?

PSB's are required to engage in the following activities:

- Establishment of an accessibility advisory committee
- Development of multi-year institutional accessibility plans
- Complying with accessibility standards as they are developed

Resources & Contact Us:

<https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/>

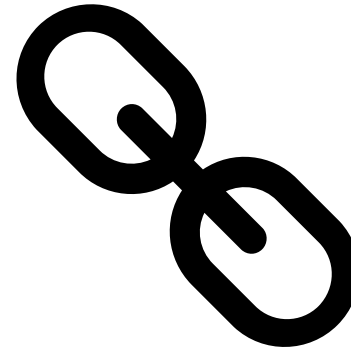
Email: accessibility@novascotia.ca

Phone: 902-424-8280

Toll free within NS: 1-800-565-8280

TTY: 902-424-2667

Toll free within NS: 1-877-996-9954





The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities

Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate

December 2019

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This toolkit is available at <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/>

Questions? Comments? Please contact
the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate

E-mail: accessibility@novascotia.ca

Phone: 902-424-8280

Toll free within NS: 1-800-565-8280

TTY: 902-424-2667

Toll free within NS: 1-877-996-9954

Contents

▶ Welcome	1
▶ An overview of accessibility	2
Disability in Nova Scotia	2
Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act.....	2
Provincial accessibility standards	3
Key requirements for your municipality.....	5
▶ Establish your Accessibility Advisory Committee	6
Questions to consider	6
Appoint an Accessibility Coordinator (recommended)	7
Launch the committee.....	8
▶ Learn together	9
Guest speakers	9
Experiential learning	10
Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) assessor training.....	11
Online learning	11
▶ Develop your municipal accessibility plan	12
Scope it out.....	12
Gather information.....	16
Draft and approve the plan.....	18
Implement and maintain the plan.....	19
▶ Your provincial partners	20
▶ APPENDICES / planning tools	21
A. Sample terms of reference for an Accessibility Advisory Committee	22
B. Sample call for applicants for an Accessibility Advisory Committee	24
C. Sample application for Accessibility Advisory Committee members	25
D. Funding opportunities.....	27
E. Suggested consultation activities	31
F. Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events (available online)	33
G. Sample waiver for participants in a Walk and Roll About	34
H. The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces (available online).....	35
▶ Glossary of Terms	36



Welcome

Nova Scotia is on a journey to become an accessible province by 2030. This includes working with our municipal counterparts, and others, to remove the barriers to inclusion that people with disabilities continue to face every day.

Our collective efforts will help ensure all Nova Scotians can participate fully in society.

In September 2018, the province released the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan. This plan outlines specific actions for achieving an inclusive, responsive, and accessible workplace for Nova Scotia public servants, and ensuring our services are accessible to all.

This toolkit was developed in partnership with Nova Scotia municipalities. It offers a recommended approach to forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee and developing an accessibility plan. I encourage you to use this resource as you involve community members in the development of a plan for your municipality or village.

I commend the many municipalities and villages across the province that have already undertaken efforts to improve accessibility. We need to build on this work and continue to drive the changes needed to create a more equitable and inclusive province. These changes will have significant economic and social impacts on people with disabilities, their families, and the province.

By working together, we are solidifying our shared commitment to accessibility and helping to build a welcoming province that includes everyone.

Sincerely,



Mark Furey
Minister of Justice

▶ An overview of accessibility

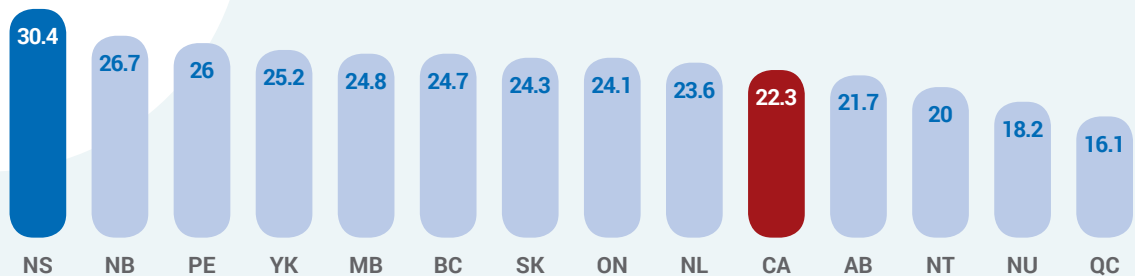
Disability in Nova Scotia

According to Statistics Canada, 30 per cent of Nova Scotians aged 15 years and older identify as having at least one disability. That is nearly 230,000 Nova Scotians. This is the largest percentage of any Canadian province. Nova Scotia also has among the highest percentage of adults older than 65—currently 20 per cent, or 1 in 5. This percentage will increase to about 25 per cent of the population, or 1 in 4, by 2030. Because older adults are more likely to have disabilities than younger people, the number of Nova Scotians with disabilities will rise as our population ages. (Learn more at novascotia.ca/accessibility/stats-on-disability-in-Nova-Scotia.pdf.)



of Nova Scotians 15 years and older have at least one disability

— The Canadian average is 22.3%.



This represents 229,430 people in Nova Scotia as of 2017.

(Source: Canadian Survey on Disability 2017, Statistics Canada)

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act

In 2017, Nova Scotia became the third province in Canada to pass accessibility legislation, committing to a more equitable and accessible province. The Accessibility Act recognizes accessibility as a human right, and sets a goal to make Nova Scotia an accessible province by 2030. The goal of the act is to prevent and remove barriers that restrict people with disabilities from fully participating in society. It enables the government to develop standards for accessibility, and outlines responsibilities for some public sector bodies, including municipalities. You can read the full text of the act at nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf.

In the Accessibility Act:

- ▶ A **disability** is defined as “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society.”
- ▶ A **barrier** is defined as “anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice.”

The government’s strategy for achieving an accessible province by 2030 is described in **Access by Design 2030**, available at novascotia.ca/accessibility/access-by-design/. This strategy outlines how the government will work with municipalities and other partners and stakeholders to implement the Accessibility Act and improve accessibility for all Nova Scotians.

Note: In June 2019, the Government of Canada adopted the Accessible Canada Act, which will apply to organizations that fall under federal jurisdiction. This includes the federally regulated private sector, such as organizations in the transportation sectors, broadcasting and telecommunications services, and the banking and financial sectors. Learn more at www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-people-disabilities.html.



Provincial accessibility standards

Provincial standards will be developed for the following areas outlined in Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act:

- ▶ **Goods and Services** – ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services
- ▶ **Information and Communication** – ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information they need
- ▶ **Transportation** – making it easier for everyone to get where they need to go
- ▶ **Employment** – making workplaces accessible, and supporting people with disabilities in finding meaningful employment
- ▶ **Built Environment** – making public buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible to all
- ▶ **Education** – making the education system accessible to all students, from early childhood to post-secondary

As described in *Access by Design 2030*, a plan is in place to develop and implement these standards over several years. Municipalities and other affected sectors will be consulted before each standard is enacted. These standards will first apply to the Government of Nova Scotia, then to municipalities and other prescribed public sector bodies, and later to other organizations. The standards for the Built Environment and for Education are currently under development. Other standards will be implemented in subsequent years, in an order to be determined.

For an overview of the implementation plan, refer to *Access by Design 2030*, page 19, available at novascotia.ca/accessibility/access-by-design/access-by-design-2030.pdf.

Goods & Services

Education



Information & Communication



Built Environment



Employment



Transportation

Key requirements for your municipality

Under the Accessibility Act, municipalities, universities, and other organizations—including villages, regional libraries, and government agencies—may be prescribed as public sector bodies. (Prescribed means identified in the Accessibility Act General Regulations.) Once prescribed, these organizations—including municipalities and villages—must do the following:

- ▶ Establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- ▶ Develop an accessibility plan within one year.

The act states that accessibility plans must be updated every three years. As accessibility standards are implemented, those standards should be integrated into your plan.



Success Story

The Lunenburg/Queens Recreation Co-ordinators/Directors Association, the Yarmouth Shelburne Municipal Recreation Association, and the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage have joined together to produce audits and reports that will be used to remove barriers to recreation facilities. This partnership also produced a comprehensive Recreation Accessibility Guidelines Resource that can be accessed at southshoreconnect.ca/project/guidelines-for-accessible-recreation-report-and-lclc-audit.

Share your insights

Thank you to the organizations that contributed success stories for this toolkit.

What policies and actions are helping to make your municipality more accessible? Email your insights, and photos if you have them, to accessibility@novascotia.ca.



Establish your Accessibility Advisory Committee

The role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to advise the municipal council on identifying, preventing, and eliminating accessibility barriers to municipal programs, services, and infrastructure. The mandate of the committee is up to each municipality to determine, but the committee should play a key role in developing your accessibility plan and helping your municipality become an accessible community. Appendix A offers sample terms of reference for the committee.

Questions to consider

These are some factors to consider before forming your committee and appointing an Accessibility Coordinator (a staff person to support the work of the committee).

Will you develop your own committee or a joint committee in partnership with other municipalities or prescribed public sector bodies?

While all prescribed municipalities and villages are required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee, you may choose to form a joint committee with other municipalities or prescribed public sector bodies (such as a regional library) that have common interests. In that case, each member must be approved separately by each municipality or public sector body represented on the committee.

Who should be represented on the committee?

Under the Accessibility Act, *at least half* of the committee members must have a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

Committee members may be staff, members of council, community members, partners, or others.

Don't assume that you know who does or does not have a disability.

Remember that advisory committee members will be your on-the-ground experts on accessibility.

How many members will the committee have?

The act does not state a minimum or maximum number of committee members, but the Accessibility Directorate recommends that your committee include people with a variety of disabilities and expertise to bring diverse perspectives to your planning.

How will you recruit committee members?

Communicate with your various stakeholder groups about opportunities to participate on the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the impact the work will have on advancing accessibility within the municipality.

Consider advertising in alternative formats (such as large print) to accommodate diverse candidates.

Consider accepting applications in diverse formats to accommodate diverse candidates.

Appendix B shows a sample Call for Applicants.

Appendix C shows a sample member application form.

TIP. 211 Nova Scotia is a free, confidential information and referral service that can connect you to local community groups, nonprofits, and government departments across Nova Scotia. Dial 2-1-1 or visit ns.211.ca for help finding organizations that might recommend community members to serve on your Accessibility Advisory Committee. At the website, click on the “Disability Support and Services” icon and enter your location.

What resources will you need to establish the Accessibility Advisory Committee, to engage stakeholders, and to develop the accessibility plan? And what funding sources are available?

Appendix D lists some funding opportunities. It includes programs that are specifically aimed at municipalities, as well as programs aimed at helping businesses, community organizations, and individuals to improve accessibility.

Appoint an Accessibility Coordinator (recommended)

While not required under the act, the Accessibility Directorate recommends that you appoint a staff member to support the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, including the development and implementation of the plan. Since accessibility impacts all aspects of municipal government, ideally the Accessibility Coordinator would work in a central department, such as the office of the Chief Administrative Officer. If you opt for a joint committee, each municipality could appoint a separate coordinator, or the municipalities that are working together may choose to appoint a single coordinator who works across municipalities. The choice is yours.



Success Story

The Town of Truro, the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, and the Town of Pictou are collaborating with the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage and Sport Nova Scotia to develop policies that support a comprehensive approach to inclusive recreation and sport.

Here are some responsibilities that could be assigned to the Accessibility Coordinator:

- ▶ Working with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, lead the development of an accessibility plan.
- ▶ When new policies and programs are introduced, work with the committee to identify accessibility needs, and provide advice on removing barriers.
- ▶ Monitor progress in implementing the accessibility plan, and ensure the plan's priorities and actions are reflected in the municipality's budget cycle and other planning documents.
- ▶ Receive and respond to stakeholder concerns, complaints, and suggestions about the plan.

Launch the committee

★ *Required steps are marked with a star.*

- ★ Recruit committee members. For municipalities, this includes issuing a public call. Refer to the "Questions to consider" on page 6 for tips and pointers to sample tools.
- ★ Approve committee members through municipal council.
- ★ Confirm a Chair and Vice Chair for the committee.
- Provide an orientation to the committee on the Accessibility Act, the municipality's obligations under the act, and the committee's mandate.
- Agree on a Statement of Commitment. The Statement of Commitment outlines your municipality's commitment to improving accessibility. It summarizes the accessibility message the municipality wishes to convey to the public.

You may want to consider the following when developing your Statement of Commitment:

- ▶ ensuring equal access and participation for all people, regardless of their abilities
- ▶ treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence
- ▶ meeting the needs of people who face accessibility barriers
- ▶ identifying, removing, and preventing these barriers by meeting the requirements of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act

▶ Learn together

Ongoing learning and collaboration are vital qualities in an accessible municipality. It is important to provide learning opportunities for staff, your Accessibility Advisory Committee, and senior leadership, on accessibility as a human right, barriers to accessibility, and your municipality's obligations under the Accessibility Act. You may also choose to provide education on an area of accessibility that is of particular interest or high need for your municipality.

How you approach ongoing learning will depend on local needs. Everything offered in this section on learning together is a recommendation, not a requirement under the act.

Some suggestions include:

- ▶ guest speakers
- ▶ experiential learning
- ▶ the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) assessor training program
- ▶ online learning

Guest speakers

At least half the members of your Accessibility Advisory Committee will be either people with disabilities or represent organizations representing people with disabilities. Consider inviting committee members or other stakeholders who have a disability to present to the committee on the barriers they face accessing programs or services from your municipality. This will ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are at the table, providing a perspective from lived experience.

In addition, you may consider inviting guest speakers from local organizations that provide services to people with disabilities.

TIP. Dial 2-1-1 or visit ns.211.ca for help finding organizations that might provide a guest speaker.



Success Story

The Town of Kentville has developed a “Recreation for All” policy and a plan for inclusive recreation. The plan provides a lens for decisions about program implementation and infrastructure investment.

