



2025–2028

Government of Nova Scotia

Accessibility Plan



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Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan
2025–2028

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You can access more information and source documents online by clicking on [underlined hyperlinked text](#).

Message from the Minister



In 2017, when the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act became law, government committed to prevent and remove accessibility **barriers**. The Act and Access by Design 2030 commits government to lead by example.

It matters that government leads in this work. The Government of Nova Scotia is the province's largest program and service provider and its largest employer. Our accessibility commitments will position us to make continued progress toward preventing and removing barriers for all Nova Scotians with disabilities.

Since our last Accessibility Plan was released in 2022, we have made progress toward our accessibility goals. That progress informs the commitments in this Accessibility Plan. Government's 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan shows what we will do over the next three years to prevent and remove barriers.

Departments and **offices** have also supported our accessibility goals by implementing other government strategies and priorities. They include the Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy, the Human Rights Remedy, the Health Equity Framework, the Autism Action Plan, and our commitments to providing universal mental health care. These strategies support Nova Scotia to become a more **equitable** province.

There has been a positive shift in attitudes toward accessibility since 2017. More Nova Scotians understand what it means to have a disability. More organizations are working to remove and prevent barriers. Awareness is growing among our partners who are playing a role to make Nova Scotia accessible. While progress is being made, we know there is more to do.

I encourage all Nova Scotians to support our goal for an accessible Nova Scotia. Learn more about **accessibility standards** development. Be part of this positive shift. Include accessibility in everyday life.

Becky Druhan
Minister responsible for the Accessibility Act

Introduction

Nova Scotia passed the [Accessibility Act](#) in September 2017. Accessibility is a human right. The Act sets a goal for the province to become accessible by 2030 through developing and carrying out accessibility standards. It requires the Government of Nova Scotia to have an accessibility plan and to update it every three years.

The 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan is government’s third accessibility plan since 2018. It is an updated plan building on progress we made in the [2018–2021](#) and [2022–2025](#) plans. Departments and agencies across government worked together through an Accessibility Interdepartmental Committee to develop this updated plan. The plan includes

- new and updated commitments to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in government policies, programs, services, and workplaces
- commitments from all government departments to advance accessibility in ways that line up with their mandates and internal priorities
- guiding principles that will help to carry it out consistently across government
- summaries of what we heard from Nova Scotians with disabilities to inform it
- reports of progress made in the previous plan

Government of Nova Scotia – Leading by Example is one of six priorities in [Access by Design 2030](#). Government is committed to lead in accessibility work, including how we develop our accessibility plans.

The 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan has been informed by **consultation** and **First Voice** perspectives. It uses **plain language** and an **intersectional accessibility lens**. It has been designed in an accessible format and translated from English to American Sign Language and French.

Outcomes for the 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan

- **Equitable Access:** Persons with disabilities will have equitable access to government programs, services, buildings, spaces, and information and communication.
- **Equitable Employment:** Persons with disabilities will have equitable access to employment, including support systems and tools to help them move forward and succeed at work.
- **Awareness and Capacity:** Government of Nova Scotia employees will learn more about the rights of persons with disabilities, barriers to accessibility, and accessibility best practices they can apply to their work.

Guiding Principles

These principles represent the values and behaviours that will guide the work of government as we carry out the 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan. They have been carried forward from the 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan.

Nothing About Us Without Us

First Voice input and insights are part of decision-making processes. Many kinds of disabilities are recognized, including invisible and episodic disabilities. Work is approached with an intersectional accessibility lens and will consider **ableism** as well as the other ways people are marginalized or oppressed.

Shared Responsibility

All government departments and agencies lead by example and work together.

Alignment

Accessibility is a part of our work each day. Accessibility goals line up with our mandates and priorities, including equity, diversity, and inclusion goals.

Human Rights

Accessibility is a human right. We strive to make sure all Nova Scotians can fully and meaningfully take part in society.

Safe Work Environments, Dignity, and Autonomy

Government workplaces are physically and psychologically safe for employees with disabilities. We promote and protect employee dignity and autonomy in all we do.

