

Photo credit River Hebert & Joggins Community Centre



# 2026 Report: Joint Accessibility Plan

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## About the Plan

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The Joint Accessibility Plan was first released in 2022. It helps the Municipality better serve people with disabilities. It was edited and re-released in April 2025. This is a report, released every spring.

The full plan, and a plain language version, are available on the municipal website: [Accessible Cumberland - Municipality of Cumberland](#). The Plan was developed by staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, including the Villages of Pugwash and River Hebert.

## About this Report

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The Accessibility Plan promises a report every year on how things are going. This is the 2026 report. Some actions have more information below them about what staff are doing to finish the task.

The actions in the plan are shown below with one of 3 icons:



Done



In progress



Not yet started

Some things are not done or started yet because they are in the “next” or “later” sections. Some things in the “later” sections are left out of this report to keep it short.

## Goods and Services



Cropped image courtesy Nova Scotia Parks website.

### Ongoing



GS1 Ongoing staff training in providing services and programs to all people including those with disabilities, including mental health stigma & awareness.

- ~2022: Many front-line staff took accessible services training.
- 2024: Several staff members in the administration and recreation departments took Digital Accessibility and Plain Language training.
- November 2025: Developed a staff training plan specific to equity & accessibility. Mental health first aid is a major focus.
- March 2026: Staff in several departments took Mental Health First Aid by Opening Minds and St. John Ambulance.
- Next steps:
  - o Equity & Accessibility Training Plan: Decide on trainings and timing for each department



GS2 Communicate in accessible ways with employees and the public.

- Council meetings are live-streamed, captioned, and posted to YouTube for later viewing.
- 2025: The first policy with a plain language overview was released ([Pets Policy 25-03](#), page 3).
- 2025: A report recommending plain language overviews is being considered.
- 2025: The internal Communication Plan lists plain language and accessibility as priorities.
- 2025: A Branding Guide was presented to management. It has an accessibility section that explains things like how to add alt text, accessible documents, plain language guides, and more.
- 2026: “Pocket talkers” are now available at Upper Nappan, Springhill, and Parrsboro Service Centres. A citizen or visitor can put on the headphones to hear the customer service representative better.
- 2026: Mandatory Plain Language training for all staff who communicate with the public.
- Next steps:
  - o Continue to follow the Communication Plan
  - o Give staff more training opportunities on accessible communications



GS3 Provide accessible buildings and spaces for positive customer experiences, including seating, well-lit and sensory sensitive spaces, and washrooms.

- 2025: Staff started an accessibility assessment of the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre (DCMMCC) in Springhill. The assessment covers things like ramps and stairs but also things like lighting, sound equipment, emergency supplies, and more.
- 2025: Municipal staff helped library staff with an accessibility assessment of the Miners' Memorial Library in Springhill.
- Next steps:
  - o Finish DCMMCC assessment
  - o Report findings to the Recreation Director



GS4 Include an "Accessibility Lens"/Impact Analysis in relevant reports to council and staff.

- Notify directors that they can ask for these reports.

Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development. ([Provincial Standards are expected in 2027.](#))

#### **Now**



GS6 Hire an Accessibility Coordinator (Community Engagement Coordinator).



GS7 Welcome service animals and support persons, including staff training.

- 2024: All service centres have "No Pets, Service Animals Welcome" signs on their doors. (See also: [Pets Policy 25-03](#))



GS8 Install devices (such as pocket-talkers) to help staff communicate with people who are hard of hearing or d/Deaf.

- 2026: Pocket talkers are now available at Parrsboro, Springhill, and Upper Nappan customer service desks. The recreation department also has one for activities county-wide.
- Next steps:
  - o Try pocket-talkers, decide if they fit service desk and citizen needs



GS9 Promote and better organize the adaptive equipment program.

- Summer 2025: Staff went to Disability Pride in Amherst. They asked people what kinds of adaptive equipment<sup>1</sup> they would like to use. They told the Active Living Coordinator who is in charge of ordering new equipment. They will buy new equipment by March 2026.
- Sledges are advertised heavily and have been borrowed.

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<sup>1</sup> Things that help people with disabilities play sports.

- The Active Living Coordinator works with Recreation NS for equipment loan and adaptive loan programs.
- Next steps:
  - Recreation staff are locating, organizing, and promoting the other pieces of the adaptive equipment.



GS10 Create a vulnerable persons registry to improve emergency management procedures for people with disabilities.

- Next steps:
  - Check with the Emergency Management Office to see what their plan is.