Experiential learning

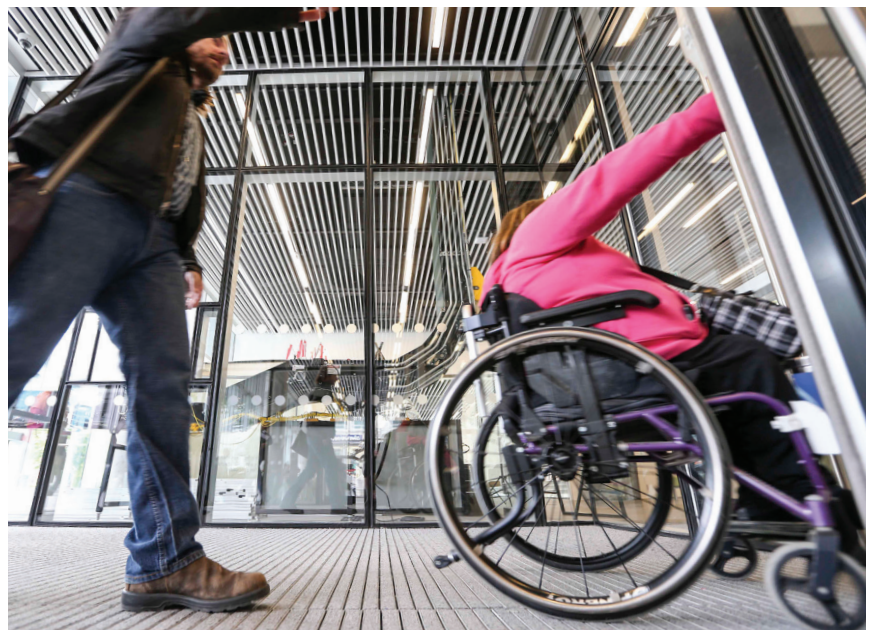
Consider giving decision makers a direct experience of barriers in the community. For example, a Walk and Roll About, using a wheelchair or walker, can give participants a better sense of the physical barriers in public spaces, such as:

- ▶ doorways that are too narrow
- ▶ a dangerous curb cut
- ▶ no curb cut next to an accessible parking spot
- ▶ a ramp that is too steep
- ▶ a ramp leading to a swing-out door with no platform at the top
- ▶ gravel or an unstable surface area
- ▶ a bathroom stall not designed to an accessible standard

Appendix G offers a sample waiver for participants in a Walk and Roll About.

Important note: There are conflicting opinions about the impact of disability simulations. Some advocates argue strongly against them, noting that an intense experience can reinforce negative stereotypes about people with disabilities. Others argue strongly in favour of simulations and point to positive outcomes. Your Accessibility Advisory Committee can help to weigh the pros and cons of different simulation approaches. If you choose to offer experiential learning, the Accessibility Directorate recommends that you ensure the activity is thoughtfully planned and facilitated. Be sure to ask a disabled person (or people) in your community to identify barriers and then focus the simulation exercise around those issues.

TIP. Dial 2-1-1 or visit ns.211.ca for help finding organizations in your region that might lend wheelchairs or walkers.



Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) assessor training

The RHFAC program is a LEED-style (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system that trains individuals on how to help owners, tenants, and municipalities measure the accessibility of their buildings and sites. The foundation also promotes universal design principles to improve accessibility, and encourages developers, owners, and others to adopt them. (www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification)

An RHFAC audit will identify assets that provide meaningful access, and those that require more work. According to the Rick Hansen Foundation, meaningful access refers to:

- ▶ the ability to independently and safely access the built environment based on planned inclusion
- ▶ the level of access for the facility as a whole

Your municipality may want an RHFAC professional to audit some of your assets to the RHFAC standard—for example, buildings that are heavily used by the public. Other assets might be audited to The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces (Appendix F), which are less detailed.

The RHFAC assessor training program trains assessors to evaluate the accessibility of a building or site. The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) offers the assessor training program, with support from the Government of Nova through the Business ACCESS-Ability grant program (cch.novascotia.ca/business-access-ability-grant-program). Enrolling at least one staff person in the RHFAC assessor training program will help your municipality to audit the built environment.

For more information about the program, contact the NSCC School of Access at RHFAC@nsc.ca or 902-491-3557.

Online learning

There are many online resources—including webinars, courses, online tools, and more—that staff and committee members can use. For example, Working With Abilities is a free online course offered by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. This course gives practical information and advice to help employers in accommodating people with disabilities, and in building inclusion and respect in all workplaces in Nova Scotia. Visit humanrights.novascotia.ca/education-training/working-abilities.

For more suggestions about online learning, contact the Accessibility Directorate at 902-424-8280 or accessibility@novascotia.ca.

▶ Develop your municipal accessibility plan

Scope it out

In accordance with the act, your municipality must develop an accessibility plan, in consultation with people with disabilities and organizations representing people with disabilities. The plan must be updated every three years.

Your accessibility plan must be publicly available online. If you are asked to provide the plan in an accessible format (such as large print or braille), you must do so at no charge within a reasonable period of time.

★ *Required steps are marked with a star.*

Your plan must include the following:

- ★ achievements to date in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in policies, programs, practices, and services
- ★ how you will identify, remove, and prevent barriers in policies, programs, practices, and services
- ★ processes in place to assess the effect of your policies, programs, practices, and services on accessibility

Consider all areas of accessibility when developing your accessibility plan, such as:

- ▶ **Awareness** – promoting awareness throughout your municipality about the importance of accessibility
- ▶ **Goods and Services** – ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to the goods and services provided by your municipality
- ▶ **Information and Communication** – ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information provided by your municipality
- ▶ **Transportation** – making it easier for everyone in your municipality to get where they need to go
- ▶ **Employment** – making your municipality an accessible workplace, and supporting people with disabilities in finding and maintaining meaningful employment
- ▶ **Built Environment** – making buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible to all

Also consider including an Implementation section, outlining who has responsibility for the plan (council, staff, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee); a timeline for implementation; how the plan will be monitored and evaluated; and a mechanism to respond to questions and complaints.



The Town of Wolfville piloted Nova Scotia's first municipal accessibility plan, beginning in April 2018. Check it out at www.wolfville.ca/accessibility-advisory-committee.html, under Reference.

Figure 1 shows a sample outline (page 14). This is adapted from the structure that the Town of Wolfville used for its accessibility plan. For each area of focus (e.g., Built Environment, Employment, etc.), consider:

- ▶ What is the vision or **commitment**?
- ▶ What is the **starting point**—the current situation?
- ▶ What **policies** are already in place or under development? These are the rules that outline how your municipality interacts with employees and stakeholders. An example of a policy could be that all employees have access to assistive devices so they can succeed at their job.
- ▶ What **actions** will your municipality take to remove accessibility barriers? An example of an action could be to establish a centralized accommodation fund to pay for assistive devices.



Success Story

The Town of Pictou and the Nova Scotia Community College are working together to enhance accessibility at the community pool. Initiatives include the installation of an accessible change room, upgrades to current change room facilities, policy development, and aquatic staff training.

Figure 1. Sample outline for an accessibility plan

	<p>Welcome message</p> <p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What We Believe ▶ Promoting accessibility awareness ▶ Glossary of Terms 	
Areas of Focus	<p>Goods and Services [ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to the goods and services provided by your municipality]</p> <p>Information and Communications [ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information provided by your municipality]</p> <p>Transportation [making it easier for everyone to get where they need to go]</p> <p>Employment [making your municipality an accessible workplace, and supporting people with disabilities in finding and maintaining meaningful employment]</p> <p>Built Environment [making buildings and shared spaces accessible to all]</p>	<p>For each area of focus, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Commitment ▶ The Starting Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview - Achievements - Barriers ▶ Policies ▶ Actions ▶ Top Priorities ▶ Other Priorities
	<p>Implementing the Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responsibilities (for example: council, staff, Accessibility Advisory Committee) ▶ Schedule or timeline ▶ Monitoring ▶ Evaluating ▶ Responding to Questions and Complaints ▶ Appendices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility Advisory Committee Members - Community Barrier Mapping Results - Community Meeting Results 	

Figure 2 provides an overview of the planning process. ☆ All of the steps in Figure 2 are required. Each step is described in more detail on the following pages. As long as you comply with the required steps, you are free to adapt the details and sample tools to suit local needs.

Figure 2. Highlights of the planning process

Gather information:

- ☆ Consult with people with disabilities—for example by hosting an in-person consultation or conducting a survey.
- ☆ Review your municipality's accessibility achievements, barriers, and opportunities, to help identify priorities for your plan.

Draft and approve the plan:

- ☆ Develop the draft plan and seek feedback from the community, especially those with disabilities.
- ☆ Approve the plan within one year of being prescribed as a public sector body.

Implement and maintain the plan:

- ☆ Make the plan publicly available online. If requested, also provide the plan in an accessible format.
- ☆ Implement the plan. This includes complying with provincial accessibility standards when they apply to public sector bodies. (Refer to Figure 1 for implementation timelines.)
- ☆ Monitor and evaluate progress on the plan. (Recommended)
- ☆ Review and update the plan every three years. **Note:** In addition, the Accessibility Directorate recommends that you update your plan as new provincial accessibility standards are implemented (refer to Figure 1).

Gather information

★ *Required steps are marked with a star.*

★ **Consult with the disability community.**

This is required under the act and it is essential groundwork for a successful accessibility plan.

Including the community early on will allow you to collect important information from people who are directly affected by accessibility barriers in your municipality—including information about specific areas of concern and priorities for action. It will be important to provide meeting participants with information on why the municipality is doing this work, and what its responsibilities are under the act.

Consider what questions you are seeking input on. For example:

- ▶ What are the barriers to accessibility in your municipality? (Remember to ask about all areas of accessibility—not just buildings or public spaces.)
- ▶ What are the top priorities for improving accessibility in your municipality?
- ▶ What is already working well to make your municipality accessible?
- ▶ Who is doing accessibility work in your municipality? What can your municipality learn from them? Who can your municipality partner with on the work?

Appendix E suggests some consultation activities, including a brainstorming exercise to capture accessibility barriers, and a sample map exercise to identify barriers within the built environment.

For tips on hosting a welcoming meeting for people of all abilities, refer to the *Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events* (novascotia.ca/accessibility/Accessible_Events_Guide.pdf), prepared by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate. This resource is described briefly in Appendix F.

★ **Review all areas of accessibility in your municipality to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.**

For example, consider how your municipality communicates with the public, delivers services, and hires employees. Involve people with disabilities in this work.

Identify strengths and achievements

Chances are, your municipality has already taken steps to remove barriers for people with disabilities. Here are some questions to help highlight accessibility achievements:

- ▶ What experience does your municipality have in reaching out to and including persons with disabilities?
- ▶ What policies, if any, promote accessibility in your municipality by the public and by staff affected by accessibility barriers?

- ▶ What partnerships have been formed with people with disabilities or organizations representing people with disabilities?

Identify weaknesses and barriers

Here are some questions to consider when identifying barriers within your municipality:

- ▶ List barriers people with disabilities have identified in accessing your programs, facilities, and services. Highlight the ones that are most significant or urgent to the public.
- ▶ What municipal policies may create barriers for people with disabilities? Consider policies affecting council, staff, advisory committee members, and people in the community.
- ▶ What temporary barriers have been created by renovations, computer software upgrades, pathways that are blocked, or chemicals used that might affect people with sensitivities?

Consider an accessibility audit of the built environment

One part of your review should be an accessibility audit of the built environment, including buildings and public spaces. For help in planning a preliminary accessibility audit of the built environment, you can refer to Appendix H, Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces. These guidelines are “interim”. They will be replaced by a standard for the built environment, once the standard has been adopted.



Success Story

Halifax Regional Council approved a motion declaring the Cogswell District Redevelopment Project—one of the largest building projects in the history of Halifax—to be designated a Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Zone, meaning that all public and private lands within the Cogswell District would have to achieve the RHFAC Gold Standard.

Draft and approve the plan

★ *Required steps are marked with a star.*

- ★ Draft the accessibility plan, using information collected from the Accessibility Advisory Committee, consultations, and the accessibility review, along with an understanding of your municipality's budget. Develop policies and actions to support outcomes identified by the community.

Remember: The plan should be accessible, too. Use plain language and clear design (Figure 3).

- Invite community feedback on the draft plan—for example, by posting it online or by holding an in-person meeting.
- Revise the plan based on consultation feedback. Prioritize the actions and identify any gaps in the plan.
- Ensure that the Accessibility Advisory Committee approves the revised plan before it is presented to council for a vote.
- ★ Approve the plan.

Figure 3. Use plain language

An important step in reviewing the municipal accessibility plan is to ensure that the information is as accessible as possible for everyone. A best practice is to have a professional plain language editor review your plan. The goal of plain language is to communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information (plainlanguagenetwork.org/).

Following is an example of text before it was reviewed by a plain language editor, and after:

Before

Partial funding for retrofitting of residential properties is available to qualified residents, with priority given to improving entrance and egress, bathroom accessibility, and mobility in the kitchen/food preparation area for older adults. Applications may be submitted in writing to this office.

After

If you are 70 years or older, you can apply for a grant to help pay for home improvements that make these areas of your home safer and more accessible:

- ▶ the entrance
- ▶ the bathroom
- ▶ the space where you prepare food

Application forms are available online or at our office. If you need help to complete the form, please call. We're here to help.

Implement and maintain the plan

Involve the community

Once council adopts the plan, it is important to communicate it through a variety of channels, both to celebrate the plan and to raise awareness about accessibility and your committed actions. Some examples include:

- ▶ Hosting a town hall meeting
- ▶ Setting up a booth at a community event (ensure the event is held in an accessible location)
- ▶ Posting the plan on your municipality's official social media accounts
- ▶ Emailing information about the plan to residents and stakeholders
- ▶ Issuing a media release

Remember, according to the Accessibility Act, the plan must be posted online, and be provided in an accessible format, upon request.

The plan must also be updated every three years, so it's important that the community continue to be given opportunities to provide input. Consider working with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to develop a process for responding to questions, suggestions, or complaints related to the plan.

Involve staff and council

Staff will recommend to council specific budget requirements to implement the plan, and will ensure priority action items are reflected in the municipal budget. Staff may wish to present budget proposals to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, along with other documents that could affect the implementation of the plan, such as transportation and planning strategies.

Your accessibility plan should be considered a living document. It's important for staff to work closely with the Accessibility Advisory Committee as the plan is implemented and evolves. As well, to keep the public engaged, the committee may consider preparing an annual report card to measure performance in implementing the plan.



Success Story

Several municipalities, including the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Inverness, have partnered to create accessible beaches in their communities. Accessible features include special mats that lead to the water's edge, beach-friendly wheelchairs and walkers with oversized tires for travelling on sand, and floating chairs that allow visitors to go into the water.

