Minister's ANNUAL REPORT on Accessibility 2021 - 2022

NOVA SCOTIA
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Message from the Minister

Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act recognizes accessibility as a human right. As Canada’s third province to enact accessibility legislation, Nova Scotia continues its work toward the goal of becoming an accessible province. The full participation of persons with disabilities in our communities is key to the social and economic well-being of Nova Scotia. I am pleased to share this annual report on accessibility for April 2021 to March 2022.

In 2021–2022, we made more progress in developing accessibility standards for the built environment, education, and employment. In its second phase of work, government received from the Accessibility Advisory Board the final set of recommendations for the built environment standard. A government-led working group has begun drafting the built environment standard using a total of 134 recommendations. The Education Standard Development Committee completed a draft of recommendations for an accessibility standard in education. In March 2022, these recommendations went out to the public for review and feedback. The Employment Standard Development Committee was formed in 2021 and began its work carrying out community consultations on barriers to accessible and inclusive employment.

We developed a provincial awareness campaign called Access Includes Everyone. The campaign aims to raise awareness about accessibility as a human right and to challenge stigmas. Ads for television, social media, and digital media showing Nova Scotians with disabilities at work, at play, and with family will launch in 2022–2023.

We created new training supports and resources to support prescribed public sector bodies. These included guides on how to make online events accessible and how to engage with persons with disabilities. The Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia received funding for an accessibility coordinator position to help build accessibility capacity for municipalities, villages, and towns.

Government’s first accessibility plan ended in 2021. Over 80 per cent of the plan’s commitments were met. In 2021–2022, we developed government’s second accessibility plan. This second plan will span from 2022 to 2025 and will build on the progress made through the first plan.

Together we will continue to create an accessible Nova Scotia for all.

Minister Brad Johns
Introduction: An Accessible Nova Scotia

In September 2017, our province passed the Accessibility Act. The Act describes accessibility as a human right. It sets a goal of Nova Scotia becoming accessible by 2030.

The Accessibility Directorate was set up within the Department of Justice in 2017. It addresses the concerns of persons with disabilities, oversees the Accessibility Act, and makes sure the Act is being carried out.

The Accessibility Advisory Board (AAB) was created in February 2018. It advises the Minister of Justice on accessibility matters and gives advice on how accessibility standards are developed. Most board members are persons with disabilities. They live in communities from across Nova Scotia. They are experts in and have experience with many areas of accessibility.

Access by Design 2030 is Nova Scotia’s strategy to become an accessible province by 2030. This strategy was released to the public in September 2018. It sets six priority areas to remove barriers and to make the province more inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities.
Accessibility Directorate Staff Positions 2021-2022

1 Executive Director
1 Administrative Assistant
1 Manager
1 Program Coordinator
1 Policy Analyst
7 Senior Policy Analysts

Accessibility Advisory Board Members as of March 2022

Rosalind Penfound, Chair
Cynthia Bruce
Linda Campbell
Ellen Johnson
Marcie Shwery-Stanley

David Caswell, Vice-chair
Andrew Jantzen
Birgit Elssner
Anne Sinclair

We thank former board member Jenny-Rachel Lind for her contributions to the board, who was part of the board until September 2021.

2030 Access by Design Priority Areas

1. Standards Development
2. Awareness and Capacity Building
3. Collaboration and Support
4. Compliance and Enforcement
5. Monitoring and Evaluation
Our 2021–2022 Accessibility Accomplishments

Access by Design 2030

Standards Development
Through the Accessibility Act and Access by Design 2030, Nova Scotia is committed to developing six accessibility standards in the following areas:

- built environment
- education
- employment
- delivery of goods and services
- information and communication
- public transportation and transportation infrastructure
In 2021–2022, the **Built Environment** Standard Development Committee finished preparing its recommendations. The AAB then submitted its second and final phase of recommendations for an accessibility standard in the built environment to the Minister of Justice. The recommendations were about exteriors, interiors, housing, wayfinding and signage, parks and recreation, and schools and public libraries. After the minister received these recommendations, a government interdepartmental working group began reviewing them to start drafting the built environment standard. Work to develop the built environment standard will continue in 2022-2023.

The **Education** Standard Development Committee completed draft recommendations for an accessibility standard in education. In March 2022, these recommendations went out to the public for review and feedback. Nine online consultation sessions were held with 220 stakeholders from public and private early years, elementary, secondary and post-secondary education sectors. The feedback will help the committee to finalize the recommendations for an Education Standard.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of **Laurie Cranton** made as Chair of the **Built Environment Standard Development Committee**.