Innovation and Flexibility

We use new ways of thinking and working in our efforts to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

Our Accessibility Achievements: Progress Made in 2022–2025

Over the last three years, the Government of Nova Scotia has continued to make progress to meet our commitments in the 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan. Our progress is reported each year in the [Minister's Annual Report on Accessibility](#).

We have made progress on all [six accessibility standards](#):

- Departments worked together to draft the Built Environment Accessibility Standard and get public input on the proposed standard. Government adopted the standard in March 2025.
- Departments worked together to review recommendations from the [Accessibility Advisory Board](#) for the Education Accessibility Standard and continued to work on drafting the proposed standard.
- Departments supported the Accessibility Advisory Board to complete recommendations for the proposed Employment Accessibility Standard. We are reviewing the recommendations and drafting the standard.
- Government supported the [Goods and Services Standard Development Committee](#) and Accessibility Advisory Board to draft recommendations for the proposed standard and get public input on the draft recommendations.

- Government supported the Accessibility Advisory Board to form the [Public Transportation Standard Development Committee](#) and the [Information and Communication Standard Development Committee](#). These committees have started to draft recommendations for these standards.

Government increased our efforts to **build capacity** as leaders in accessibility. We developed new mandatory accessibility training for all government employees and the Accessibility Confident Leadership training for managers and supervisors.

Departments expanded accessibility and disability training and awareness programs for government employees, recognized Access Awareness Week and International Day of Persons with Disabilities, shared accessibility and disability resources with government employees, and worked together to develop an internal accessibility resource hub for government employees.

Government launched the [Access Includes Everyone](#) campaign and website and the accessibility [Resource Hub](#). We developed a First Voice Experts Roster, which brought together a group of Nova Scotians with disabilities to review and provide input on projects. We provided two years of funding to create a disability partnership forum to help disability organizations build capacity and to increase collaboration between government and partner organizations.

Government supported **prescribed public sector bodies** (PPSBs) to develop, carry out, and update their accessibility plans by developing resources, delivering presentations, and providing advice. We created Accessibility Foundations training for PPSBs, which covers basic concepts about disability and accessibility, and then rolled out the training to prescribed organizations.

Departments completed accessibility audits and renovations at spaces owned or leased by government. We identified and developed plans to remove barriers at leased courthouses. We improved accessibility at Access Nova Scotia centres across the province. Through the Business and Community ACCESS-Ability Grant Programs, we invested in 98 projects to improve accessibility and inclusion at libraries, museums, and recreation and community spaces.

Government continued our work to make Nova Scotia a more equitable province:

- We launched the [Health Equity Framework](#) and started to implement it.
- We started to carry out recommendations of the [Human Rights Review and Remedy for the Findings of Systemic Discrimination Against Nova Scotians with Disabilities](#).
- We developed and are implementing an [Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy](#) to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism.

Departments also supported this work by

- creating and implementing an equity-impact assessment tool to support a whole-of-government approach for identifying and addressing systemic inequity and racism
- creating new equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility committees
- setting up working groups and new positions to advance accessibility work
- using accessible communication practices for government programs and services, including accessible forms and guides used by clients

Departments worked together to identify and remove barriers experienced by Nova Scotians with disabilities when applying to agencies, boards, and commissions. This included creating a recruitment video in American Sign Language and an accessible online application portal.

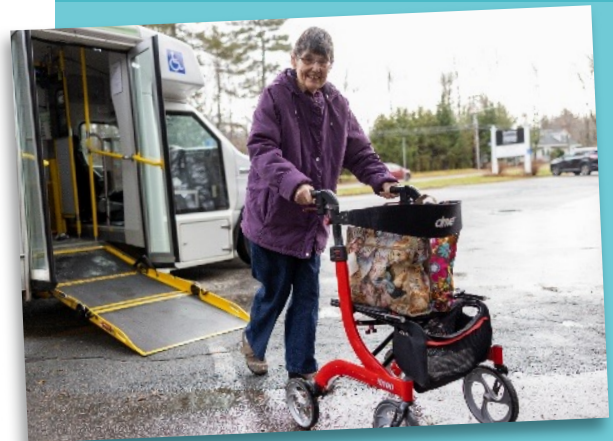
Government developed our [Response to Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act Independent Review Report](#) and started taking action to address the review's recommendations.