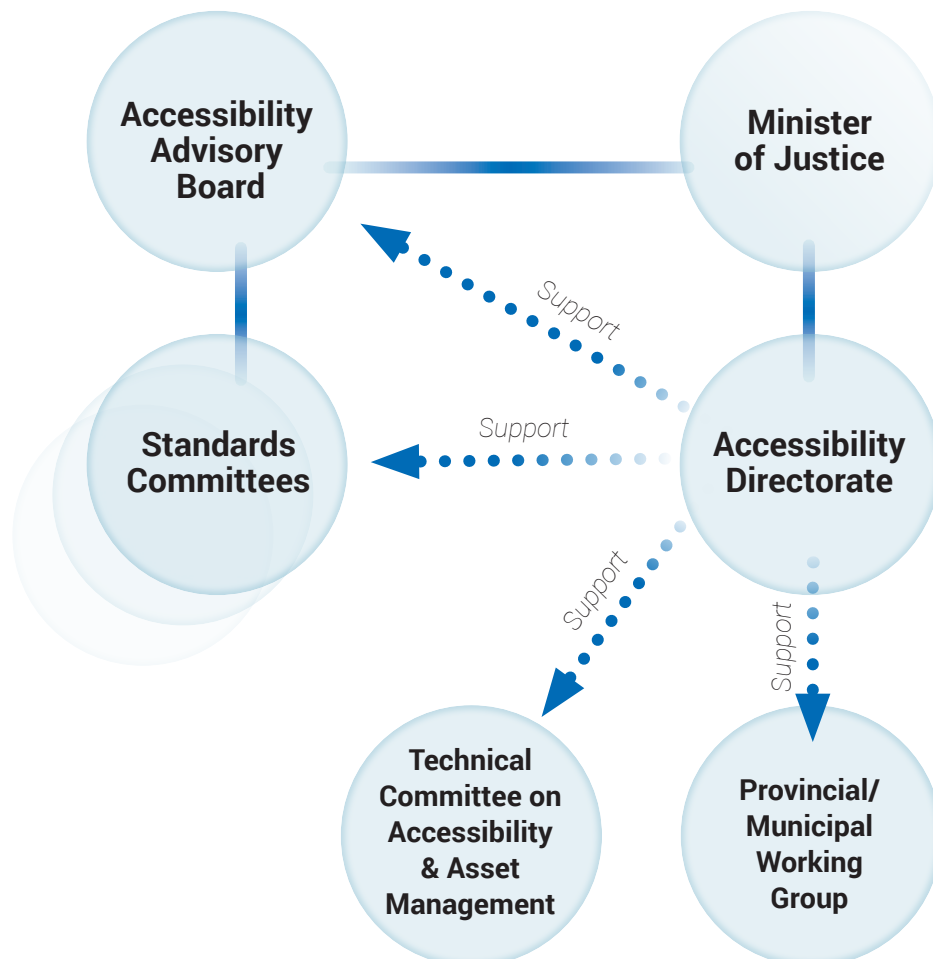
▶ Your provincial partners

The province's Accessibility Directorate has responsibility for administering the Accessibility Act and advancing disability issues within the government. An Accessibility Advisory Board advises the Government of Nova Scotia on accessibility. The majority of members are people with disabilities.

This municipal toolkit was developed by the Accessibility Directorate and overseen by the Provincial/Municipal Accessibility Working Group, which is made up of municipal staff and elected officials from across Nova Scotia, and representatives from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Accessibility Directorate.

The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces (Appendix H) were developed under the guidance of a technical working group of municipal representatives, and finalized by a researcher at Dalhousie University.

Who is working on municipal accessibility issues?



Appendices / planning tools

- A. Sample terms of reference for an Accessibility Advisory Committee
- B. Sample call for applicants for an Accessibility Advisory Committee
- C. Sample application for Accessibility Advisory Committee members
- D. Funding opportunities
- E. Suggested consultation activities
- F. *Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events* (available online)
- G. Sample waiver for participants in a Walk and Roll About
- H. *The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces* (available online)

Appendix A.

Sample terms of reference for an Accessibility Advisory Committee

Purpose

The Accessibility Advisory Committee provides advice to council on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping the Municipality of _____ become an accessible community and meet its obligations under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

Role

The Accessibility Advisory Committee shall:

- 1) Advise council on the preparation, implementation, and effectiveness of its accessibility plan. In accordance with the Accessibility Act, the plan must include
 - a) a report on measures the municipality has taken and intends to take to identify, remove, and prevent barriers
 - b) information on procedures the municipality has in place to assess the following for their impact on accessibility for people with disabilities:
 - ▶ any proposed policies, programs, practices, and services
 - ▶ any proposed enactments or by-laws
 - (c) any other prescribed information
- 2) Review and update its accessibility plan at least every three years, in accordance with the act.
- 3) Consult with the community on accessibility in the municipality.
- 4) Advise council on the impact of municipal policies, programs, and services on people with disabilities.
- 5) Review and monitor existing and proposed municipal bylaws to promote full participation of people with disabilities, in accordance with the act.
- 6) Identify and advise on the accessibility of existing and proposed municipal services and facilities.
- 7) Advise and make recommendations about strategies designed to achieve the objectives of the municipality's accessibility plan.

- 8) Receive and review information from council and its committees, and make recommendations, as requested.
- 9) Assist in monitoring compliance with federal and provincial government directives and regulations.

Composition and Terms of Appointment

The Accessibility Advisory Committee shall have _x_ members. At least half of the members must be people with disabilities or represent organizations that represent people with disabilities, in accordance with the act.

The members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be appointed by Council for a term of _x_ years, and in accordance with the _____ Policy.

The Committee shall elect a Chair and Vice-Chair every year.

Meetings

The committee shall meet at least _____ times per year, or as needed to fulfill its duties. Meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be open to the public. Quorum shall be determined by the _____ Policy.

The committee may establish working groups to explore specific issues related to the accessibility plan and/or to other responsibilities. A working group may include additional members from the community who are not Advisory Committee members. The chair of a working group must be a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Appendix B.

Sample call for applicants for an Accessibility Advisory Committee

Volunteer Opportunity: Accessibility Advisory Committee

Name of municipality/municipalities _____

Are you looking to make a difference in your community? Why not consider serving as a volunteer member of the newly formed Accessibility Advisory Committee?

The Accessibility Advisory Committee provides advice to the municipal council on identifying, preventing and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping [name the municipality] to become an accessible community that complies with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017).

At least one half of the members of the advisory committee must have a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

Disability includes a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, or sensory impairment—including an episodic disability—that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society.

Applications are available online or can be picked up at Town Hall. The deadline for applications is [date]. Your completed application may be submitted by mail, in person, or by email to:

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Subject line: Accessibility Advisory Committee Volunteer

For more information about the Accessibility Advisory Committee, refer to the terms of reference at [link]. Or contact [name] at [phone number] or [e-mail].

Appendix C.

Sample application for Accessibility Advisory Committee members

Committee Application Form

Applicant Name

Street Address

Postal Code

Home Telephone

Work/Cell Telephone

E-mail Address

Occupation

Application for appointment to (Committee Name)

Describe how your lived experience, community involvement, education, or work might be helpful to this committee.

Why are you interested in serving on this committee?

What contribution do you believe you can make to this committee?

What past contributions have you made on a similar committee or organization?

What experience do you have in exchanging your views with others and in appreciating and respecting the skills, abilities and knowledge of others?

Are you a person with a disability, or do you represent an organization representing people with disabilities?

Yes No

Note: At least one half of the members of the advisory committee must have a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

Organization/sector you are representing (if applicable): If you are a person with a disability or represent an organization representing people with disabilities, what disability/disabilities do you or your organization represent?

Note: Members with a variety of disabilities will bring diverse perspectives to this committee. We will strive to accommodate all members to ensure they are able to fully participate.

Are you interested in an interview?

Yes No

The final approval of appointments is given by the council. If you would like more information about the approval process, or if you have questions about any of the bodies to which appointments are to be made, please contact the municipal Clerk's Office at [insert phone number]. The personal information on this form will be used to assist the council in selecting appointees for various committees. Questions about this collection may be referred to the municipal Clerk, [insert address].

[insert a consent to collect and disclose personal information, if required]

Applicant Signature

Date

Appendix D.

Funding opportunities

The following are some provincial and federal funding programs that directly or indirectly support accessibility for people with disabilities. The information was current as of September 2019.

Federal funding for municipalities, businesses, and community groups

Capital projects*

***Note:** Capital projects could relate to the Built Environment; Transportation; Employment; or Information and Communication.

The Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) provides funding for eligible capital projects that increase accessibility for people with disabilities in Canadian communities and workplaces, creating more opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in community activities, programs and services, or access employment opportunities. Eligible recipients can apply for funding through periodic funding processes. Learn more at www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/enabling-accessibility-fund.html

Provincial funding for municipalities, businesses, and community groups

M means this funding is for municipalities

Accessibility planning

M The **Community Works Program** helps municipalities to pay summer students and others to work on community projects, including active community involvement in accessibility planning (i.e., audits of municipal infrastructure such as buildings, sidewalks, trails, and signal lights). The program will consider up to 50% to a maximum of \$25,000 of eligible costs for each employment project, with the balance coming from the applicant or other potential sources. Learn more from the NS Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing at CommunityWorks@novascotia.ca

Transportation

M The **Accessible Transportation Assistance Program** (ATAP) helps community-based organizations* and municipal accessible transit organizations to buy accessible vehicles or modify existing vehicles. The program will provide up to 75% of the total capital cost to a maximum of \$75,000.

(*To be eligible, the community-based organizations must also be receiving funding from the Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP), described below.) Learn more from the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage at beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-buy-or-modify-accessible-vehicles-accessible-transportation-assistance-program

The **Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP)** covers a portion of the operating costs of a community-based inclusive transportation service for disabled, elderly, and low-income people in rural Nova Scotia who need transportation to and from medical appointments, education, and recreation opportunities. Services are developed and provided by non-profit organizations through partnerships with public, private, non-profit, and volunteer resources and services. Learn more from the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage at beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-operating-costs-community-based-transportation-service-community-transportation-assistance-program

M The **Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program (NS-TRIP)** provides funding for projects that generate new and improved public transit services in rural areas and underserved urban areas of the province. Projects must enhance the service capacity of new or existing public transit organizations. The program provides cost sharing at various funding levels, depending on the scope of the project. Funding is available for one project per year per organization. The program includes but is not limited to projects that focus on accessibility. Learn more from the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage at beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-help-assess-need-and-develop-transit-service-rural-or-underserved-urban-area-nova-scotia-transit-research-incentive-program

Built Environment

M The **Community ACCESS-Ability Program** offers cost-shared grants to non-profit organizations, Nova Scotian Mi'kmaq Band Councils, and municipalities, for accessibility-related capital improvements to community facilities. Learn more from the NS Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage at cch.novascotia.ca/investing-our-future/community-funding-and-awards/community-access-ability-program

The **Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program** is a cost-shared grant for businesses to make accessibility-related improvements. Improvements can be for clients and customers, for employees, or both. Learn more from the NS Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage at cch.novascotia.ca/business-access-ability-grant-program

Disabled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Landlords provides financial assistance for landlords to modify homes to be more accessible for residents with disabilities. Learn more from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing at housing.novascotia.ca/programs/housing-programs-persons-disabilities/disabled-residential-rehabilitation-assistance#landlords

Provincial funding for individuals

Transportation

Individuals can apply for a rebate on the sales tax they paid when buying a vehicle for use by or to transport someone who has lost the complete use of their legs (referred to on the applications as a physiologically challenged person). There are two application forms available from Service Nova Scotia:

- ▶ For a rebate of the Nova Scotia Sales Tax (NSST), go to beta.novascotia.ca/apply-nova-scotia-sales-tax-nsst-rebate-vehicle-person-without-complete-use-their-legs
- ▶ For a rebate of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), go to beta.novascotia.ca/apply-hst-rebate-vehicle-person-without-complete-use-their-legs

Communication

Individuals can apply for a rebate on the HST they paid to modify a computer for use by a person with physical, vision, or hearing impairments, or mental challenges. Learn more from Service Nova Scotia at beta.novascotia.ca/apply-hst-rebate-computer-person-disabilities

Built Environment (Housing)

Access-A-Home Program offers funding to help people adapt their homes to become wheelchair accessible. The amount of the grant depends on income. The maximum amount is \$7,000. Learn more from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing at housing.novascotia.ca/programs/housing-programs-persons-disabilities/access-home-program

Disabled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program

for Homeowners offers funding to help homeowners make their homes more accessible for people with disabilities.

The amount of the grant depends on the value of the home and the total household income. The maximum amount

is \$16,000. Learn more from the Department of Municipal

Affairs and Housing at housing.novascotia.ca/programs/housing-programs-persons-disabilities/disabled-residential-rehabilitation-assistance#homeowners

Appendix E.

Suggested consultation activities

The Accessibility Act states that public sector bodies, when they are preparing their accessibility plans, must seek input from people with disabilities and representatives of organizations representing people with disabilities.

Remember to design all consultation activities to be accessible. For example, ensure that people with a variety of disabilities are able to access the information and are able to give their input. Refer to Appendix F for a *Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events*.

Here are some ways to kick-start your consultation:

- ▶ Create an Accessibility Advisory Committee working group focused on consultation.
- ▶ Gather information from stakeholders, either in person (for example, at pop-up events) or online.
- ▶ Ask for suggestions to improve the accessibility of your municipality.
- ▶ Ask for help in identifying accessibility priorities and possible examples, such as a hiring practice or a registration process.

Following are some sample exercises.

Brainstorming and ideation

Here are some questions that could spark discussion at a stakeholder meeting:

- ▶ What's your current experience of accessibility in [name of municipality]? (what's working; what's not)
- ▶ How can [name of municipality] contribute to an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030?
- ▶ What does an accessible [name of municipality] mean to you?
- ▶ What are some ways to remove accessibility barriers in [name of municipality] that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot?
- ▶ What accessibility improvements would you make to [name of municipality] in the long term that would have the biggest impact?
- ▶ What local partnerships can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.

Ask participants to identify accessibility priorities—such as employment, information and communication, and delivery of goods and services—and invite them to write their ideas under each category. *Wolfville: Access By Design* contains policies and actions in several categories that could be a useful starting point for a brainstorming session.

Mapping

One way to identify priorities in the built environment is to provide maps of key corridors in the community, or floor plans of buildings, and ask participants to mark the following hotspots, using coloured pencils or markers:

- ▶ **Red:** circle any accessibility barriers that represent a public safety hazard for people with disabilities within the municipal public domain (in public spaces for which the municipality has some responsibility or authority)
- ▶ **Orange:** circle any accessibility barriers that represent an access/equity issue for people with disabilities within the municipal public domain.
- ▶ **Green:** circle any areas in which the municipality has excelled at removing accessibility barriers.