Laurie passed away in March 2022. Laurie was instrumental in developing the AAB’s recommendations for a built environment standard. He will be warmly remembered as an advocate for accessibility and inspirational leader. Laurie will be greatly missed; his legacy will live on.
In summer 2021, applications were received to join the Employment Standard Development Committee. The 19 members of the new committee were announced in December. The committee started its work in February 2022. Seven online consultation sessions on barriers to accessible employment for persons with disabilities were held in March 2022. This feedback will help the committee to draft recommendations for an employment standard.

After reviewing the research on the three remaining standard areas to be developed, the AAB recommended delivery of goods and services for the fourth standard. In October 2021, the Minister of Justice approved the recommendation to develop this standard area. Work is expected to start in 2022–2023.

Work on the information and communication standard has not started. Research about sign language interpreter services is underway through a project at Saint Mary's University. The project is led by Deaf leaders using a collaborative community approach. It involves gathering information from across Canada about resources, best practices, tools, and competencies for signed-spoken language interpreting services with Deaf professionals in professional settings. Recommendations from the project will be used to help develop this standard once work begins.

Work on the public transportation and transportation standard has not started. Research to identify accessibility needs in community transportation has begun which will inform the standard once work begins.
Awareness and Capacity Building

In 2021–2022, the Access Includes Everyone campaign remained a priority for the Accessibility Directorate and Communications Nova Scotia. The campaign aims to raise awareness about accessibility as a human right, to challenge stigmas, and to remove barriers to accessibility by showing inclusive and diverse representations of disability.

Three ads were created showing Nova Scotians with disabilities at work, at play, and with family. A media schedule was created to decide when and to whom the campaign would be delivered using television, social media, and digital media. A website was also created to provide information about the Accessibility Act, barriers faced by Nova Scotians with disabilities, and ways Nova Scotians can help to make our province more accessible. The campaign will launch April 2022.

The Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO) and the Partnership for Access Awareness Nova Scotia committee, supported by the Accessibility Directorate, hosted Provincial Access Awareness Week 2021 activities. These included a flag-raising and proclamation ceremony, a panel discussion on the effects of COVID-19 from a First Voice perspective, and an award ceremony celebrating outstanding accessibility contributions. Thirteen scholarships, worth a total of $24,000, were awarded by NSLEO, to young persons with disabilities to support their post-secondary education.
Collaboration and Support

In 2021–2022, the Accessibility Directorate continued to support prescribed public sector bodies (PPSBs) to meet their obligations to develop accessibility plans and advisory committees. New resources were created, including guides on how to make online events accessible and a workshop and tools on how to engage with persons with disabilities.

PPSBs have completed a great deal of work in 2021-2022 to advance accessibility:

• The Nova Scotia Public Libraries Joint Accessibility Framework launched in February 2022. Regional libraries are setting up actions, timelines, and plans to carry out the framework. They are doing this according to their own priorities, processes, and budgets.

• The Post-Secondary Accessibility Working Group made progress advancing collaborative commitments in the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework, including:
  • Developing a provincial monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor progress and impact of accessibility work happening across the sector. These tools will guide the sector in monitoring and reporting on commitments in the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework and institutional accessibility plans.
  • Sharing tools and resources to build awareness and understanding among faculty, staff and students about accessibility, disability, accommodations and accessibility services.

• The Regional Centres for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien Accessibility Planning Working Group established a joint accessibility advisory committee and is drafting a joint accessibility plan.

• The Nova Scotia Museum launched an online visitor survey about accessibility experiences at their sites. 344 responses were received, including from 26 individuals who identify as having a disability, providing suggestions for accessibility improvements.
The Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia received provincial accessibility funding to create an accessibility coordinator position. This person will provide support to municipalities and villages as they work on their accessibility priorities.

Monitoring and Evaluation | Compliance and Enforcement

In October 2021, government appointed Dr. Katie Aubrecht to complete the first independent review of the Accessibility Act. The review is a requirement in the Accessibility Act. It will give government and Nova Scotians valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the Act and what changes need to be made to make sure the province is on the right path to becoming accessible by 2030.

In 2021–2022, the Accessibility Directorate worked with its Compliance and Enforcement Working Group and the Executive Council Office to develop a compliance and enforcement framework for the Accessibility Act and its regulations. It used a responsive regulation approach to develop this framework. The working group included First Voice representatives from the disability community, representatives of sectors that are regulated under the Accessibility Act, and Government of Nova Scotia staff. Its 54 members held meetings between February and June 2021. The framework is expected to be finalized in 2022-2023.

