



Accessible Cumberland

Report Card for the Joint Accessibility Plan
Accessibility Advisory Committee
March 26, 2024

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About the Joint Accessibility Plan



In 2022, the Municipality of the County of Cumberland (“the Municipality”), Village of Pugwash and Village of River Hebert created the [Joint Accessibility Plan](#) (“the Plan”) to address barriers in the county. We want a more accessible Cumberland in which all can be included and equal, whether they have disabilities or not.

The Plan was developed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (“the Committee”). The Committee had members from the Municipality, the villages, and members of the public. The public was surveyed to share their thoughts for the Plan’s development.

As the Plan evolves, the Committee will keep in good communication with the public. The Plan must be reviewed and updated at least every three years per the Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act (“the Act”), so the Committee has come together again to begin working towards an edited Plan, which will be re-released in 2025.

About this Report

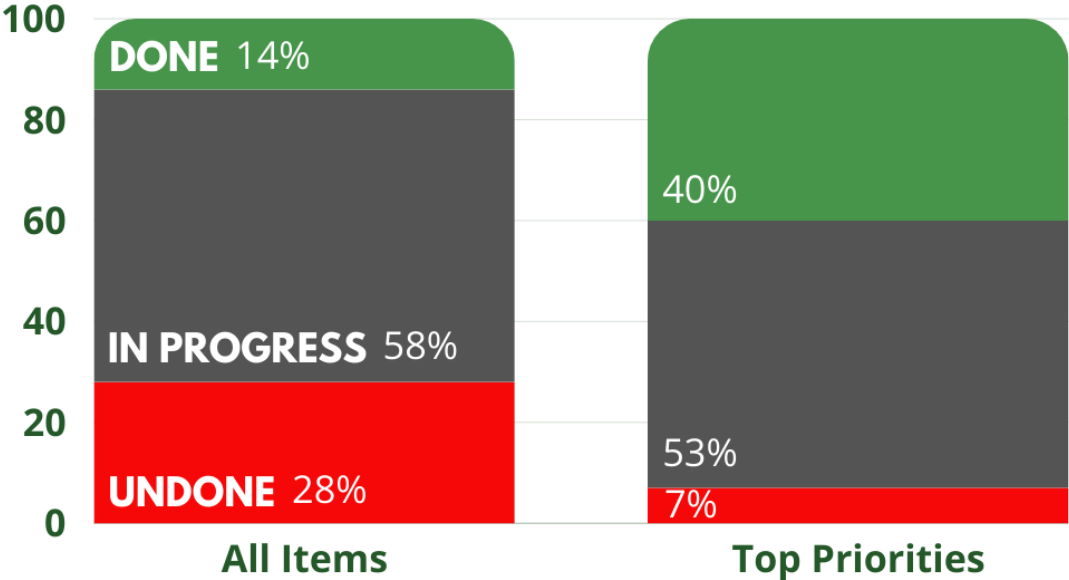
This document will tell you which things from the Plan were and were not completed, and the things that are being worked on.

“Accessible” means that something is easy to use. People with and without disabilities can use or participate in it fully (e.g. design of products, devices, services, or spaces).

As you read this report, you will see that it includes all items from the Plan. “Top Priorities” were meant to be complete by the time this report is released. Everything else is to be complete by 2030.

Plan Progress

MARCH 2024



You will notice that many things are undone or in progress, even Top Priorities. This is because until recently, there was no staff member dedicated entirely to this work. Existing staff were trying to do what they could, but on top of their already full workload, some Plan items were not done.




In February 2024, the Community Engagement Coordinator (“the Coordinator”) was hired. They work on equity and accessibility full-time. Now, the Municipality will be able to make much swifter progress toward becoming a more inclusive place to live.

This report is meant to be concise, and the wording of some items has changed. For much more information, please refer to the Plan itself.

Goods and Services



Top Priorities

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Hiring an Accessibility Coordinator to lead an advisory committee, monitor and carry out the Plan, and learn from the public.		
<p>Ongoing staff training in serving citizens (including people with disabilities).</p>		<p>Organize an internal awareness committee (target date: October 31, 2024).</p> <p>Find training resources (in progress) and offer training.</p> <p>Meet with frontline staff to make sure they understand the training and have a chance to ask follow-up questions in-person.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning accessible public meetings and events, referring to these event guides .		<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with administrators to review guidelines and make room for questions, starting with Council.