For the first planning cycle, you may consider focusing on the streets and public spaces that have the most pedestrian traffic—for example, the commercial district and adjacent streets.

This exercise should be modified for participants with visual impairments—for example, by inviting oral feedback.

Here is a sample map from a community meeting in Wolfville.



Appendix F.

Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events

(available online)

Ensuring that all Nova Scotians are able to participate in meetings and events is one important aspect of accessibility. All resources and events you plan for stakeholder consultations and for your Accessibility Advisory Committee **must** be accessible.

The *Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events* offers tips and checklists on these topics:

- ▶ Scheduling
- ▶ Selecting a venue
- ▶ Promotions and registration
- ▶ Communications and accommodations
- ▶ Room set up
- ▶ Chairing or moderating events
- ▶ Effective, respectful communication

The guide encourages organizers to be flexible, creative, and open to alternative arrangements.

Download the printable pdf at

novascotia.ca/accessibility/Accessible_Events_Guide.pdf

Appendix G.

Sample waiver for participants in a Walk and Roll About

WAIVER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY FOR [EVENT AND DATE]

I _____ want to participate in the Municipality of [_____] Accessibility Walk and Roll-About event. In order to participate in the event, I am signing this Waiver and Release of Liability. I understand this document creates a contract between me and the Event Organizers. The Event Organizers including The Province of Nova Scotia, the Municipality of [_____] , sponsors, promoters, [_____] , and any of their directors, officers, employees, volunteers, representatives, or agents.

By signing this Waiver and Release of Liability, I confirm all of the following:

- ▶ I am at least 19 years old.
- ▶ I have no health-related reasons or problems that prevent me from participating in this event.
- ▶ I assume all risks that may arise from participating in the event. I understand it is impossible to list or anticipate all the risks, but some include, for example: risks arising from my own negligence or carelessness; risks as a result of the terrain; equipment breakdown or misuse; weather; traffic; the actions or carelessness of others (for example, other participants, volunteers, monitors, and Event Organizers); and so on.
- ▶ I understand that by participating in this event I may suffer physical injury, property damage, or loss.
- ▶ I accept the consequences of any physical injury, property damage, or loss that I may suffer by participating.
- ▶ I agree that if I do suffer any physical injury, property damage, or loss I will not sue any Event Organizer.
- ▶ I agree to receive any medical treatment that may be considered advisable if I am injured or become ill during the event.
- ▶ I agree to allow others to photograph and record me (for example, on video or film). I also agree the Event Organizers may use the photos or recordings for purposes related to the event and future similar events.
- ▶ I agree that this Waiver and Release will apply to my next of kin and anyone representing them, as well as to my executor or administrator, and that no one will be able to sue any Event Organizer on my behalf.
- ▶ I understand the Event Organizers will rely on my Waiver and Release of Liability and that the terms of the Waiver and Release of Liability will be interpreted broadly.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Participant's Name _____

Appendix H.

The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces (available online)

The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces offer a way to begin identifying barriers to accessibility in the built environment. They are “interim” because they will be replaced by a provincial accessibility standard for the built environment, which was under development when this toolkit was prepared.

The guidelines are rooted in three core principles: a whole journey approach; universal design; and seasonal maintenance.

The guidelines focus on four common elements in indoor and outdoor spaces: signage and wayfinding; ramps; stairs; and handrails.

Aspects of **indoor public spaces** that are addressed include

- ▶ building entrances and approaches
- ▶ doors and doorways
- ▶ circulation
- ▶ public washrooms
- ▶ interior and exterior emergency services

Aspects of **outdoor public spaces** that are addressed include

- ▶ streets
- ▶ transit stops
- ▶ parking
- ▶ recreation and leisure, such as parks, playgrounds, and trails
- ▶ outdoor fixtures, such as waste receptacles, picnic tables, and seating

The interim guidelines reflect the highest standard set by either the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations or the most recent Canadian Standards Association’s Accessible Design for the Built Environment standard (B651-18). They also include recommendations from nationally recognized accessibility guides, such as the Rick Hansen Foundation’s RHFAC Ratings Professional Handbook and the Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards.

Your municipality may want to audit some of its assets to the RHFAC standard—for example, buildings that are heavily used by the public. Other assets might be audited to the Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces, which are less detailed.

You can download the Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces at novascotia.ca/accessibility.

Glossary of terms

Access by Design 2030 (2018)

The provincial strategy for implementing the Accessibility Act. Access by Design 2030 provides a roadmap for government, businesses, and communities to work together to eliminate barriers to accessibility and make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/access-by-design/)

Also see the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2018-2021).

Accessibility Act (2017)

The provincial law enacted to achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities. The law defines the role and responsibilities of the Accessibility Directorate and the Accessibility Advisory Board, and addresses standards, compliance, and enforcement. (nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf)

Accessibility Advisory Committee

A volunteer committee established by a municipality to advise municipal council about identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping the municipality become a barrier-free community that complies with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017). At least one half of the members of the advisory committee must have a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Board

A 12-member provincial board appointed by the provincial government to advise the Minister of Justice on accessibility and make recommendations on accessibility standards. The majority of board members are people with disabilities. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/advisory-board/)

Accessibility Coordinator

A person appointed by municipal staff to support the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee in developing and implementing the municipal accessibility plan. The Accessibility Coordinator also liaises with the municipality's senior management and provides consultation services to staff, from frontline workers to website developers.

Accessibility Directorate

The provincial body that is responsible for implementing and administering the Accessibility Act, supporting accessibility initiatives and advancing broader disability-related issues. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/)

Barrier

Something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice."

Disability

As defined in Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act: "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society."

Equitable/equity

A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities.

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan

A multi-year plan setting specific priorities and commitments for achieving accessibility within the Government of Nova Scotia. The first plan was published in 2018 and covers the years 2018-2021. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan)

Plain language

Clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information (plain-languagenetwork.org/).

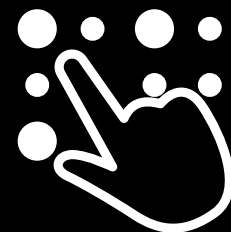
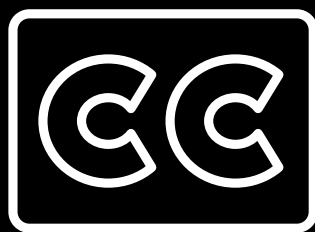
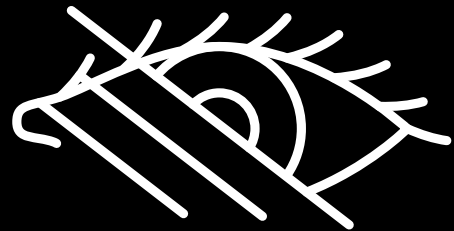
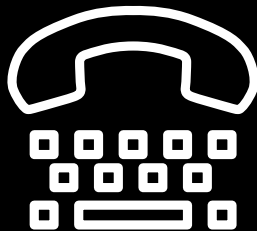
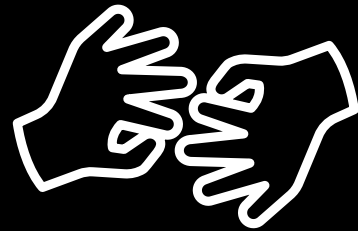
Prescribed

Means "prescribed in the Accessibility Act General Regulations." The Accessibility Act enables the government to use the regulations to identify which organizations must comply with certain requirements. These requirements include forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee and developing an accessibility plan within one year. The use of the word "prescribed" in legislation is intended to give wide authority for regulations to be made that set down a specific rule or direction.

RHF / RHFAC

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification. (www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification)

Accessible East Hants



EAST HANTS

This plan has been designed and formatted to be more accessible to persons with disabilities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome by Chair	5
Built Environment	6
Employment	10
Information and Communications	14
Services	17
Transportation	20
Implementing the Plan	22
Glossary of Terms	25
Community Engagement	27



Hearing Assistance Available
Asistencia auditiva a su disposición
Aide à l'audition

This facility is equipped with a hearing assistance system. Please ask for a receiver.

Este establecimiento está equipado con un sistema de asistencia auditiva. Por favor solicite un receptor.

Cet établissement est équipé d'un système d'aide à l'audition. S.V.P. demandez un récepteur.



WILLIAMS SOUND®
HELPING PEOPLE HEAR

HOLD

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

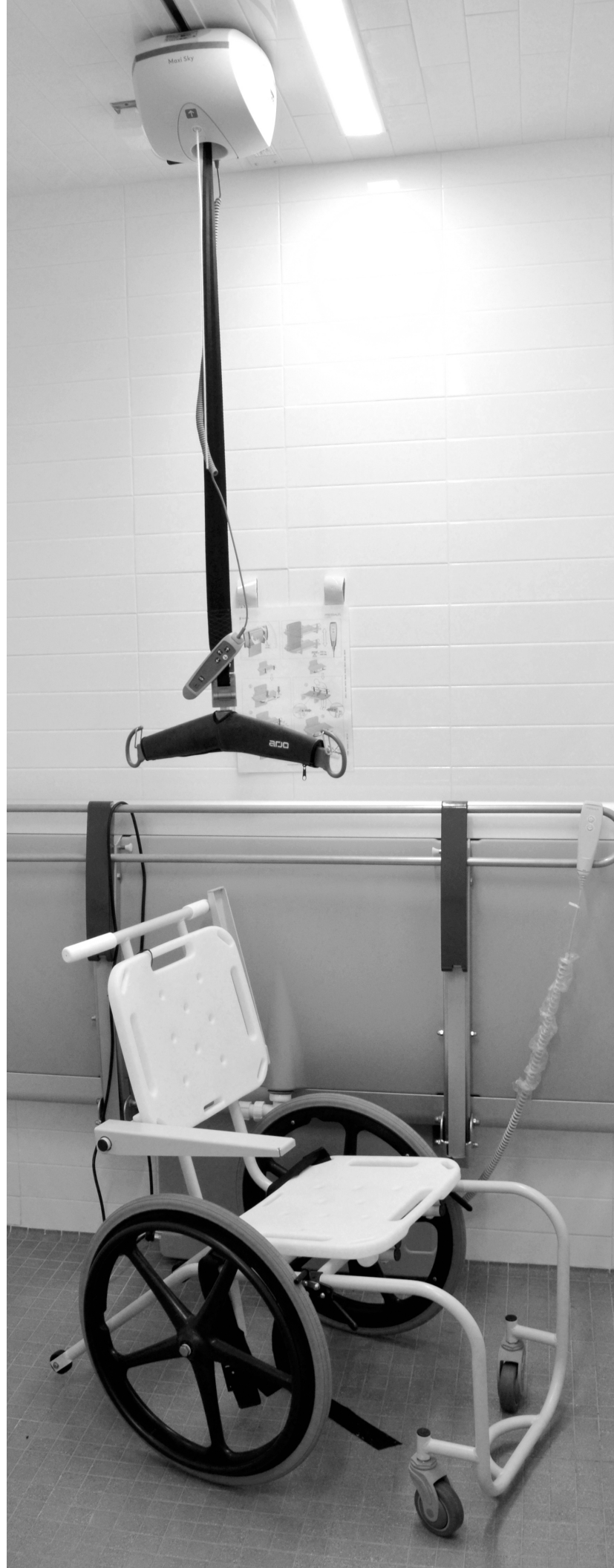
Our Commitment

To construct and maintain municipal infrastructure and buildings that meet the needs of the people within our community and visitors to our community, of all ages and abilities. We will also encourage citizens and the business community to make other public and private spaces accessible.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality of East Hants owns, leases and operates public facilities. The main municipal offices are located at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre which is shared with other tenants such as the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Nova Scotia Works and a branch of the Colchester East Hants Public Library. The East Hants Aquatic Centre was completed in 2020 and provides a location for swimming classes, aquatic fitness classes, day camps, open swims, and other recreational programming opportunities. The Municipality also has tourism properties where people from across Nova Scotia and further afield visit and enjoy the property. In addition to municipally-run properties there are other properties which are municipally owned but



leased and run by community groups. This includes the Tin Smith Museum in Shubenacadie, the E.H. Horne School in Enfield and others across the Municipality.

Other municipal infrastructure includes: sidewalks; roads; parks; trails; and street lights. The Municipality has buildings and properties which are related to providing public municipal infrastructure services such as water, wastewater, and solid waste management.

Achievements

- Lloyd E. Matheson Centre
 - Doors into the building have accessible power open function.
 - The Finance Department, which is our most visited area of the municipal side of the building, is on the ground floor.
- Parks
 - Ezlaunch Dock system was installed in 2016 at Wickwire Station Park to assist individuals in a wheelchair or with other disabilities launch and retrieve canoes and kayaks at the Shubenacadie River.
 - A fully accessible Surface Spinner installed at the Mount Uniacke Community Memorial Park in 2019.
- Starting in 2018 all playground surfacing is certified accessible (wood fibre and rubber surfacing).
- Starting in 2016 walkways are constructed with accessibility in mind. Using a surface of crusher dust or other material which gives a smooth finish and whenever possible, the selection of travel paths to meet recommended accessible grades.
- Accessible standards for new municipal trails have been developed.
- Have installed three inclusive swings since 2018 in municipal parks.
- Recreation
 - Opened doors in July 2020 to newly built aquatic centre with advanced accessibility features.
 - Ramp entry into all three pool tanks.
 - Accessible change room equipped with a with mounted ceiling lift and adjustable table.
 - Accessible door hardware and safety systems; e.g., panic buttons in washrooms to unlock doors.
 - Accessible splash pad attached

to the Aquatic Centre outside.

- Infrastructure
 - Over 16 kilometres of new sidewalks built on existing roads since the year 2000.
 - Municipal transportation standards updated in 2020 to include accessible sidewalk features.
- Visitor/Tourism Sites
 - Interpretive signage was designed at a height which allows for wheelchair access at Burntcoat Head Park.
 - Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre parking area is level and designated parking spots are provided.
 - There is a ramp into the Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre building.
- Infrastructure
 - Several roads are owned and maintained by the Province making coordination and funding difficult.
 - Asphalt sidewalks are subject to settlement and frost-heave, sometimes resulting in uneven surfaces.
- Visitor sites
 - No elevator or stair lift for the second floor of the Burntcoat Head Park Lighthouse. Second floor includes 'local history' information.
 - There is a steep grade from the parking area at Burntcoat Head Park to the lighthouse.
 - Access to the ocean floor at Burntcoat Head Park is not accessible.