A responsive regulation approach is one where those who will be affected by the framework were directly involved in developing it.
Government of Nova Scotia: Leading by Example

The Nova Scotia government is the province’s largest program and service provider. As well, many Nova Scotians work for the provincial government. To meet our goal of becoming an accessible province, government must lead by example. We are committed to doing so through the Accessibility Act and Access by Design 2030.

Accessibility Plans

The Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2018–2021) laid out commitments for government’s first steps to remove barriers in government programs, policies, services, and infrastructure. The plan came to an end in December 2021. You can find a summary of progress made through this plan in Appendix A on page 22.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, the Accessibility Directorate and government’s Accessibility Interdepartmental Committee worked together to create government’s second accessibility plan. The Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2022–2025) builds on the first plan. It details the next steps government is taking to become an accessible province.

Twenty-six departments and agencies are represented on the Accessibility Interdepartmental Committee. They helped to develop the 2022-2025 plan’s updated framework, commitments, and accountability structures. The plan incorporates First Voice perspectives from persons with disabilities and other equity-deserving groups. The plan includes 47 accessibility commitments, and all departments are leading commitments. It is set to be released in 2022–2023.

Accessibility Awareness

Government joined community partners in celebrating Access Awareness Week 2021 in May. Events and resources were promoted across government to help government staff and managers learn more about accessibility.

Justice hosted Access Awareness Month from May 10 to June 6, 2021. Events included educational webinars for managers and staff working in the department and virtual panels on accessibility topics and First Voice perspectives.
Building Capacity

In 2021–2022, government continued building its accessibility capacity in many ways.

The Public Service Commission and Accessibility Directorate developed a mandatory Introduction to Accessibility course through government’s learning management system. As well, Labour, Skills and Immigration’s Inclusive Leadership program included accessibility as a key module.

Several government departments, including Natural Resources and Renewables, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism, and Finance and Treasury Board, supported accessibility through the work of department advisory committees. Many departments added accessibility to existing equity, diversity, and inclusion committees. This supports their department work to improve accessibility capacity.

Over 5,000 government employees have completed Introduction to Disability. This is government’s first mandatory accessibility training module.
In 2021, government created an Equity and Engagement Division within Health and Wellness. Part of the division's mandate is to make sure government works toward a more engaging and equitable health system that is shaped by lived experiences of equity groups, including persons with disabilities. The division, along with key health partners, is also planning to develop the province’s first health equity framework, expected by July 2023. The legislated framework will engage and incorporate feedback from persons with disabilities.

Seniors and Long-Term Care created new accessibility guidelines in its funding program for long-term care organizations seeking to modify physical spaces. Grant proposals must show how new changes to physical spaces will be designed to make sure they are accessible for clients with disabilities.

Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage continued to help businesses and communities to advance accessibility.

- The Business ACCESS-Ability program provided $1 million to help 44 businesses across Nova Scotia improve accessibility. For example, the Nova Scotia Realtors Association was funded to create an accessibility ratings system which will train its agents on how to carry out accessibility audits.
- The Community ACCESS-Ability program provided $1 million in funding to help 90 projects improve accessibility in community facilities. The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg received funding to improve accessibility at Indian Falls Park including a new access road to a section with less slope, an accessible parking lot and construction of a 1 km of barrier-free trail loop.
- Through support for the live performances sector, many live performance venues and theatre companies such Neptune Theatre, Two Planks and a Passion Theatre, and Zuppa Theatre are offering performances with integrated American Sign Language interpretation (ASL).

Accessible Public Infrastructure

In 2021–2022, government improved the accessibility of public infrastructure in several sectors.

Public Works continued its efforts to audit existing government owned spaces to identify accessibility issues and priorities. This information will be used to develop an action plan for meeting requirements under the Accessibility Act.

Fisheries and Aquaculture completed the development of an accessible fishing platform and connector pathway at John Bernard Croak Memorial Park in Glace Bay.

Labour, Skills and Immigration began upgrading and renovating several Nova Scotia Works sites to help them meet future accessibility standards.
Health and Wellness supported Nova Scotia Health to improve the accessibility at 240 of its washrooms by installing shelves, extra hooks, and signs to support those who use ostomy bags.

Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced the Affordable Housing Demonstration Projects Initiative. It requires projects to meet National Building Code of Canada accessibility standards. The department also supported upgrades to 71 public housing units under the Public Housing Accessibility Improvement Program. 25 of these upgrades meet Nova Scotia Building Code barrier-free standards.