Celebrating Progress

Government improved accessibility at provincial beaches and parks throughout the province. We developed an accessible campsite at Caribou-Munroes Island Provincial Park and updated washrooms at Dollar Lake Provincial Park and Lawrencetown Beach Provincial Park to make them more accessible. We also added accessible beach mats at Rainbow Haven Beach Provincial Park, Dollar Lake Provincial Park, Point Michaud Beach Provincial Park, and Port Hood Station Provincial Park.

We supported municipalities and villages to create accessible community transportation services. Lunenburg County Wheels offers pre-booked, door-to-door, accessible service for residents in western Lunenburg County. In the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, residents can book low-cost, accessible transit through SMART-GO.

We developed training to support career practitioners helping persons with disabilities to enter or re-enter the workforce. The training was created with input from subject matter experts in the disability field. It is available online.



What We Heard From Nova Scotians

The 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan has been informed by the perspectives of Nova Scotians with disabilities. This includes data gathered by the Accessibility Directorate during community consultations held between 2022 and 2024.

This plan also reflects data from the [Nova Scotia Accessibility Act Independent Review Report](#), the [2022 Canadian Survey on Disability – Nova Scotia Results](#), the [2022 Corporate Employee Accessibility Survey](#), and input provided by government employees with disabilities and the Accessibility Advisory Board.

Insights we gained:

- Persons with disabilities experience barriers accessing essential services (especially in the healthcare and justice systems), public spaces, accessible housing, public transportation options across the province, government communication and information, and events.
- Persons with disabilities experience barriers to employment, including accessing employment (including in the public sector) and receiving the support systems and tools needed to succeed and advance at work.
- Stigma and attitudinal barriers remain common.
- Government employees need more information and support to help them learn how to make accessibility part of everyday work.
- Prescribed public sector bodies and businesses need information and support to understand how to engage meaningfully with persons with disabilities, how to make their built environments accessible, and how to comply with accessibility requirements (including carrying out accessibility plans).



Our Priorities and Commitments for 2025–2028

Government-Wide Commitments

To move our cross-government accessibility priorities forward, all departments will

- continue to use an accessibility lens in equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility work.
- let employees know of opportunities to learn about accessibility and require all government employees to take part in accessibility awareness and education initiatives
- build capacity to support accessibility work inside government, including sharing resources and information to help employees learn about accessibility practices they can use in their work
- work to remove barriers to employment and create safe and inclusive workplaces for persons with disabilities
- support employees with disabilities to succeed and advance in their careers, including offering more leadership and professional development opportunities
- work toward preventing and removing accessibility barriers to government policies, programs, and services
- create plans to carry out their accessibility commitments (government will report on progress once a year)
- implement an executive director governance and reporting model for government's Accessibility Plan

Priority Areas



Awareness and capacity building



Built environment



Education



Employment



Delivery of goods and services



Information and communications



Public transportation and transportation infrastructure



Accountability



PRIORITY AREA 1: Awareness and Capacity Building

To build a culture of accessibility across the public service and to help organizations and communities build capacity to improve accessibility across Nova Scotia, departments will



- build reciprocal relationships and partnerships with underrepresented and underserved communities and with disability organizations to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities
- work together to carry out the human rights ruling about making restaurant washrooms accessible for wheelchair users
- build capacity to support accessibility work inside government and to raise awareness about accessibility, including
 - Justice and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism creating accessibility awareness and education initiatives for government employees
 - Justice continuing to work with and provide support to the Nova Scotia Disability Employee Network
 - departments incorporating accessibility best practices when hosting meetings, events, and engagement sessions for government employees and the public
- work together to raise awareness about the Accessibility Act and accessibility work across the province
- support communities and organizations to make their programs and services accessible by helping them to learn more about accessibility, disability, and accessibility best practices
- promote funding opportunities that support accessibility
- develop resources and supports to help prescribed public sector bodies become more accessible and meet Accessibility Act requirements, including
 - creating accessibility plans
 - following accessibility standards when they are enacted
 - engaging with their accessibility advisory committees and with underrepresented and underserved communities