Barriers

- Parks
 - Costs for fully accessible products are charged a premium.
 - Recommended grades for walkways are hard to meet in some locations.
 - Finding products that don't stigmatize persons with disabilities (e.g., "that's the disability swing").

Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Where appropriate, require accessible parking spaces in/near public areas owned by the Municipality.
- Upgrade existing sidewalks to accessible standards where feasible and cost-effective.
- Prioritize an Accessible Building Audit of municipal visitor properties, eg. Burntcoat Head

Park and the Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre.

Actions

Top Priorities (2021-2024)

- Undertake an accessibility audit of the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre.
- Undertake an Accessibility Audit of the East Hants Aquatic Centre and consider whether to pursue, if appropriate, the Rick Hanson Foundation Accessibility Certification.
- Undertake and prioritize an accessibility audit of municipal tourism properties, eg. the Burntcoat Head Park and the Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre.
- Undertake an Accessibility Audit of the Waste Management Centre.
- Continue to build accessible playgrounds and walkways.
- Locate pedestrian buttons or light controls, such as those at intersections or pedestrian controlled crosswalks, over areas which are accessible.
- Identify where doorways could be widened and automatic power door buttons or sliding doors could be provided at the public access entrance for municipal buildings and municipal public washrooms.
- Consider auditory and visual pedestrian features at signalized intersections.

- Investigate access to the picnic facilities at Burntcoat Head Park for accessibility options.
- Consider adding accessible parking requirement to the Land Use Bylaw where it is not required under the Building Code (eg. for townhouses).
- Consider accessibility when preparing a Municipal Housing Strategy, which may include encouraging aging-in-place housing options in the Official Community Plan.
- Review accessible parking provision at Burntcoat Head Park and Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre.

Other Priorities

- Construction of a fully accessible playground in the municipality within the next 10 years.
- Undertake an accessibility audit on municipally-owned buildings that are leased by community groups.
- Promote the Province's Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the East Hants business community.
- Promote the Province's Community ACCESS-Ability Program to local community groups.
- Promote marked crosswalks in high traffic areas to increase pedestrian safety.

EMPLOYMENT

Our Commitment

The Municipality of East Hants commits to supporting people with disabilities in finding meaningful employment and to making our employment practices and workplaces accessible for new and current employees of all ages and abilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

As of March 2020, the Municipality of East Hants employs 70 permanent employees. The main worksite for most permanent employees is the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre in Elmsdale, NS. Other worksites include the East Hants Waste Management Centre in Georgefield, NS, and various water and wastewater facilities throughout the municipality.

The Municipality employs approximately 40 employees in casual positions at the East Hants Aquatic Centre, and in 2020, approximately 20 seasonal or student employees were employed in the summer months in tourism, parks, recreation, and as summer labour.



The Municipal Council of East Hants consists of a Warden and 10 other Councillors who represent each of the Municipality's 11 districts. The Council is the governing and legislative body for the municipality. The Council may appoint members of the public to serve on committees or task forces.

Achievements

- Council Chambers has a microphone system allowing for use of earbuds for councillors with hearing impairment.
- Council Chambers is on the main floor of the municipal office and allows barrier-free access to Council meetings.
- Job advertisements include a statement detailing how to request an accommodation to assist in the application process.
- The interview scheduling process includes notifying candidates that an accommodation for interviews can be requested.
- Recruitment process includes standardized questions and a scoring process to remove bias.
- Onboarding process for new employees includes an overview of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and how to request an accommodation in the workplace.
- Council Chambers Online internal system allows for online and electronic access to all documents, reports, minutes, and Council activities. Users can review documents at one's own pace and exploring assistive technology is an option.
- East Hants has upgraded all users to Microsoft Windows 10 which includes many accessibility features.
- Records Management project underway to move from paper-based processes to online or electronic documentation as well as allowing work to be shared electronically more easily. Users can review documents at one's own pace and exploring assistive technology is an option.
- Accommodation requests from prospective or current employees to-date have been managed on an individualized basis.
- Municipal sites have a Scent-Free Policy to support employees with environmental sensitivities.
- Emergency evacuation procedures for safe exit of the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre include sound and flashing light fire alarms.
- A municipal employee has completed the program requirements and is a qualified assessor with the Rick Hansen

Foundation Accessibility Certification program.

understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion in our workplace.

Barriers

- A number of municipally-owned sites are not barrier free.
- Municipal processes, systems, communications, and documents generally have not taken accessibility considerations into account and historical documents and processes may not be easily adaptable to assistive technology such as screen readers.
- Managers and staff are not trained in recognizing barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Traditional print and online recruitment methods are generally used, which may not reach or be accessible to all qualified candidates.

Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Offer accommodation during the recruitment process as requested.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all ages and abilities.
- Ensure accessibility and inclusion is considered when reviewing and developing programs or processes related to employment.
- Educate staff and build an

Actions

Top Priorities (2021-2024)

- Conduct a formal review of municipally-owned facilities with respect to physical barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.
- Develop an Accommodation Policy.
- Establish a centralized accommodation fund.
- Provide training for Managers on accommodation and supporting prospective candidates or employees who request accommodation.
- Employee Engagement Survey will include questions about accessible workplace, accommodation, and barriers.
- Provide training for all staff on inclusiveness and diversity.
- Develop an understanding of assistive technologies for the workplace, speech readers, etc.
- Build relationships with community groups that work with or support people with disabilities for discussion around barriers to employment.
- Review workplace emergency response plans with respect to

physical barriers.

- Review the recruitment and selection process for areas where barriers may exist.
- Review the Municipality's performance management program and career development opportunities for areas where barriers may exist.

Other Priorities

- Investigate strategies for non-traditional recruitment methods that may reach a wider and more diverse audience.
- Research implementing a Voluntary Self-Identification Questionnaire for new and current employees to gather data on demographics of our workforce and track metrics.



INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

Our Commitment

The Municipality of East Hants is committed to providing information and communication that is accessible to all. Plain, clear language is essential to providing the best service to our stakeholders.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality delivers information to the public in many ways, including:

- In-person at various municipal properties and includes meetings, customer service delivery, digital displays, etc.
- Digitally via email, website, social media, and videos.
- Telephone
- Print via newsletters, letters, and newspaper advertisements.

Achievements

- Council Chambers - There are four hearing assistance devices for public use in our Council Chambers. A sign notifies the public that devices are available. They include ear buds and a neckloop for use with hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Council Chambers - For councillors, our microphone system allows use of earbuds for councillors with hearing impairment.

- Microsoft Windows 10 – East Hants has upgraded all users to Microsoft Windows 10 which includes many accessibility features.
- Council Chambers is on the main floor of the municipal office and allows barrier-free access to Council meetings.
- An adjustable height podium that can rise and lower to accommodate presenters who are seated or standing has been installed in Council Chambers and is accessible during meetings.
- Council meetings will be live streamed to enhance access for people with disabilities to participate in or view Council meeting discussions.
- for the average reader.
- The Municipal Government Act sets limitations for certain public notices to be published in newspapers that may not be accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Many people may not be aware of barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Barriers

- The municipal website needs to be improved so that those with visual impairment can better access the information.
- Forms and templates developed by the municipality need to be re-formatted so that they are readable by screen readers. The size and colours of the documents also need to be considered so that they take into consideration other visual impairments.
- Some material produced by staff is not plain language and at a level

Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Upon request, provide electronic documents in an accessible format based on the user’s specific needs.
- Give priority to barrier-free locations for municipal events and meetings.
- Documents and web/digital content will be prepared using plain English for clarity and readability and will be written at a level no higher than Grade 8.
- Train staff in better ways to communicate with people of all ages and abilities.

Actions

Top Priorities (2021-2024)

- Ensure that the new **easthants.ca** website is in compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A. This will ensure our website is accessible for

persons with disabilities.

- Inventory forms used internally and externally and assess level of accessibility.
- Staff will be trained on the creation of accessible documents and plain language writing.
- Continue to provide staff with resources on the staff intranet and provide accessibility awareness training.
- Produce a style guide to assist staff in writing using plain language and at Grade 8 reading level.
- Provide more services online so that residents with mobility issues can access services virtually.

Other Priorities

- Wayfinding signage review
- Turn forms into accessible documents.
- Investigate improving existing grant programs or establishing a new grant program to enable community meeting spaces and/or comfort centres to enhance accessibility.
- Provide information on the municipal website of municipal buildings, trails and parks which are accessible. For example, the EZLaunch Dock at the Wickwire Station Park.

SERVICES

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equitable access to services delivered by the Municipality of East Hants. This includes ensuring that there are policies, procedures and tools to promote the accessible delivery of services.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The following are some of the many services the Municipality delivers to the public:

- Providing customer service counters at the Lloyd E Matheson Centre and the East Hants Aquatic Centre
- Maintaining parks, trails and open spaces, including playgrounds and Visitor Information Centres
- Providing recreation programming for youth
- Providing aquatic programming
- Providing targeted senior programming
- Providing grants and other administrative support to local community groups
- Providing swim programming adapted to different individuals' needs or abilities
- Maintaining sidewalks, including



winter maintenance to approved service standards (see Built Environment section)

Achievements

- One of the Municipal Building Inspectors has been trained and is qualified through the Rick Hanson Accessibility Foundation.
- Finance
 - Most forms of payment are accepted, including mail and online banking, which offers flexibility and options for those unable to come to the office physically.
- Recreation Services
 - Opened doors to newly built aquatic centre with high accessibility standards in July 2020.
 - District Recreation Fund grant that has allowed for groups to upgrade their accessibility standards.
 - Community Grant Program has section under recreation programming to support persons with disability attending sporting event.
 - The Adaptive Recreation Equipment Loan Program is a partnership with other municipalities in the Fundy

region. This is a new resource for families of children and youth who have a physical disability and/or individuals who would benefit from its use. This equipment will provide opportunities to borrow a variety of equipment to experience new leisure pursuits.

- Special Olympics swimming program provided by the community at Milford Pool and has started at the East Hants Aquatic Centre.
- Online recreation and aquatic centre program registration system.

Barriers

- The municipal website is not accessible to people with visual impairments (see Information and Communication section).
- Recreation Services
 - Dedicated inclusive staff to support recreation program service delivery (ex. day camps).
 - Limited training programs are available to train recreation staff with knowledge and tools on working with people with disabilities.

Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will deliver all goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability.

Actions

Top Priorities (2021-2024)

- Recreation Services
 - In process of developing an inclusion framework that reduces the barriers for individuals with disabilities to participate in recreation and leisure programs in East Hants.
 - Train and hire staff who are responsible for delivering programming to persons with disabilities.

Other Priorities

- Where applicable, include an Accessibility Lens/Impact Analysis in reports to Council.



TRANSPORTATION

Our Commitment

We will work towards providing or supporting accessible transportation options for people of all ages and abilities in East Hants.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality of East Hants does not have a publicly funded transit service but has been exploring options for providing a fixed route service for residents of the corridor area of the municipality.

The Municipality began investigating the feasibility of providing a transit service with the preparation of a Corridor Feasibility Study which was prepared in 2012. Following on from the feasibility study, in 2015, a Transit Services Business Plan was prepared. This document identified options on how the Municipality could provide a fixed route transit service for residents. At this time, Council decided not to go forward with a transit service. The 2015 Business Plan document has recently (2020) been updated. This update builds on the previous two studies and provides recommendations based on updated community road networks,

infrastructure and transit trends. This document has not yet been reviewed by Council and no decisions regarding transit have been made at this time.

The East Hants & Area Community Rider is a non-profit charitable service of which the Municipality is a partner of the program. Community Rider offers dial-a-ride transportation services to residents throughout the community and provides a door-to-door service. Community Rider has been providing transportation services to residents of East Hants since 2006. The organization currently operates five vehicles, three of which are wheelchair accessible.

Achievements

- The community has access to the East Hants & Area Community Rider which the Municipality partners with and provides some of the funding. Community Rider provides a valuable service for persons with disabilities and also the wider community.
- The Municipality has begun exploring options for an East Hants Transit Service.

Barriers

- Without a fixed route transit

service, people without a vehicle or who may not be able to drive a vehicle do not have access to predictable transportation options.

Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will...

- Consider the needs of persons with disabilities if a new transit service in East Hants is pursued.
- Continue to support the East Hants & Area Community Rider as it provides a valuable service to residents throughout the community.

Actions

Top Priorities (2021-2024)

- Review the current business plan for a fixed route transit service within the corridor area of the municipality.
- Continue to support the East Hants & Area Community Rider so that persons of all abilities have access to transportation throughout the municipality.



IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Responsibilities

- Council is responsible for adopting and overseeing the Accessibility Plan.
- The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for receiving and responding to public concerns, complaints and suggestions.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for giving feedback and recommendations to Council.

Schedule or timeline

All top priorities in this Plan will be implemented by 2024. Other priorities will be implemented by 2030.

Monitoring

- The East Hants Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACAC) will prepare a Monitoring Report for Council each year. This report will measure the performance of the policies and actions in this plan. The committee may also make recommendations to improve the plan.
- The Monitoring Report will be a public document. It will be posted

on the municipal website.

Evaluating

The Municipality will lead a review and evaluation of the Accessibility Plan every three years.

Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, pose a question, or express a concern about accessibility in the municipality. These should be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, the Coordinator will consult with the staff person responsible for the area of inquiry. The Coordinator's response will contain the reasons for the decision.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response from the Accessibility Coordinator. Council may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted

to them, and will provide summary updates to the advisory committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the advisory committee's continual review of the Accessibility Plan, and may inform future changes.

Promoting Accessibility Awareness

Promoting awareness throughout the municipality about the importance of accessibility.

- Promote the National AccessAbility Week (late May). 'It is a time when accessibility and inclusion is promoted across communities and workplaces and a time to celebrate the contributions of Canadians with disabilities. It is also an opportunity to recognize the efforts of Canadians who are actively removing barriers and ensuring persons with disabilities have an equal chance to participate in all aspects of Canadian society.' (Government of Canada website). Along with promoting the federal program the Municipality will look at putting our own local voice to this month by highlighting local examples and events.
- Develop an Annual Accessibility

Awareness Plan every year. The plan may include:

- Organizing local events
- Highlighting external accessibility grants
- Identifying local examples of the contributions of local residents with disabilities and the efforts of Canadians who are actively removing barriers.
- Highlight how the Municipality is removing barriers.
- Identify who the public can contact if they have questions or concerns regarding accessibility of municipal buildings, infrastructure or services.
- Identify any 'areas of focus' for the year.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accommodation: For the purpose of this Accessibility Plan, “accommodation” and “reasonable accommodation” are used interchangeably. The fundamental nature of the duty to accommodate imposes a positive duty on employers to provide employees or job applicants with an opportunity to perform the essential duties of the job. It is an individualized process which, to the point of undue hardship, involves the removal or alleviation of barriers that prevent an otherwise capable individual from participating equally in the workplace because of a disability as defined by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Accommodation does not have to be perfect but it does have to be reasonable.