Seniors and Long-Term Care updated its Space and Design standards to include new accessibility requirements. These will apply to new construction of long-term care facilities starting in 2022-23. Recent new builds of care homes for seniors have been constructed to be more accessible than current building code requirements.

**Accessible Employment**

Government continued its work to prevent and remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.

The Public Service Commission led a review of government employment policies called the “Employment Systems Review”. It consulted with employees and networks across government, including those representing persons with disabilities. Information from the review will be used to remove employment barriers for equity-deserving groups.
Labour, Skills and Immigration worked to improve accessible employment opportunities through

- working with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) to host four focus groups to discuss challenges faced by persons with disabilities and other equity-deserving groups trying to connect and stay with employers. Information from the focus groups will be used to customize TRIEC training. It will also be shared with Nova Scotia Works service providers.

- launching its new Go3D program at two Nova Scotia Works sites. The program supports persons with disabilities who want to become entrepreneurs.

Community Services explored new ways to deliver its Workplace Support Program, including Workplace Attendance Support and Technical Aids and Assistive Devices programs. It is working with service providers to find ways to improve program standards.

**Accessible Education**

In 2021–22, Education and Early Childhood Development

- continued to support tele-education for families to connect virtually with student supports, including mental health clinicians, School Health Partnership nurses, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists and counsellors, and student support workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>post-secondary grads found jobs through Youth Employment Programs</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students who self-identified as having a disability benefited from paid work experience</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of 3,373 Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning participants self-identified as having a disability</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persons who self-identified as having a disability were helped by Nova Scotia Works to become employed</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• added 30 assistive technology support workers and an assistive technology project lead to help schools support accessible education by using assistive technology
• supported staff and students to take training about assistive technology

Advanced Education's Post-Secondary Innovation Social Equity Working Group supported training development about universal design for post-secondary faculty and staff.

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency created a learning support strategist position. This person will support apprentices who face barriers in their training. In 2021–2022, 30 apprentices received learning supports through the agency’s Virtual Learning Strategy.

Accessible Information and Communications

In 2021–2022, Communications Nova Scotia
• created draft guiding principles for accessible and inclusive communications to make sure accessibility is part of its project planning and its work with clients
• appointed a communications director as agency lead to advance corporate inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility priorities
• supported staff to take part in an accessible design and accessibility summit, provided by CreativePro, where they were trained on tools and resources for creating accessible graphic design, video and audio, and websites

Government continued transforming its web presence to be more accessible. Data about improvements made to government's website showed that, in 2021–2022, the public had better access to government programs, services, and information. To date, 24 departments have moved to beta.novascotia.ca. The new site meets international accessibility standards.
Labour, Skills and Immigration updated public-facing documents and forms to be accessible. The work was done through its Labour Services and Immigration and Population Growth branches.

The Office of Addiction and Mental Health began using an accessibility lens to design public consultations to guide universal mental health and addiction care.

**Accessible Delivery of Goods and Services**

In 2021–22, Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

- worked with the Accessibility Directorate to provide accessibility training to front-line staff working for the 211 phone and web service
- began developing training on accessible customer service that will be delivered to Access Nova Scotia and provincial call centre staff
- launched an internal government site for all government staff to use that includes tools and resources for creating accessible documents

**Accessible Public Transportation**

Public Works is working to better understand the needs of Nova Scotians served by Rural Transportation Association member organizations, including persons with disabilities. As part of a two-year Accessible Transportation Assistance Program pilot, the Accessibility Directorate and Transportation and Active Transit are reviewing and analyzing 2021–2022 ridership data. The results will guide future accessibility improvements and will inform the future standard for public transportation and transportation infrastructure.

**COVID-19: Impact and Efforts to Remove Barriers**

**Measuring Impact of COVID-19**

In February and March 2022, the Accessibility Directorate met with disability organizations from across Nova Scotia to learn how COVID-19 has affected persons with disabilities. It prepared a report on its findings to share with the AAB in the spring of 2022.

The report will help the AAB to understand the most urgent needs of the community at this stage in an ongoing pandemic. Staff will also share this report with colleagues across government. They will work with others to address these challenges.
Disability organizations and persons with disabilities reported the most common benefits and challenges that have come out of the COVID-19 pandemic so far.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased awareness of mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased availability of telehealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased availability of online programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased opportunity for remote work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased accessibility in government communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Deterioration of mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crisis in care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delayed access to healthcare and other supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of secure internet access</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Through the 2022 Atlantic Quarterly Omnibus Survey (telephone survey), when asked about the impact of COVID-19 on those with a disability, 79% identified it has impacted their life. The highest impact has been the effects of social isolation, followed by financial hardship and mental health consequences.

