NOVA SCOTIA



The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities

Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate

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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

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TOWN HALL



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

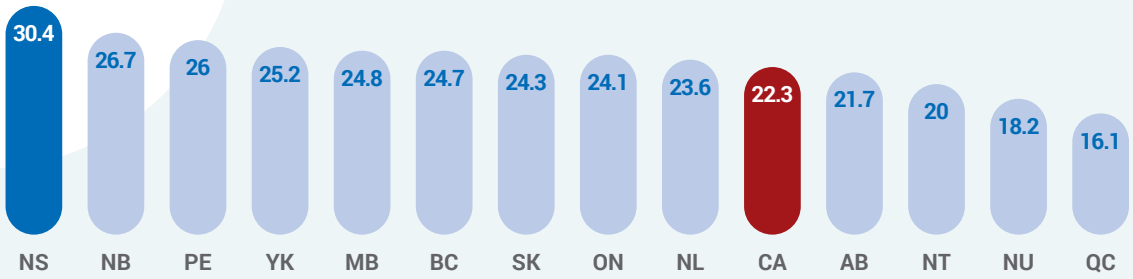
Disability in Nova Scotia

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.)

30%

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.



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 infra-structure 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@nscc.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

Welcome message

Introduction

- What We Believe
- Promoting accessibility awareness
- Glossary of Terms

Areas of Focus

Goods and Services
[ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to the goods and services provided by your municipality]

Information and Communications
[ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information provided by your municipality]

Transportation
[making it easier for everyone 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 and shared spaces accessible to all]

For each area of focus, consider:

- The Commitment
- The Starting Point
  - Overview
  - Achievements
  - Barriers
- Policies
- Actions
- Top Priorities
- Other Priorities

Implementing the Plan

- Responsibilities (for example: council, staff, Accessibility Advisory Committee)
- Schedule or timeline
- Monitoring
- Evaluating
- Responding to Questions and Complaints
- Appendices
  - 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.
- ☆ 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.

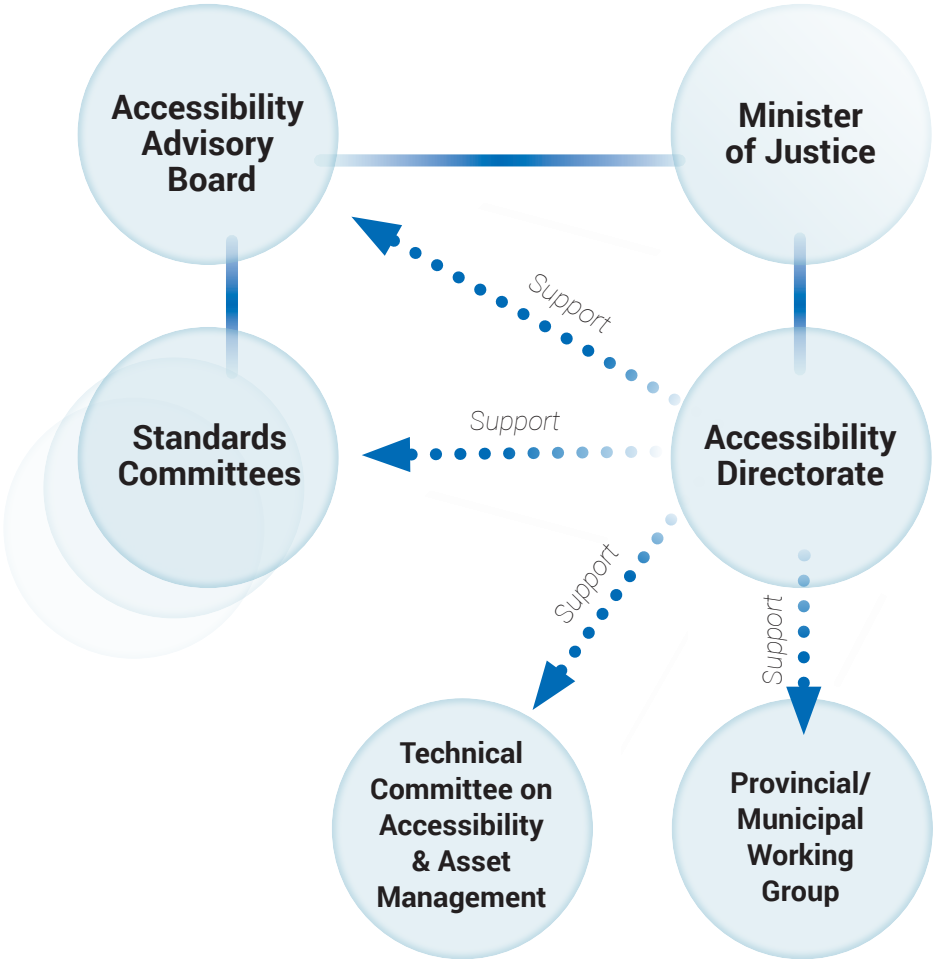
Your provincial partners

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 underserviced 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-underserviced-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'kmaw 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 (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.

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

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