GS11 Following consultation with d/Deaf residents, develop a policy for offering communication services such as American Sign Language (ASL).

- 2025: A memo on the topic is being considered.
- Next steps:
  - Engagement with d/Deaf residents
  - Find out what other municipalities are doing
  - Develop the policy

## Built Environment



The office of the Glooscap Campground just outside of Parrsboro.

### Ongoing



BE1 New municipal buildings (including retrofits), outdoor spaces (including sidewalks), roads, and trails will comply with national standards: CSA-B651-23.

- By national and provincial legislation, new buildings have to follow the Building Code.
- 2025: The Province released their [Built Environment Accessibility Standard](#). This applies to outdoor spaces. By April 2026, Prescribed Public Sector Bodies<sup>2</sup> have to follow this standard.
- 2025: Public Works made sidewalk and crosswalk improvements in multiple areas
  - o Parrsboro: sections of Upper Main Street
  - o Springhill: extended the sidewalk up McDougall St. from Main St. to the Senior's Center



BE2 Using available resources (RHF, CSA) review emergency management and building exit plans with people with disabilities. Train staff on these procedures.

### Next



BE3 Continue assessments of municipal buildings, sidewalks, etc. to document needs.

- 2025: Staff surveyed the sidewalks in Springhill and Parrsboro. Every sidewalk was photographed. Staff now have a full map of sidewalk issues and will plan to address them.
- 2025: Staff have started an audit of the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre (DCMMCC) in Springhill.
- Next steps

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<sup>2</sup> Provincial and local governments, universities, and other key organizations (like libraries).

- Finish the DCOMM assessment and report findings to the Recreation Director
- Assess other municipal buildings, as required
- Report findings to relevant department directors and the Accessibility Advisory Committee



BE4 Improve accessibility in Municipally owned libraries.

- 2025: Staff helped library staff with an assessment the Miners Memorial Library in Springhill.<sup>3</sup>
- Next steps
  - Report findings to the Community Engagement Librarian and building maintenance staff



BE5 Engage with Public Works (PW) to identify ways to improve winter maintenance, such as snowbanks at crosswalks, and make changes where possible.

- Ride along with PW to understand the process
- Listen to PW thoughts on snow clearance as it is now and what could be better

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<sup>3</sup> They started there because Pugwash's library is already very accessible, and in Parrsboro, the Municipality has plans for a new library.

## Information and Communications



### Ongoing

- IC1 Ensure the Municipality's web presence meets the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
  - 2024: The Communications Officer (and other staff) took training in online accessibility.
  - Municipal staff and the web developer communicate regularly.
- IC2 Provide different versions of key municipal resources (e.g. in large print and/or in plain language). Examples include recreation guides, emergency management information, and bylaws.
  - It is becoming normal to make documents in different versions. For example, the Joint Accessibility Plan, Equity and Diversity Plan, and [Pets Policy](#) have plain language versions.
  - Next steps
    - Communicate to the public that they can ask for this.
- IC3 Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development. ([Information and Communication Standards](#) are expected in 2028-29.)

### Now

- IC4 All public communications should be in plain language.
  - 2024: The Communications Officer took a workshop in plain language.
  - 2025: The [Pets Policy](#) was released with a plain language summary.
  - 2026: Plain language training is now required for many staff.
  - Municipal staff are working on getting used to writing in plain language.
  - Next steps:
    - Continue talking about plain language at work.
    - Continue sharing plain language trainings with staff.
    - Check public communications for plain language.
- IC5 All new bylaws and policies should have a plain language summary.
  - 2025: A memo on this topic is being considered.



IC6 Reformat bills (water, tax) to be in large print as the standard rather than the exception.

### Next



IC7 Improve signage and wayfinding for municipal buildings consistent with accessibility best practice.

- 2025: The assessment of the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre (DCMMCC) includes signage and wayfinding.
- Next steps:
  - o Finish DCMMCC assessment and report findings to the Recreation Director.



IC8 Ensure digital communications and documents are screen readable. Pay people who use screen readers to test document accessibility.

- 2024: Staff in the administration and recreation departments took training in digital accessibility.
- Ongoing: Staff are learning how to make accessible documents.
- Next steps:
  - o Find out what other municipalities are doing
  - o Make connections with organizations serving people with disabilities. Find someone to test documents.



IC9 Train staff in accessible documents, plain language, and how to communicate with people with varying disabilities (e.g. dementia, autism).