Removing Barriers

In 2021–2022, government held 63 live-streamed briefings about COVID-19. Communications Nova Scotia continued to support ASL and communication access realtime translation (CART) services at the briefings. This made sure 58,000 Deaf and hard-of-hearing Nova Scotians had access to important details about the pandemic. It also raised awareness about ASL and Deaf interpreters.

In 2021-22, Advanced Education administered a one-time $800 COVID Accessibility Grant to 3,200 post-secondary students with permanent disabilities. Funding was provided by the Government of Canada through the Workforce Development agreement. Funds addressed new barriers that arose from remote learning and assisted with costs related to the pandemic. 500 post-secondary students with disabilities received a $750 COVID-19 response grant through Advanced Education to ensure they had the technology and internet supports required to carry out studies in a virtual format.
Celebrating Progress

Good News Stories and Profiles

Cape Breton University’s first student with Down syndrome

In fall 2021, Joanna Paul became the first person with Down syndrome to attend Cape Breton University (CBU). She enrolled through CBU’s inclusion program, which launched in fall 2019. The program works to meet each student’s individual needs, helps them to connect with peers, and supports them as they set and reach post-secondary education goals. Like other CBU students, students in the inclusion program study, work on assignments, and take part in field trips and group work. Joanna, who is from Membertou First Nation, is the first L’nu to go through the inclusion program. (L’nu is the term the Mi’kmaq use to describe themselves as Indigenous people). She is also the first recipient of the Sharon Morrison Memorial Award. The award was set up in 2020 to support a student with Down Syndrome who enrolls in CBU’s inclusion program.

ASL Story Time Brings Children’s Literature to Life with Sign Language

In October 2021, ASL Story Time was launched on YouTube. The project is a partnership between 16-year-old Kaylee Harding, Digitally Lit, and regional publishers. It aims to break down barriers for Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth in Atlantic Canada. Digitally Lit is an organization focused on literary and digital practices with youth in our region. Through this online project, Kaylee and Digitally Lit ASL Mentor and Deaf Literacy Specialist Ellie Bernard-Wesson worked together to post and promote two signed stories, with more to come.
Nova Scotia Museum Sites Advance Accessibility

All 28 Nova Scotia Museum Sites licensed an application called Aira, which provides interpretation services to the visually impaired. With a subscription to this service, people can access a visual interpreter via the Aira app at any of Nova Scotia's museum sites free of charge.

Working Together with Community Partners

New Accessible Viewing Deck Opens at Peggy’s Cove

An accessible viewing deck along the Peggy’s Cove coastline opened to the public in October 2021. It offers visitors a safe and accessible space from which to experience the iconic lighthouse, waves, and rocks. It also includes new accessible public washrooms and improvements to trail connections that lead to the lighthouse and parking area. Develop Nova Scotia worked closely with the local community to develop a master plan and vision. The project included a joint investment of $3.1 million from the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada, including $1.7 million from the Tourism Revitalization of Icons Program, administered by Tourism Nova Scotia. The design of the project prioritized accessibility, sustainability and safety and meeting the needs of residents and visitors.

Assessing Accessibility in Transition Houses

The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia received funding under the Community Housing Capacity Building Program to have built environment accessibility assessments done for seven transition houses and two family healing centres across Nova Scotia. The project was developed in response to the Not Without Us: Women with Disabilities and Domestic Violence report. It is supported by Municipal Affairs and Housing, the . and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The results will be used to identify how transition houses can become more accessible.

Hawks Dream Field – Phase One

Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community Services, and Public Works worked together to use funding from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program to create projects that promote accessibility and inclusivity. One example is supporting the Hawks Dream Field project in Dominion, Nova Scotia. The goal of the project is to make Hawks baseball field accessible to people of all ages, abilities, gender, and socioeconomic status. When all phases of work are completed, the field will include turf, accessible dugouts, an infield where wheelchairs can round the bases, charging docks for motorized mobility aids, and bleachers that will accommodate all fans. It will also include a competition bocce ball court, walking track, and splash pad. The field’s building will have accessible washrooms equipped with adult change tables, family facilities, and a canteen. The project is expected to be completed in three phases, with phase one completed in 2021-2022.
Moving Forward: 2022–2023

Several initiatives are planned to build on our progress made in 2021-2022.