Welcoming service animals and support persons.



Signage has been posted on service centre doorways welcoming service animals.

Future Actions

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate in accessible ways with employees and the public.		<input type="checkbox"/> Documents are being edited so they are screen readable and searchable (e.g. policies, forms). <input type="checkbox"/> Employees will receive accessible PDF training for the long-term sustainability of this point.
Accessible digital content, technologies, and platforms.		Audit the Municipality's public and internal websites.
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear and accessible wayfinding signage to municipal services and events.		<input type="checkbox"/> Include the need for accessible signage in the new Communications Strategy.
Provide accessible buildings		The Parrsboro playground, Dr. Carson and Marion Murray

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

Community Centre, Upper Nappan Service Centre lobby, and new Pugwash Library have received many positive reviews. This shows what the Municipality can do for future projects, too.

Assistive devices to help communicate with citizens who are hard of hearing or D/deaf.



The Coordinator is investigating the right type of device for centre and patron needs. Quotes, purchase, and installation will follow.

An improved winter maintenance program.







Capital investment in improved sidewalks (flatter surfaces) will help snow clearance crews.

Accessible and affordable transportation to municipal services and events.





Discuss options with CCTS (Cumberland County Transportation Services), private taxi companies, and auto dealers who sell accessible vans.

<p>Promote and better organize our adaptive equipment program.</p>		<p>See the Cumberland Recreation web page for more information.</p> <p>Expand the adaptive equipment program.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Applying an accessibility lens to procurement (buying goods and services).</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review procurement policies and make recommendations to Council.</p>
<p>Review all policy, procedures, and practices with accessibility in mind, and consider it for all future policies.</p>		<p>Train Elected Official and senior management to build an accessibility mindset.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> When planning for emergencies or essential infrastructure, consider people with disabilities.</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> The Current Cumberland EMO (Emergency Management Office) plan is under revision.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In the department’s ongoing efforts to increase public safety, vulnerable people are a priority.</p>

Further Considerations:

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
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<input type="checkbox"/> Make room in the budget for communication services such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and American Sign Language (ASL).		<input type="checkbox"/> Review budgets. <input type="checkbox"/> Train a staff member in ASL, aiming to avoid contracting interpreters from out-of-county (in progress & long-term). <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate plausibility of hiring contract interpreters until our own is ready.
Provide ASL interpreters (upon request) for recreation and library programs.		As above.
<input type="checkbox"/> Include an "Accessibility Lens"/Impact Analysis in relevant reports to Council and staff.		<input type="checkbox"/> Work with the clerk to investigate this further.




Built Environment




Image (cropped) courtesy of <https://pugwashlibrarythanks.ca>.



Top Priorities



*When implemented

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<p><input type="checkbox"/> New municipal buildings (including retrofits) and outdoor spaces (including sidewalks) will follow the Accessibility Act’s Built Environment Standard*.</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</p>
<p>New or rehabilitated sidewalks, roads, and trails will comply with the Accessibility Act’s Built Environment Standard as closely as possible*).</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Continue audits of municipal buildings, sidewalks,</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Build a priority list of which audits to complete next.</p>