Barrier: something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act defines a barrier as “anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice”

Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program: is a grant program offered by the Nova Scotia Government to enable businesses to apply for a cost-shared grant to make accessibility-related improvements.

Community ACCESS-Ability Program: is a grant program offered by the Nova Scotia Government to enable community groups to apply for cost-shared grants for accessibility related capital improvements.

Disability: A condition that makes it harder for a person to participate. The condition may always interfere, or only sometimes. Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act defines disability as “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society.”

Municipal Government Act: Provincial legislation that gives the broad authority to municipalities to govern in whatever ways the councils consider appropriate within the jurisdiction given to them by the Government of Nova Scotia.

Neckloop: is a loop of wire worn

around the neck to enable listeners with telecoil-equipped hearing aids and cochlear implants to hear without the general room background noise.

Consortium (WC3), an international team of experts. WCAG sets guidelines to make their websites more accessible.

Plain language: Language a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.

Recreation Programming: recreation programs and opportunities that typically require registration fees, have set times, occur at predetermined locations, and expect a certain level of commitment by the participant (e.g. swimming lessons, day camp, instructor-led activities, etc.)

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification: is a national rating system that measures and certifies the level of meaningful access of buildings and sites.

Screen Reader: is a form of assistive technology for persons with a visual impairment that renders text and image content as speech or braille output.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0: is an internationally accepted web accessibility standard developed by the World Wide Web

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is an essential component in developing the Accessibility Plan. The community experiences and uses municipal buildings, infrastructure and services. They are therefore in a position to identify what does and doesn't work for persons with disabilities.

According to Statistics Canada, 30 per cent of Nova Scotians aged 15 years and older identify as having at least one disability and 30 per cent of the East Hants population is around 7,000 people. We hoped to reach a proportion of the approximately 7,000 people, their caregivers, or organizations that represent them.

An open house was held at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre (LEMC) on November 5, 2019 from 3pm to 7pm. Efforts were made to reach out to as many people and groups as possible, letting them know about the open house and inviting them to attend. Posters were printed and displayed in various locations throughout the municipality inviting people to attend the open house. Around 40 people or groups were directly sent an invite and information was provided in our community development newsletter. The Open House was also promoted

on municipal social media accounts.

At the open house, community maps were printed for Mount Uniacke, Enfield, Elmsdale, Lantz, Milford, Shubenacadie and a large map printed of the whole of the municipality and people were invited to add comments directly on the maps. Paper copies of the survey were also available for people to complete. In addition to the drop-in open house, a table was set up at the East Hants Sportsplex beginning in January 2020 for two weeks. Maps and surveys were provided with an invite to provide feedback and comments.

In total, 47 people responded to the survey and these comments, along with comments provided on the maps, fed into the preparation of the Accessibility Plan. A summary of the survey responses is available on our 'Accessible East Hants' page easthants.ca/accessibility.

Lunenburg County Accessibility Plan

Submitted to the Accessibility Directorate: March 9, 2021



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What We Believe	4
Glossary of Terms	5
Community Consultation	7
Areas of Focus.....	8
1. Goods and Services	8
2. Information and Communications.....	9
3. Transportation	9
4. Employment.....	10
5. Built Environment	10
Implementing the Plan.....	11
Responsibilities	11
Accessibility Advisory Committee.....	11
Accessibility Coordinator	11
Councils.....	12
CAOs/Staff.....	12
Timeline.....	12
Monitoring and Evaluating	12
Responding to Questions and Complaints.....	13
Reference Documents.....	14
Committee Members.....	16

Introduction

This Accessibility Plan was developed by the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, a joint committee of the Municipality of the District of Chester, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Town of Bridgewater, Town of Lunenburg, and Town of Mahone Bay.

This committee provided advice to the municipal councils in Lunenburg County on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers experienced by people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives and facilities, and worked with staff on the development and oversight of this plan.

This document outlines the overarching goals for improving accessibility in Lunenburg County. In coordination with this Accessibility Plan, individual municipal units will be releasing local Accessibility Action Plans which will provide more details on action items, associated timelines, and budgets. These individual Accessibility Action Plans may not be available until a future date.

What We Believe

We commit to fostering a culture of accessibility, encouraging the prevention and removal of barriers to participation, and building capacity in these areas amongst municipal staff, Council members, and the public.

Several principles have guided this process and should remain as priorities as we move forward to implement this plan.

- Working towards equitable access for all members of our community means that every individual has an equal opportunity, and everyone is treated fairly. Equitable access acknowledges individual circumstances to removing barriers.
- It is essential to include first voice perspectives, or lived experience, of people with disabilities in the creation of this plan, actions, and decision-making processes.
- As new standards are introduced and new technologies become available, we will review and update this plan to ensure its relevance. As such, this plan should be interpreted as a living document.
- It is essential to continue to collaborate with other municipal units, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, and community partners to advance this plan and work towards improved accessibility in our communities.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility Act (2017)

The provincial law enacted to achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities. The law defines the role and responsibilities of the Accessibility Directorate and the Accessibility Advisory Board, and addresses standards, compliance, and enforcement. (nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf)

Accessibility Advisory Committee

A volunteer committee established by a municipality to advise municipal council about identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping the municipality become a barrier-free community that complies with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017). At least one half of the members of the advisory committee must have a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

Accessibility Lens

An Accessibility Lens is a tool for identifying and clarifying issues affecting persons with disabilities used by policy developers and analysts to access and address the impact of all initiatives (policies, programs or decisions) on persons with disabilities. It is also a resource in creating policies and programs reflective of the rights and needs of persons with disabilities.

Barrier

Something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice."

Disability

As defined in Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act: "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society."

Equitable/equity

A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities. Equity recognizes and values differences, removing systemic barriers and accommodating individual differences, as needed.

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan

A multi-year plan setting specific priorities and commitments for achieving accessibility within the Government of Nova Scotia. The first plan was published in 2018 and covers the years 2018-2021. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan)

Meaningful

In the context of our Accessibility work, the term meaningful is used to ensure the efforts being made are deemed valuable by those affected by the efforts.

Plain language

Clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information (plainlanguagenetwork.org/).

Prescribed

Means “prescribed in the Accessibility Act General Regulations.” The Accessibility Act enables the government to use the regulations to identify which organizations must comply with certain requirements. These requirements include forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee and developing an accessibility plan within one year. The use of the word “prescribed” in legislation is intended to give wide authority for regulations to be made that set down a specific rule or direction.

Community Consultation

The Accessibility Committee undertook public consultation efforts in May and June of 2020. These efforts were hampered by COVID-19 restrictions that prohibited public gatherings and restricted resident movement. Despite these challenges, the Committee heard from more than 170 residents and organizations on the issue of accessibility through an online survey, phone calls, emails, and informational interviews.

Respondent Demographics

46.53% Persons with a disability (visible or invisible) 27.08% Family member, friend, or caregiver of a person with a disability 26.39% Employed or volunteer at an organization that provides services to people with disabilities Many of which self-identified as all of the above
67.33% Women 26.67% Men 1.33% Non-binary Remainder preferred not to say
55.63% aged 55-74 28.48% aged 35-54 10.60% aged 74+ 4.64% aged 18-34 0.66% aged Under 18
33.11% Municipality of the District of Lunenburg 25.83% Bridgewater 13.25% Municipality of the District of Chester 12.58% Town of Lunenburg 10.60% Town of Mahone Bay 2.65% Village of Chester 1.99% Do not reside in Lunenburg County

Areas of Focus

Consistent with the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018-2021, we have identified commitments to improving accessibility within five areas of focus. These priority areas include (1) Goods and Services, (2) Information and Communications, (3) Transportation, (4) Employment, and (5) Built Environment. Working towards equitable access in these priority areas will help to identify, prevent, and eliminate barriers for people with disabilities to participate fully in our communities. This Accessibility Plan is a united plan based on universal standards. Each municipality has been provided with a template to develop their individual Accessibility Action Plans for each commitment.

1. Goods and Services

The Commitment

Residents and visitors with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services provided by our municipalities.

- 1.1 Services – Enhance services provided by municipal units by making municipal services and events more accessible to people with disabilities, including but not limited to accessible communication, accessible digital content and technologies, and welcoming service animals and support persons.
- 1.2 Service Delivery – Improve service delivery by developing and implementing ongoing awareness and training programs for municipal staff and Council to increase knowledge and understanding of accessibility, equity, human rights, disability rights, and accessibility barriers in our community, as well as developing and implementing new awareness and training opportunities as part of an orientation package for new employees. This will ensure that all municipal staff and Council are educated in and striving towards building competency in accessibility matters.
- 1.3 Physical Space – Upon entering a municipal building, physical spaces should be conducive to positive accessible customer service experiences. For example, provide chairs to rest in while waiting and/or sensory sensitive spaces to communicate with staff.
- 1.4 Programs – Deliver programming to people of all ages and abilities and commit to training all program delivery staff as per 1.2.
- 1.5 Events - Improve accessibility of public events planned and delivered by a municipal unit by planning events with an accessibility lens including location, event delivery, and/or participation. Planning should consider the needs of persons with disabilities including, but not limited to, having adequate accessible event parking, accessible portable toilets, and when possible, places to rest from sensory overwhelming environments.
- 1.6 Procurement – Apply an accessibility lens to all procurement processes, including creating common accessibility language, accessibility requirements, and factoring accessibility into the scoring process for procurement.
- 1.7 Internal Policy– Apply an accessibility lens to all policy, procedures, and practices.

- 1.8 Emergency Management – Emergency management plans and prioritization of critical infrastructure need to consider accessibility barriers and vulnerable populations to ensure safety of people with disabilities in contingency and evacuation plans.

2. Information and Communications

The Commitment

People with disabilities can equitably access information and communications provided by our municipalities.

- 2.1 Delivery of Communications – Improve communications about existing municipal programs, services, and events that are accessible to people with disabilities by delivering communications in a wide range of accessible formats.
- 2.2 Public Meetings – Ensure that all public open houses and meetings are as accessible as possible to all members of the public by offering materials in various formats, providing support to facilitate participation, and ensuring topics are discussed in plain language when possible.
- 2.3 Advertising/Marketing – Develop and implement a standardized symbol system for all public communications of programs and events to clearly identify what accessibility accommodations are available on site. For example, accessible entrances, scent free facility, and accessible washrooms.
- 2.4 Wayfinding – Improve signage and wayfinding for municipal buildings and public facilities by implementing signage and wayfinding consistent with accessibility best practice. Prioritize having signage and wayfinding where necessary, but not in excess.

3. Transportation

The Commitment

Residents and visitors with disabilities have equitable access to transportation provided by our municipalities.

- 3.1 Pedestrian Infrastructure – Improve connectivity in communities by improving pedestrian infrastructure where possible including constructing sidewalks, improving surface quality of sidewalks, and implementing appropriate curb cuts. Prioritize safety of pedestrian infrastructure by implementing audible signals, tactile walking surface indicators at crossings, appropriate lighting, and benches to rest where possible. Municipalities will comply with the Accessibility Act's Built Environment Standard (when implemented).
- 3.2 Snow Removal – Prioritize snow clearance at transit stops, public buildings, and in municipally managed parking areas.
- 3.3 Parking – Ensure all municipal parking areas and municipally managed parking areas have accessible parking spaces and appropriate drop-off locations for larger vehicles. Accessible parking shall meet the Accessibility Act's Built Environment Standard (when implemented).

- 3.4 Transit Connectivity – Where possible, support improving transit connectivity by expanding public transportation systems.
- 3.5 Transit Infrastructure – Improve existing transit infrastructure and ensure transit vehicles, transit stops, and signage are accessible to people with disabilities.

4. Employment

The Commitment

Our municipalities are accessible and equitable employers and support the careers of employees with disabilities. We will seek to attract and retain a skilled workforce that reflects the diverse residents of the municipalities.

- 4.1 Job Opportunities – Improve opportunities for people with disabilities to gain employment at the municipality by ensuring job postings clearly state they are open to people with disabilities, accommodations may be available in the workplace, and/or advertise job postings across different platforms.
- 4.2 Hiring – Improve processes, policies, and practices to facilitate and encourage the recruitment, selection, transition, and advancement of people with disabilities in their employment at the municipalities. Improve job standards to reflect the actual standards of the job and examine what assumptions are being made in the job standards.
- 4.3 Flexibility – Improve support and flexibility in the workplace by ensuring municipal staff and Council with disabilities have access to adaptive technologies, possible accommodations in the workplace, appropriate and supportive leave practices and return to work plans, and a flexible work environment such as the ability to work from home.
- 4.4 Culture of Inclusion – Build capacity among staff and senior leadership to cultivate a culture of inclusion that supports, retains, and provides opportunities for career growth to people with disabilities. Municipal units will develop Employment Equity Statements.
- 4.5 Representation – Actively recruit people with disabilities on all municipal committees and working groups. Review committee and Council recruitment materials to ensure they are accessible.

5. Built Environment

The Commitment

Municipal buildings and outdoor spaces within the municipalities provide meaningful and equitable access for users with disabilities.

- 5.1 Buildings – Improve and maintain the accessibility of municipal buildings and outdoor spaces to comply with the Nova Scotia Building Code, and the Accessibility Act's Built Environment Standard (when implemented), aiming to exceed them when feasible.
- 5.2 Public Spaces – Improve access to public spaces and opportunities for recreation by improving access to parks and playgrounds, lakes and beaches, diversifying recreation

equipment, and creating accessible parks, playgrounds and trails. Municipalities will comply with the Accessibility Act's Built Environment Standard (when implemented).

5.3 Washrooms – Look for opportunities to construct and maintain more accessible public washrooms and retrofit existing washrooms where possible.

5.4 Temporary Disruptions – Establish and implement processes to ensure accessibility is maintained during temporary disruptions including emergencies, evacuations, and/or special events.

5.5 Emergencies - Ensure emergency management and building evacuation plans are reviewed with accessibility in mind.

5.6 Construction Mitigation - Municipalities should ensure accessible detours are available when a sidewalk is closed for or affected by construction.