• Launch the Access Includes Everyone public awareness campaign. The campaign will run on television and social media until the end of 2022. We will monitor how the campaign performs by tracking video completion and impressions.

• Continue to develop the accessibility standard for the built environment.

• Support the AAB to finalize recommendations for an accessibility standard in education and submit them to the Minister of Justice.

• Support the AAB to continue developing the recommendations for an accessibility standard for employment.

• Begin to develop the fourth accessibility standard area: delivery of goods and services. This will include the recruitment and formation of the Delivery of Goods and Services Standard Development Committee.

• Continue to support prescribed public sector bodies with accessibility resources and support.

• Release the finalized compliance and enforcement framework.

• Receive findings from the first independent Accessibility Act Review.

• Finalize and release government’s second accessibility plan which will span 2022–2025.
Appendix A:

Final Report

Under the Accessibility Act, government must have an accessibility plan to help Nova Scotia become accessible. Government’s 2018–2021 Accessibility Plan outlined its first commitments and actions to improve accessibility and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. We have achieved many key outcomes from our first three-year plan.

The plan included eight departments leading 23 commitments in five priority areas. What follows is a summary of the progress we made in 2018–2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Area</th>
<th>Commitments Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness and Capacity Building</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Communications</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings, Infrastructure and Public Spaces</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods and Services</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Highlights from the 2018–2021 plan:

### Awareness and Capacity Building

- Developed media and creative content for a provincial awareness campaign with the slogan “Access Includes Everyone.” This campaign includes a website, social media, and print, digital, and television ads.
- Developed new mandatory accessibility training for all government employees, and ensured accessibility and disability content was included in existing diversity training modules.
- Supported prescribed public sector organizations to develop and carry out accessibility plans by developing resources, delivering presentations, and responding to inquiries.
- Distributed more than $3.8 million to over 160 businesses through the Business ACCESS-Ability program and $3 million to roughly 275 non-profits and community groups through the Community ACCESS-Ability program.

### Goods and Services

- Developed services to make sure government employees with disabilities have access to tools and other supports needed to work, including flexible work options, assistive devices, interpretation services, and modifications to workspaces.
- Promoted accessibility in procurement processes by developing mandatory staff training. Added accessibility related categories and service providers in government procurement system.
- Supported accessible use of technology, such as creating accessibility document guidelines for internal government use.
- Supported navigation services for persons with disabilities by training contact centre staff on accessibility topics, adding an accessibility inquiry field in the “Ask Us” online inquiry form, and creating an accessibility line of business code to monitor related call volumes.
Information and Communications

- Updated government’s beta.novascotia.ca website to meet international accessibility standards (WCAG 2.0 Level AA). In total, 24 government departments have migrated to beta.novascotia.ca. This includes publishing 3,420 and translating 752 pieces of content.
- Built accessibility capacity of government communications staff by appointing a Communications Director as lead for equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.
- Increased accessibility of government information and communications by using accessible design best practices, captioning and sign language, image descriptions and text, high-contrast images, screen reader-friendly plain text, and more.
- Provided ASL/CART services for all live-streamed COVID-19 briefings during the pandemic.
- Developed a form to record and review assistive technology requests. Developed tools to support the use and maintenance of assistive technology devices for government employees.

Employment

- Launched government’s All Together Strategy, set out to improve employee experiences of equity-deserving groups including persons with disabilities.
- New content related to disability and accommodation was developed and incorporated into the mandatory recruitment and selection training modules for new government hiring managers.
- Carried out employment systems review to understand and remove barriers faced by equity-deserving government employees including persons with disabilities.
- Expanded opportunities for students with disabilities to take part in a paid work-integrated learning program in their fields of study.
- Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency updated its Diversity and Inclusion Framework to include an accessibility lens.
• Developed and updated an Accessibility Audit Handbook to support accessibility audits for public buildings based on current building codes and standards. Piloted handbook in six government-operated buildings.

• Incorporated a clause into new government leasing documents that states services provided by the property owner must be accessible to persons with disabilities, and that standards that fall under the latest building codes must be followed.

• Developed 22 barrier-free sportfishing sites across Nova Scotia. An interactive online map was developed to promote the new barrier-free sites.

• Audited and retrofitted several provincial beaches, parks, and campgrounds to make them more accessible to users with disabilities.

• Added accessible equipment to provincial beaches, including Hippocampe beach chairs, Mobi-Mats, and removable accessible boardwalks.

• Launched an updated provincial parks website describing accessible park experiences and available adaptive equipment.