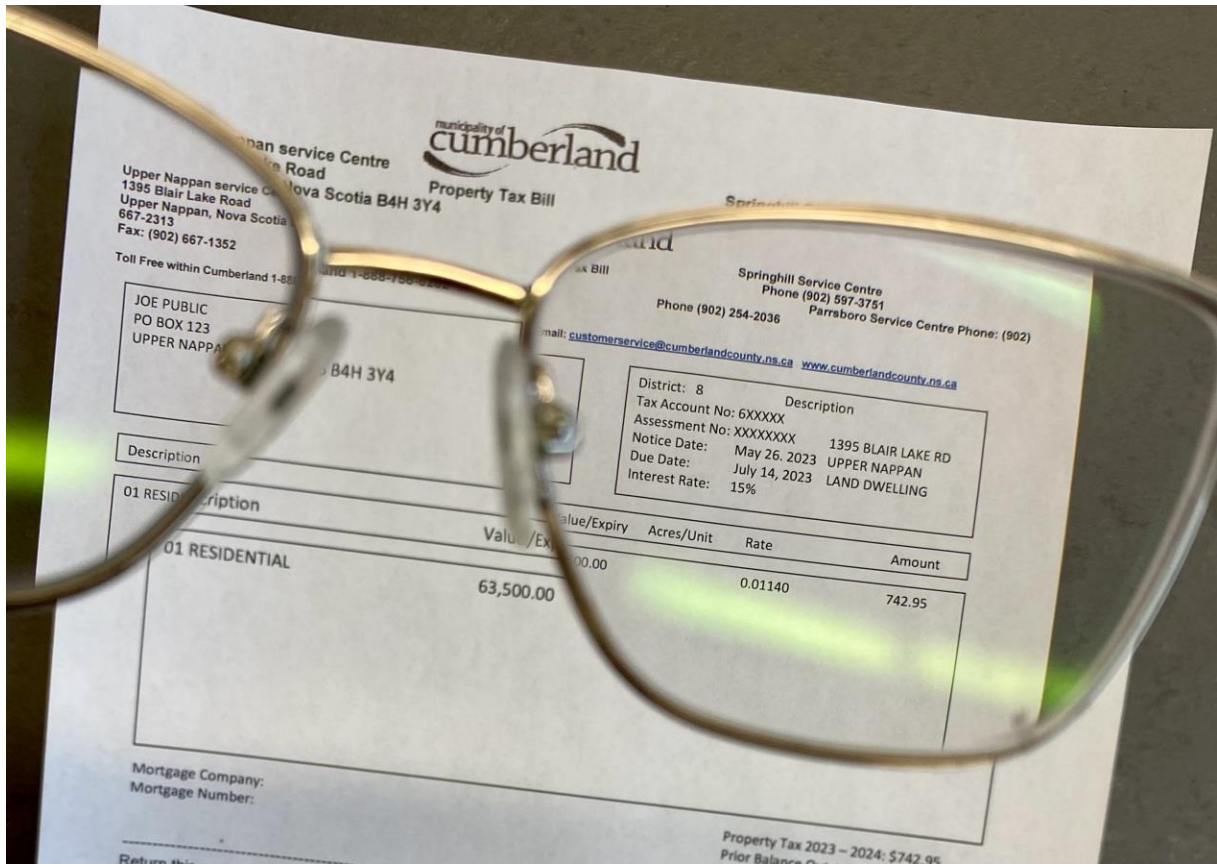
<p>etc. to document needs.</p>		
<p>Emergency management and building exit plans will be reviewed with accessibility and vulnerable people in mind.</p>		<p>The Current Cumberland EMO plan is under revision.</p>

Future Actions



ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve and maintain the accessibility of municipal buildings and outdoor spaces including sidewalks to comply as closely as possible with the Accessibility Act’s Built Environment Standard*.</p>		
<p>Conduct a “gap analysis” of where</p>		<p>Our gap analyses are not yet available to the public.</p>

<p>sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting are lacking and needed.</p>		<p>In the meantime, please add accessibility concerns to the PEACH CANdid Access map.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> When closing sidewalks for construction, offer an accessible detour.</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> When in consultation with 3rd party construction companies, plan ahead for accessible detours.</p>
<p>Work with library partners to make library spaces more accessible.</p>		<p>Cumberland Public Libraries (CPL) has an accessibility plan. The staff and board have an accessibility mindset that prioritize these changes when possible.</p>





Information and Communications





Top Priorities

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the Municipality’s web presence meets the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> The web developer is aware of the site’s accessibility issues. They will be making some changes. If necessary, outsource a contractor who specializes in accessible web design.</p>
<p>Ensure digital communications and documents are screen readable. Encourage partner agencies to achieve the same standard of communication.</p>		<p>Staff will be receiving training on accessible PDFs. The Coordinator is in the process of editing old documents to be screen readable.</p>

Future Actions

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve wayfinding for municipal buildings by posting accessible signage.		
Provide different versions of key municipal documents (e.g. screen-readable) on request.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Train staff in accessible documents, plain language, and how to communicate with different types of people.		<input type="checkbox"/> Provide training. <input type="checkbox"/> Require each department, within a reasonable time, to turn in an edited example document to demonstrate their understanding.
Plan for meetings with enough time to meet accommodation requests.		