The Municipality of the District of Chester, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Town of Bridgewater, Town of Lunenburg, and the Town of Mahone Bay hereby all agree together to work cooperatively with regards to the administration and implementation of the Joint Accessibility Plan and hereby agrees to jointly advocate the Provincial and Federal Government to provide new funding initiatives and programs to support the further development and implementation of this Plan.

Implementing the Plan

This plan is a united framework and universal standards, agreed upon by all five municipal units. Each municipal unit is responsible for creating individual operational plans and operationalising those plans.

Responsibilities

Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Review this Accessibility Plan at least every three years as required by the Accessibility Act and update as required.
- Review Municipal Accessibility Report Cards annually and report on progress toward meeting the commitments outlined in this Plan.

Accessibility Coordinator

- Guide the work by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Book meetings, prepare and distribute agendas and minutes, assist Chair in leading the meetings, manage recruitment for Committee when necessary.
- Act as a liaison with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and municipal units.

Councils

- Recognize the significant cost of implementing this plan and the municipal operational plans and seek adequate funding to allow municipalities to meet the requirements under Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act*.

CAOs/Staff

- Ensure the commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan are reflected and operationalized in municipal Accessibility Action Plans required as public sector bodies under Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act*.
- Accept complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them by the public.
- Provide a summary of complaints, questions, and concerns to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Timeline

In 2017, the Government of Nova Scotia passed the province's Accessibility Act. A supporting document, *Access by Design 2030*, is the implementation strategy for how Nova Scotia will achieve an accessible province by 2030. It also identifies actions to improve public awareness, build collaboration and increase compliance with existing regulations. The Accessibility Act set an ambitious goal to become a fully accessible province by 2030. As such, we strive to have the commitments of this plan achieved by 2030, to be consistent with the Province of Nova Scotia.

For specific timelines and budgets associated with the commitments and action items of this plan, please see your municipality's Accessibility Action Plan. As highlighted above, these individual Accessibility Action Plans may not be available until a future date.

Monitoring and Evaluating

Each municipal unit will be responsible for submitting an Accessibility Report Card to the Accessibility Advisory Committee by November 30 each year. This report card will track and report on the progress made towards the commitments in this plan, and performance of the policies and actions in their individual Accessibility Action Plans. The Accessibility Advisory Committee may also make recommendations to improve this plan.

The Accessibility Report Cards of each municipal unit will be public documents, posted on their individual websites.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will review new directives, guidelines, and updates from the province as they are released, and determine if updates to this Accessibility Plan are required based on those updates. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the municipal units on the need for updates to their individual Accessibility Action Plans.

Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, pose a question, or express a concern about accessibility in Lunenburg County. These should be directed to the CAO of the appropriate municipal unit.
- The CAO will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, the CAO will consult with the staff person responsible for the area of inquiry. The CAO's response will contain the reasons for the decision.
- If the complainant still has concerns, they can contact the Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response from the CAO or the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Council may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The CAOs will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them, and will provide summary updates to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the Accessibility Advisory Committee's continual review of the Accessibility Plan and may inform future changes.

Reference Documents

The **Built Environment Standard**, under the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018-2021 will be released soon and include accessibility standards for the built environment, to prevent the design and construction of new barriers and remove existing barriers over time.

The **Clearing Our Path** resource, produced by the CNIB Foundation (2019), provides international standards and universal design principles to build accessible environments for people who are blind or have low vision.

Link: http://www.clearingourpath.ca/8.0.0-design-needs_e.php

The **Guidelines For Accessible Recreation** prepared for Lunenburg Queens Recreation Coordinators and Directors Association and Yarmouth Shelburne Municipal Recreation Association by Fulcrum Accessibility Consulting, 2018, includes a **Basic Standards of Accessibility list** developed as a result of accumulated insight and recommendations based on *the Americans with Disabilities Act*, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the *Accessibility for Nova Scotian's Act*, and the *Human Rights Act of Nova Scotia*. Interwoven into these Guidelines are principles of Universal Design, the suggestions of persons with disabilities themselves, and learned techniques from practicing accessibility consultants and access audits on various buildings.

Link:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/southshoreconnect.cioc/CCH/Revised+September+5th+edition+of+April+7+Combined+Audit+%26+Accessibility+Report.pdf>

The **Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide** document produced by the World Health Organization (WHO), 2007, outlines research and recommendations for communities to become more age-friendly, including but not limited to, recommendations for outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, and civic participation.

Link: https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

The **Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018-2021**, released by the Department of Justice in September 2018, is a multi-year plan setting specific priorities and commitments for achieving accessibility within the Government of Nova Scotia.

Link: <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan/government-accessibility-plan.pdf>

The **Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces**, released by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate in April 2020, provide ways to identify barriers to accessibility in the built environment and are intended to be replaced by the provincial accessibility standard for the built environment.

Link: <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/docs/Interim-Accessibility-Guidelines-for-Indoor-and-Outdoor-Spaces.pdf>

The **Wolfville: Access by Design, An Accessibility Plan for 2019-2022**, released by the Town of Wolfville in April 2019, is the first municipal-level accessibility plan. The Town was chosen by the Government of Nova Scotia to serve as an example for other communities in the province.

Link: <https://www.amans.ca/other-resouces/692-wolfville-accessibility-plan/file.html>

Committee Members

Accessibility Coordinator: Sarah Kucharski, Communications Officer, MODL

Community Members (6 of 6 positions)

David Outhouse	First Appointed: September 01, 2019 Term Expiring September 01, 2022
Louise Hopper	First Appointed: September 01, 2019 Term Expiring September 01, 2022
Patricia George-Zwicker	First Appointed: September 01, 2019 Term Expiring September 01, 2021
Ellen Johnson	First Appointed: September 01, 2019 Term Expiring September 01, 2021
Mary St. Amand	First Appointed: January 30, 2020 Re-Appointed: December 2020 Term Expiring December 2023
Desiree Gordon	First Appointed: December 2020 Term Expiring December 2023

Elected Officials (6 of 6 positions) Terms: 2yrs

Municipal Unit	Name
Municipality of the District of Lunenburg	Councillor Cathy Moore Alternate: Councillor Reid Whynot
Municipality of the District of Chester	Councillor Danielle Barkhouse Alternate: Councillor Abdela Assaf
Town of Bridgewater	Councillor Jennifer McDonald Alternate: Councillor Mike Conklin
Town of Lunenburg	Councillor Melissa Duggan Alternate: Councillor Susan Sanford
Town of Mahone Bay	Councillor Penny Carver Alternate: Deputy Mayor Francis Kangata
Village of Chester	Commissioner Martin Hiltz

Staff Resources (6 of 6 positions) Terms: N/A

Department	Name
Recreation	Diana Johnson , Recreation Coordinator, ToB
Communications	Sarah Kucharski , Communications Officer, MODL
Planning	Jessica McDonald , Director of Planning, ToB
Engineering	Greg Jonah , Engineering Technologist, MODC
Policy	Dylan Heide , C.A.O. ToMB
Heritage	Arthur MacDonald , Heritage Manager, ToL

Wolfville: Access by Design

An Accessibility Plan for 2019-2022



Working to provide access for all.



Contents

Welcome Message	2
Introduction	4
Built Environment	8
Information and Communications	13
Employment	16
Goods and Services	19
Transportation	22
Implementing the Plan	25
Appendices	27

For important terms, check out
“What the Words Mean (Glossary of Terms)” on page 6.



Welcome

On behalf of the Town of Wolfville's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), and the Town's staff members, I invite you to read the Town's first Accessibility Plan. Nova Scotia is the third province in Canada that has adopted an accessibility law. Wolfville was selected by the Province to be the first town to create an accessibility plan. This plan is meant to serve as an example for other communities in the province. The Town created the Committee in order to receive guidance in writing the accessibility plan and organizing actions to improve accessibility. In accordance with section 44 (2) of the Accessibility Act, "At least one half of the members of an accessibility advisory committee must be persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities." Wolfville's Committee meets this requirement.

Our plan, *Wolfville: Access by Design*, is the result of the collaboration of the Town of Wolfville, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate within the Department of Justice, and members of the public. Members of the public were invited to provide input regarding their areas of concern about accessibility in Wolfville. We asked for comments and concerns at community meetings, including a well-attended priority-setting session at the Farmers' Market. Members of the public were also invited to provide feedback online, and attend Committee meetings that included time for their questions and comments. During meetings, Committee members provided input to Town staff members on setting priorities for accessibility. In turn, staff members from both the Town and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate wrote several versions of the plan, according to input they received from the public and the Committee.

The plan reflects the goal of the Town to be responsive to the needs of people with various abilities. Wolfville strives to be a welcoming, inclusive, and accepting community to all people. With this aim in mind, I encourage you to view the Accessibility Plan as a “living document,” and to suggest changes to it that will continually improve it. Although the plan must be updated every three years, please voice your concerns, questions, and suggestions at any time, since the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Town of Wolfville, and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate rely on your invaluable input. I cordially invite you to attend our meetings, as well as to contact the Town’s Accessibility Coordinator.

For Committee members, serving on the Committee has been an opportunity for engagement, learning, and growth, and we are grateful for it. We are proud of the Town’s Accessibility Plan, and look forward to seeing it put into practice.

Agnieszka Hayes

*Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee
Town of Wolfville*

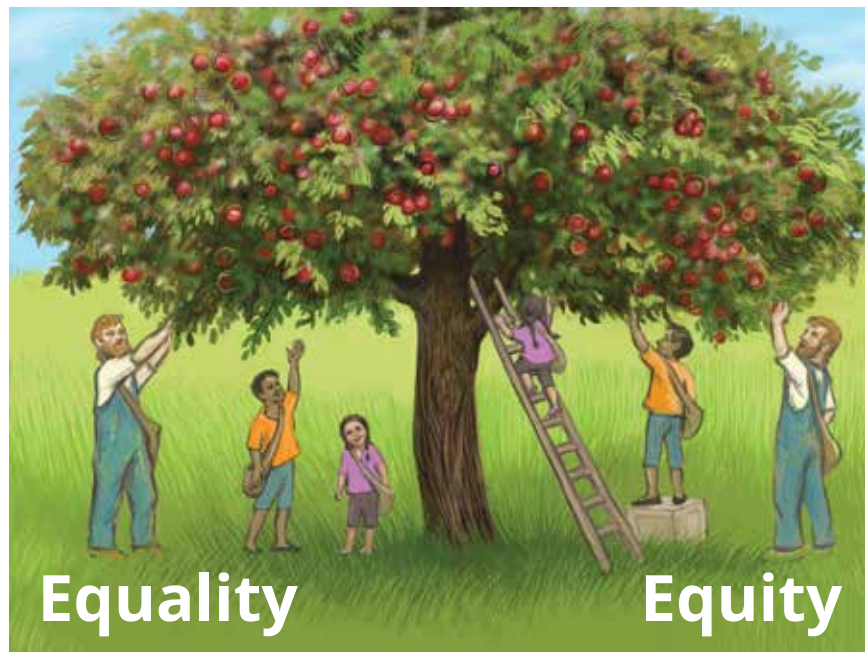


What We Believe

The Town of Wolfville is committed to ensuring equitable access to community life and participation in society for all people, regardless of their abilities. We are committed to helping all people maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion.

Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody gets the same thing; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities (Figure 1).

Figure 1.



We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face barriers to accessibility. We will do this by identifying, removing, and preventing these barriers and by meeting the requirements of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

Areas of Focus

Our plan includes five areas of focus (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

What the Words Mean (Glossary of Terms)

AAC: Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Appeal: Make a formal request to clarify or change a decision.

ASL: American Sign Language.

Auditory: Related to hearing or sensing sound.

Barrier: Something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice."

Braille: A reading and writing system for people who are visually impaired.

CART: Communication Access Realtime Translation.

CSA: Canadian Standards Association.

Density bonusing: (Also called "incentive zoning" or "bonus zoning") A way for developers and municipalities to negotiate changes to zoning rules. For example, the municipality might allow the developer to include less parking in exchange for benefits to the public, such as public art, parks, or accessibility improvements.

Disability: A condition that makes it harder for a person to participate. The condition may always interfere, or only sometimes. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines disability as "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society."

EMO: Emergency Management Office.

Equitable/equity: A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities.

Infrastructure: The "underlying structure" that makes a place liveable and keeps its systems working (e.g., roads, sewers, clean water, electricity, and more).

NSFM: Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Pedestrian: A person walking outside or using an assistive device outside to travel at a walking speed.

Plain language: Language a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.

Retrofit: To add features that were not included in the original design.

RHF: Rick Hansen Foundation.

RHFAC: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification. (Learn more at www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification.)

Tactile: Related to the sense of touch.

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. (Learn more at www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag.)



Built Environment

Our Commitment

Our public buildings and public spaces will be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, whether we own, lease, or operate the space. We will also encourage citizens, the business community, and Acadia University to make other public and private spaces accessible.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town of Wolfville owns, leases, and operates public facilities such as Town Hall, Rotary Park, many sidewalks, parking areas, and a wide variety of other buildings, parks, and infrastructure (basic structures and systems that help the Town run smoothly).

Achievements

- Reservoir Park and Harvest Moon Trail have been improved to include areas that are more accessible.
- Sidewalk rebuilding is included in the 10-year capital investment plan, and sidewalk repairs now have more attention in the Operations Plan.
- The Town bought additional equipment to speed up snow removal.
- The customer service counter in Town Hall is a height that is wheelchair accessible.
- Town Hall is barrier free on the first floor.

Barriers

- Some sidewalks and walkways are uneven.
- Some entryways to public and private buildings are narrow.

- Some public open spaces—such as the Mona Parsons Statue, Quiet Park, and the Rail Trail—are not accessible to people with mobility challenges.
- Some public washrooms are not fully accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- Accessible parking is limited.
- Some ramps are steep and do not have a mid-ramp landing—for example at Town Hall.
- There are not enough signs for people with visual and hearing impairments.
- Cars and pedestrian traffic compete for street priority and snow clearance.
- Sidewalk snow clearing does not always meet accessibility requirements.
- It can be very expensive to update (retrofit) existing buildings to make them more accessible.
- Accessibility projects compete with other budget demands, including essential services such as water and sewer services.



Mona Parsons Statue

Policies

For Public Spaces

The Town of Wolfville will...