- 2025: A draft equity and accessibility training plan is being considered. The plan includes different training opportunities for different roles, including customer service.
- 2025: Staff met with Autism Nova Scotia. They learned how summer staff can better support autistic summer campers.
- Next steps:
  - o Give customer service representatives a tip sheet about how to serve people with support persons, service animals, and more.
  - o Organize a training day with Autism Nova Scotia.



IC10 Work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). Request accessibility to be included in the public notice requirements of the Municipal Government Act.

## Employment



Accommodations for employees can look a variety of ways. Here, a Municipal employee enjoys using a sit-stand desk.

### Ongoing

- ⚙️ EM1 Build capacity for a culture of inclusion that supports diverse staff and council to thrive.
  - Building awareness of accessibility helps to build this culture. Staff and council are becoming more aware of how many Nova Scotians have disabilities (38%) [1]
- ⚙️ EM2 Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development. ([The Employment Accessibility Standard](#) is expected in 2027.)
  - The standards are not out yet, but the lead accessibility staff person has read the national standards: [Employment - Accessibility Standards Canada](#). This helps the municipality prepare. The Municipality has made many improvements to accessibility in the workplace since the Joint Accessibility Plan came out.

### Now

- ✅ EM3 Develop an Employment Equity Statement.
  - Found on the municipal webpage [Employment Opportunities](#). “The Municipality of Cumberland is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome interest from all qualified applicants, including Designated Groups under the Employment Equity Act, specifically women, visible minorities, First Nations and persons with disabilities.”
- ✅ EM4 Clearly state in job postings that they are open to people with disabilities and that accommodations are available in the workplace.
- ✅ EM5 Improve support and flexibility in the workplace by providing access to adaptive technologies and accommodations.
  - Some adaptive technology and accommodations that staff have tried so far:
    - Flexible work hours
    - Sit-stand desks
    - Work-from-home

- Chairs, desks, etc. that fit a person's body (ergonomic equipment)
- Light switch dimmers



EM6 Consider and implement employees' accommodation requests as appropriate (e.g. assistive devices). Promote this on job postings.

- 2025: An accommodations section was added to the [personnel policy](#).
- Ongoing: As needed, managers buy equipment for staff (see above).

### Next



EM7 Investigate strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience with job postings.

- Ongoing: The accessibility lead and Human Resources Generalist watch many webinars that often share how to attract disabled job seekers.
- Next steps:
  - Build relationships with organizations like Inclusion Nova Scotia, Sunset Communities, [GOVRC](#), and Nova Scotia Inclusive Employment Collaborators. Learn from these organizations.



EM8 Plan accessible meetings and events for staff and council.

- 2024: Managers have tried walking meetings to accommodate disabilities and to boost wellness.
- 2025: Staff that often schedule meetings have received a tip sheet on how to plan accessible meetings.
- Next steps:
  - Practice making accommodation requests happen in internal meetings.
  - Get ready for accommodation requests by buying adaptive technology and improving our buildings for people with disabilities.

## Transportation



Cumberland County Transportation Services (CCTS) has a fleet of accessible, hybrid vehicles to get you where you need to go, when you need to get there.

### Ongoing

TR1 Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development.  
([Public Transportation Standards](#) are expected in 2028-9.)

### Now



TR2 Promote CCTS on the Municipality's [Accessible Cumberland](#) webpage.



TR3 Municipal staff will work with CCTS staff to review accessibility at frequent stops, including snow removal at municipally-owned facilities.



TR4 Provide a report to Council about the importance of increased transportation options, such as fixed-route transit or weekly trips from smaller communities to grocery stores.

- 2025: A report was submitted to Deputy CAO for review.
- Next steps:
  - o Because the Town of Amherst is doing a transportation study, the municipality is waiting to see those results before considering further work on this.

### Next



TR5 Work closely with the province, Sunset Communities, CCTS, and other partners to support transportation solutions for all, including rural residents with disabilities.

- 2024-5: The Municipality, Sunset Communities, and CCTS have formed a working group on this topic.
- 2025-6: The Town of Amherst is doing a feasibility study on transportation. The Municipality is waiting to see the results of this study before making more progress on transportation in the rural county.



TR6 Develop an active transportation plan.

- July 2025: Staff did a sidewalk assessment. This means looking at the sidewalks to see if they are smooth, if there are tripping hazards, and if sections need replacing. This is now in our asset management plan, which will help us make decisions about updating sidewalks in the future.

## Bibliography

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- [1] C. S. o. Disability, *Disability Rate in Nova Scotia, 2022*.
- [5] "Population Data," Statistics Canada, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm>. [Accessed 05 03 2025].