Further Considerations:

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide American Sign Language (ASL) and/or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services at Municipal Council and other public meetings, on request.</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review budgets.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Train a staff member in ASL, aiming to avoid contracting interpreters from out-of-county (in progress & long-term).</p>
<p>Work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). Request accessibility to be included in the public notice requirements of the Municipal Government Act.</p>		




Employment



Top Priorities:

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop an Employment Equity Statement.		
Clearly state in job postings that they are open to people with disabilities and that accommodations are available in the workplace.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve support and flexibility in the workplace by giving staff/council members with disabilities access to adaptive technologies and accommodations.		<input type="checkbox"/> Employees are beginning to feel the effects of this step.



Future Actions

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to reach more diverse applicants.		
Build ability of staff and senior leadership to create inclusive and diverse staff/council.		Staff training is in the early stages of planning. Senior leadership is increasingly aware of how to create positive work culture.
<input type="checkbox"/> Make room in the budget to pay for devices or accommodations for employees. Promote this fund on the job posting.		<input type="checkbox"/> Plans are in place to create a new Accommodations policy, allowing employees to identify as needing accommodations.


Transportation



Top Priorities:

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Promote CCTS on the Municipality's webpage .		
Municipal staff will work with CCTS staff to review accessibility at frequent stops, including snow removal.		

Other Considerations:

ACTION ITEM	STATUS	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Explore subsidized transit and taxi fares, especially to municipal services and events.		<input type="checkbox"/> Review budgets. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss opportunities with partners, MCC departments, and funding bodies (in progress).



Aerial photo of the Parrsboro Playground, installed in 2023. Courtesy of Don Matthews, with permission.

Implementing the Plan

Schedule

The goal of the Plan (2022) was to complete 'Top Priorities' by March 31, 2024. 'Future Priorities' are planned for 2030.

The incomplete or in progress Top Priorities in this report will have a new deadline when the Committee revises the Plan. The Plan will be edited and available to the public in 2025.

Monitoring

- The Committee will prepare an Accessible Cumberland Report Card (“the Report”) (this document) for council by March 31 of each year. This report card will measure the actions in this Plan.
- The Committee will conduct a yearly public survey to measure public opinion of the progress in the report card. Results from the survey will be included in the following year’s report. As this is the first report, no survey results are currently available to include this year.
- The Plan will be updated every 3 years or more frequently as new provincial requirements are passed.
- The Report will be a public document. It will be posted on the Municipality’s website.

Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can submit a complaint, ask a question, or share a concern about accessibility in the Municipality. These should be directed to the Community Engagement Coordinator at skeilhack@cumberlandcounty.ns.ca
- Staff will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, they will meet with the department responsible. The Coordinator’s reply will include a decision and the reasons for it.

- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not happy with the response from the Coordinator. Council may ask the Committee to review and make recommendations before making a final reply.
- The Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them, and will provide summary updates to the Committee regularly. These updates will become part of the Committee's continual review of the Joint Accessibility Plan and will be used to inform future changes.

Appendix A – 2024/2025 Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

Stephanie Keilhack (Chair, Community Engagement Coordinator, lived experience)

Amanda Purdy (Vice Chair, Sunset Community)

Melanie Prendergast (Secretary, Municipality of Cumberland staff)

Maggie Pitts (Municipality of Cumberland staff)

Catherine Elma Aquino-Russell (lived experience)

Helen Sims (Cumberland County Transportation Services)

David MacEwan (Village of Pugwash)

Lisa Betts (Village of Pugwash)

Darrell Fagan (Village of River Hebert)

Andrea Meekins (Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services)