- By 2021, ensure that all or most municipal facilities meet the Accessibility requirements (Schedule “C”) in the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulation. For facilities not completed by that date, have a plan in place to complete the work by 2025.
- Ensure that all new municipal buildings (including major renovations) meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Gold Standard.
- Provide basic access for people of all ages and abilities to public buildings, public washrooms, and at public parks with a natural slope of less than 5 percent (e.g., parts of Reservoir Park; Harvest Moon Trail; Quiet Park; parts of Willow Park, etc.).
- Ensure sidewalks and curb cuts within the Core area are improved and maintained, as soon as possible, to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Provide accessible parking locations, and associated curb cuts, spread throughout the Core Area.
- Provide crosswalks and curb-cuts in areas where there are many pedestrians, such as near schools and parks.

For Community Partnerships

The Town of Wolfville will...

- Encourage private developers to have their existing buildings RHFAC-certified and for new developments to meet the RHFAC Gold Standard.
- Offer density bonusing (negotiated changes to zoning rules) to private developers who meet the Rick Hansen Gold Standards within the Core Area.

- Regard Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification as a “public benefit” under the Density Bonus Program.
- Work with the Wolfville business community, including the Wolfville Business Development Corporation, to promote Wolfville as an accessible community.
- Encourage seniors to “age in place” through alternative housing options, such as “granny-flats”, co-housing, senior shared housing with students, etc.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Add sidewalk curb cuts at all intersections where sidewalks exist.
- Commit a portion of the annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in public buildings and spaces.
- Ensure all pedestrian buttons or light controls, such as those at intersections or pedestrian controlled crosswalks, are located over a flat area.
- Place street furniture, sandwich boards and sidewalk planters away from the path of travel and set back from curb cuts and sidewalks so that people can move freely.
- Widen doorways and install power door buttons or automated sliding doors at the entrance of municipal buildings and public washrooms.
- Town staff to review and bring forward to Council recommendations (with related capital and operating costs) to improve the standard timelines for snow removal on sidewalks.
- Put auditory, visual, and tactile markers at busy intersections where people cross the road—for example, within the Core Area and near schools and parks.

Other Priorities

- Ensure the Council Chambers meet CSA Accessibility requirements by March 31, 2020. This includes providing a mid-ramp landing to improve access to the first floor at Town Hall.
- Ensure service desks are an accessible height, including in the Community Development and Public Works building.
- Work with library partners, such as Annapolis Valley Regional Library, to ensure library collections are more accessible.
- For renovations to private buildings that aim to meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification, fast track the approval and waive the development fee.
- For new developments that aim to achieve Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification, consider:
 - deducting the cost of certification from development fees, and
 - fast tracking these applications through the development approval process.
- Promote the province's Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the Wolfville Business Community, including the Wolfville Business Development Corporation.
- Consider changing Land Use Bylaws to make it easier for homeowners and landowners to:
 - add a secondary suite (e.g., an apartment unit) or a backyard suite
 - create co-housing (a community that includes private living space and shared space).
- Encourage aging-in-place housing options in the municipal planning strategy and zoning by-laws.



Information and Communications

Our Commitment

Information and communications delivered by the Town of Wolfville will be clear and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. We will take steps so people understand accessibility and barriers to participation, and will increase awareness about the accessibility rights of people of all ages and abilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town delivers information to the public in many ways, including:

- meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees, which are open to the public
- email, the Town's website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other forms of social media
- kiosks (display structures) to promote events and special town meetings
- public awareness campaigns

Achievements

- Meetings are generally held at Town Hall, where the first floor is barrier free.
- When meetings are not held at Town Hall, a wheelchair-accessible space is booked, whenever possible.
- Agendas and minutes of all meetings are posted on the Town website.

Information and Communications

- People can listen to or watch Town Council meetings live on the Internet during the meeting. (Town Council meetings are streamed on Facebook Live. This new initiative will improve as technical issues are resolved.) After the meeting, people can listen to or watch an archived copy on the Town's website.
- The Emergency Management Office (EMO) Coordinator has worked with seniors and seniors' housing to develop a contact list for use in the event of an emergency.

Barriers

- Many people do not know that others face barriers to accessibility.
- There is currently no process for hearing-impaired individuals to attend or participate in public meetings, including meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees.
- The Town's website is not accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Staff are generally not trained to promote inclusion in communications.
- "Plain language" is not consistently used in written material.
- The Municipal Government Act sets limitations for certain public notices—for example, advertisements must be published in newspapers, which may not be accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Streaming video and related technologies do not always work as intended.

Policies

The Town of Wolfville will...

- On request, provide information in an accessible format, or with communication supports that consider a person's specific needs. Build a campaign to promote this service to the public.

- Ensure the Town's digital presence (e.g., website and social media) and Information Technology systems are designed for people of all ages and abilities.
- Hold all in-person public meetings in barrier-free locations.
- Train front-line staff in better ways to communicate with people of all ages and abilities, and to provide information in an accessible format.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Train relevant staff in plain language and inclusive communications.
- Develop and implement a public awareness program (for Town staff and the public) to build awareness around barriers to accessibility and what an accessible community means.
- Provide modified editions of key municipal resources—in large print and/or in plain language—on request. Examples include recreation guides, emergency management information, and bylaw services.
- Ensure digital communications, including emergency alerts, are screen-readable. Encourage partner agencies to achieve the same standard of communication.

Other Priorities

- By 2021, ensure the Town's web presence meets the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- Provide American Sign Language (ASL) and/or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services at Town Council and other Town-hosted public meetings, on request.
- Include braille on all employee business cards.
- Work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) to advocate for accessibility to be included in the public notice requirements of the Municipal Government Act.

Information and Communications

- Issue meeting agendas with enough lead time to review and book communication accommodations, if needed.
- Ensure the public have enough notice to give feedback and participate in discussions before Town Council makes a decision.



Employment

Our Commitment

We will remove barriers to employment for people of all ages and abilities who seek a career with the Town of Wolfville. Our workforce will reflect the Town's diverse population. We will make our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees of all ages and abilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town employs 42 permanent employees. There are 7 elected representatives on Town Council, including the mayor. Elected representatives must be Canadian citizens, at least 18 years old, and live in the community. The Council may appoint other members of the public to serve on committees or task forces.

Achievements

- Members of Council receive iPads for reading agendas and Town documents. This makes reading more accessible because users can zoom in on text and change the font size.
- Town Hall is barrier free on the first floor.
- The Council table is generally wheelchair accessible.
- The Public Works/Community Development building is wheelchair accessible on the first floor.

Barriers

- The second floor is not wheelchair accessible in all Town-owned buildings.

Employment

- Staff, including senior management, are generally not trained to recognize barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Jobs are posted in traditional ways, including web pages, which may not be accessible to some individuals.
- Because the Town does not have a Human Resources Department, there are few ways to help staff who have individual needs.

Policies

The Town of Wolfville will...

- Offer accommodation during recruitment, if needed.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all ages and abilities. This includes providing assistive devices so that employees can succeed at their jobs.
- Track the number of employees with disabilities, with the aim of reflecting the Town's diversity by 2020.
- Work with Town employees to build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Update the employee training manual to include a section on respecting diversity. This will include training in working with people of all ages and abilities. All town employees will be required to take the Working with Abilities online training provided free by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (workwithabilitiesns.ca).
- Establish a centralized accommodation fund to pay for assistive devices or accommodations employees need to succeed at their jobs. Promote this fund on the job posting.

Other Priorities

- Survey the municipal workforce to get baseline data on the ages and abilities of employees.
- Produce annual diversity reports, including trends and analysis about people with varying abilities.
- Share opportunities for accessibility training with residents and local businesses—online or in person with Town of Wolfville staff training.
- Investigate strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience with job postings. Include statements in the job postings to ensure applicants are aware that accommodation can be provided.
- Assign a designated staff person to help individuals who may need assistance to succeed at their jobs.



Goods and Services

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Town of Wolfville. This includes ensuring that there are policies, procedures, and tools to promote the accessible delivery of goods and services.

Our Starting Point

Overview

Following are some of the many services the Town of Wolfville delivers to the public:

- handling meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees
- overseeing communication to the public (see Information and Communication section)
- providing Customer Service counters
- maintaining streets, including sidewalk snow removal (see Built Environment section)
- maintaining parks, trails, and open spaces, including playgrounds, and a Visitor Information Centre (see Built Environment section)
- maintaining water and sewer services
- providing emergency services, such as police and fire

Achievements

- The customer service counter in Town Hall is at a height that is wheelchair accessible.

- The Visitor Information Centre has no steps, and so it is partially wheelchair accessible.

Barriers

- Although the Visitor Information Centre is built at ground level, it is not fully accessible. For example, it does not have an automatic door opener and does not have an accessible washroom.
- Although the Recreation Centre at Rotary Park is built at ground level, it is not fully accessible. For example, there are no automatic door openers, some doors are too narrow, and the ramp to the program room is inappropriate.
- No staff members are trained in alternative communication methods, such as American Sign Language (ASL).
- No resources or funds are designated to offer alternative communications to people who need them (for example, a sign language interpreter).
- The Town's website is not accessible to people with visual impairments.

Policy

The Town of Wolfville will deliver all goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Ensure public parks can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.
- Create an accessible playground at Willow Park.
- Improve snow clearance.
- Provide an adapted listing of recreation programs and services for people of all ages and abilities, and update it annually.

Goods and Services

- Train the staff who are responsible for delivering accessible services to people with diverse abilities.

Other Priorities

- Waive the entrance fees at leisure activities for individuals whose role is to support a person with a disability.
- Establish an accommodation fund to provide services for residents who need accommodation, such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and American Sign Language (ASL).
- Provide sign language interpreters, on request, to enable people to participate in recreation and library programs.
- Provide accessible exercise equipment at municipal recreational facilities.
- Provide accessibility training to the Town's Building Inspector, through the RHFAC training offered by Nova Scotia Community College.
- Where applicable, include an "Accessibility Lens"/Impact Analysis in reports to council and in consultant reports delivered to staff and council.



Transportation

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equitable access to publicly funded and/or regulated transportation services. These currently include Kings Transit Authority, Kings Point to Point, and taxi services.

Our Starting Point

Overview

Kings Transit Authority operates 13 buses from Weymouth to Hants Border, with service extending to Cornwallis Park, Upper Clements Park, and Port Williams.

Kings Point-to-Point Transit (KPPT) provides a door-to-door accessible public transportation service for all residents of Central and Eastern Kings County. KPPT operates a fleet of 8 vehicles, including an 18-passenger minibus. All vehicles are accessible.

The Town of Wolfville licenses 16 taxis.

Achievements

All Kings Transit Authority buses are equipped with the following:

- Global Positioning System (GPS) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), using DoubleMap. These features enable passengers to get up-to-the-minute estimates of bus arrival times, by phone or Internet.

Transportation

- Automatic Voice Annunciation (AVA) Technology to announce the next stop for passengers with visual impairments
- low-floor kneeling capabilities and electric ramps
- priority seating

All of the Kings Point-to-Point vehicles are accessible.

Barriers

There are currently no accessible taxis operating in Wolfville. Kings Point-to-Point Transit must be booked at least 24 hours in advance.

Policies

The Town of Wolfville will...

- Ensure that no resident is denied transit or taxi service because of a disability.
- Ensure that no resident is charged an additional fee for transit or taxi service because of a disability.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Town staff to work with Kings Transit staff to review snow removal at transit stops and steps (including costs) required to improve snow removal timelines
- Ensure all transit stops are designed to meet or exceed Canadian Standards Association (CSAA) Standard B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.

Other Priorities

- Explore subsidized transit fares and/or transit passes for people with disabilities and/or low income.
- Ensure training is available for operators and drivers of public transportation.

- Ensure accessible taxi service is available to the public by doing the following:
 - a) Consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the public to determine how many on-demand accessible taxis are needed.
 - b) Demonstrate progress toward meeting that need.
 - c) Ensure that no one is charged additional fees or is charged a fee to store their mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.
 - d) Ensure that the vehicle registration is visible and available in accessible formats for passengers of all ages and abilities.



Implementing the Plan

Responsibilities

- Town Council is responsible for adopting and overseeing *Wolfville: Access by Design*.
- The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for receiving and responding to public concerns, complaints, and suggestions.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for giving feedback and recommendations to the Town Council.

Schedule

All Top Priorities in this plan will be implemented by March 31, 2022 (the end of the fiscal year). Other priorities will be implemented by 2030.

Monitoring

- The Wolfville Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) will prepare an Access by Design Report Card for council by March 31 of each year (the end of the fiscal year). This report card will measure the performance of the policies and actions in this plan. The committee may also make recommendations to improve the plan.
- The Access by Design Report Card will be a public document. It will be posted on the Town's website.

Evaluating

The Town will lead a public review and evaluation of Wolfville: Access by Design before fiscal year 2022/23.

Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, pose a question, or express a concern about accessibility in the Town of Wolfville. These should be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, the Coordinator will consult with the staff person responsible for the area of inquiry. The Coordinator's response will contain the reasons for the decision.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response from the Accessibility Coordinator. Council may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them, and will provide summary updates to the advisory committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the advisory committee's continual review of the Accessibility Plan, and may inform future changes.

Appendices

Committee Members

Agnieszka Hayes, *(Chair) Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Birgit Elssner, *(Vice-chair) Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Mercedes Brian, *Councillor, Two Year Term*

Oonagh Proudfoot, *Alternate Councillor*

David Daniels, *Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Rebecca Smith, *Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Andrew Roach, *Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Emily Duffett, *Member at Large, Three Year Term*

Ex-Officio Members

Mayor Jeff Cantwell, *ex-officio*

Erin Beaudin, *ex-officio*

Mike MacLean, *Director of Finance,
ex-officio (Accessibility Coordinator)*

902-542-4501

mmaclean@wolfville.ca



Council Awareness Rollabout Event

Wolfville's Mayor, Councillors and Accessibility Committee members experienced a small part of what it can be like to rely on a wheelchair to get from place to place, as well as barriers to those with visual impairments. Assistance and support for this awareness event was provided by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.



Community Engagement Event

On September 25th, 2018 the Committee held a Community event to engage the public in identifying barriers to accessibility in the Town of Wolfville. All were invited to check out the large maps of Wolfville and add sticky notes to areas of concern they have when it comes to accessibility. The Committee ended up with maps representing Built Form areas of concern for: General areas; Connections; Spots. This information was then turned into an overall map.

wolfville.ca



West Hants Regional Municipality

Accessibility Advisory Committee 2021/22 Budget Proposal

Expenditures

Communications supplemented by general communications budget	\$	1,500.00
Programming experiential learning materials and supplies print materials	\$	1,500.00
Consultant community assessment by 3rd party or employee	\$	37,000.00
		<hr/> <hr/>
	\$	40,000.00