Justice will

- set up a partnership between academia, government, and other organizations to increase research about accessibility



PRIORITY AREA 2: Built Environment

To enhance the accessibility of buildings, offices, and public spaces owned, leased, and operated by government, departments will

- work together to carry out the built environment accessibility standard
- continue to work with Public Works and property owners to audit built environments owned and leased by government (including healthcare spaces, affordable housing, learning spaces, and long-term care residences) to identify and remove accessibility barriers

Public Works will

- finish developing its Accessibility Audit Handbook tool to be used to find and remove barriers in buildings and public spaces operated by government
- continue to carry out built environment audits to inform developing a plan and recommendations for meeting requirements under the Accessibility Act
- provide guidance to other departments to support the use of the Accessibility Audit Handbook

Municipal Affairs will

- continue to support ongoing education for building officials in accessibility according to the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations



Fisheries and Aquaculture will

- review existing barrier-free sport fishing sites to assess how accessible they are for a range of disabilities
- provide information about barrier-free sport fishing sites and make sure information on the Fisheries and Aquaculture website is helpful and accurate



PRIORITY AREA 3: Education

To create learning environments where all students in all stages of life can participate, departments will

- work together to enact and carry out the education accessibility standard
- launch a provincial approach to improve transitions for students with disabilities within and between education levels and sectors



Education and Early Childhood Development will



- integrate information about disability and accessibility into school curriculum when relevant and make sure that that curriculum is accessible for learners with disabilities
- explore accessible options in before and after school programs
- identify and remove barriers that students with disabilities face in accessing spaces, programming, and services (prioritized based on the needs of current students)

Advanced Education will

- make it a priority to remove ableist and attitudinal barriers in post-secondary institutions
- strengthen how it delivers services with post-secondary institutions to create positive experiences for students with disabilities

Labour, Skills and Immigration and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will

- make apprenticeship programs more accessible and create new supports for apprentices with disabilities



PRIORITY AREA 4: Employment

To support the development of accessible workplaces, including within the Government of Nova Scotia, departments will

- work together to enact and carry out the employment accessibility standard

Labour, Skills and Immigration will

- support employers to make workplaces more accessible by helping to increase job opportunities for persons with disabilities and providing tools, supports, and guidance for inclusive employment

The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism will

- develop and carry out strategies and assessment tools to remove employment barriers within government





PRIORITY AREA 5: Delivery of Goods and Services

To provide persons with disabilities with equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Government of Nova Scotia, departments will

- enact and carry out the goods and services accessibility standard
- work together to carry out the recommendations in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Review and Remedy for the Findings of Systemic Discrimination Against Nova Scotians with Disabilities

Service Nova Scotia will

- make accessibility part of government procurement processes

Municipal Affairs will

- explore how communities can be more accessible through land use planning



Health and Wellness will

- implement the Health Equity Framework
- work with health partners to make sure persons with disabilities have equitable access to healthcare and to measure progress made

Emergency Management will

- consider accessibility and engage with First Voice community members when developing emergency management approaches



PRIORITY AREA 6: Information and Communication

To make government communication usable by all, departments will

- support the Accessibility Advisory Board in making its recommendations for the information and communication accessibility standard and support Justice in drafting the proposed standard
- create accessible communication resources to be shared across government to help build internal capacity, support consistent practices, and make sure government communication is accessible
- apply an equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility lens to regular reviews of communication policies and practices



Health and Wellness will

- develop an internal communication strategy that includes accessibility

Justice will

- develop a communication and engagement strategy on accessibility



PRIORITY AREA 7: Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

To improve accessibility of public transportation and its infrastructure to make it easier for all to travel, departments will

- support the Accessibility Advisory Board to make its recommendations for the public transportation and transportation infrastructure accessibility standard and support Justice to draft the proposed standard
- develop plans to prevent and remove barriers in community and school transportation systems, making sure plans include rural areas and underrepresented and underserved communities





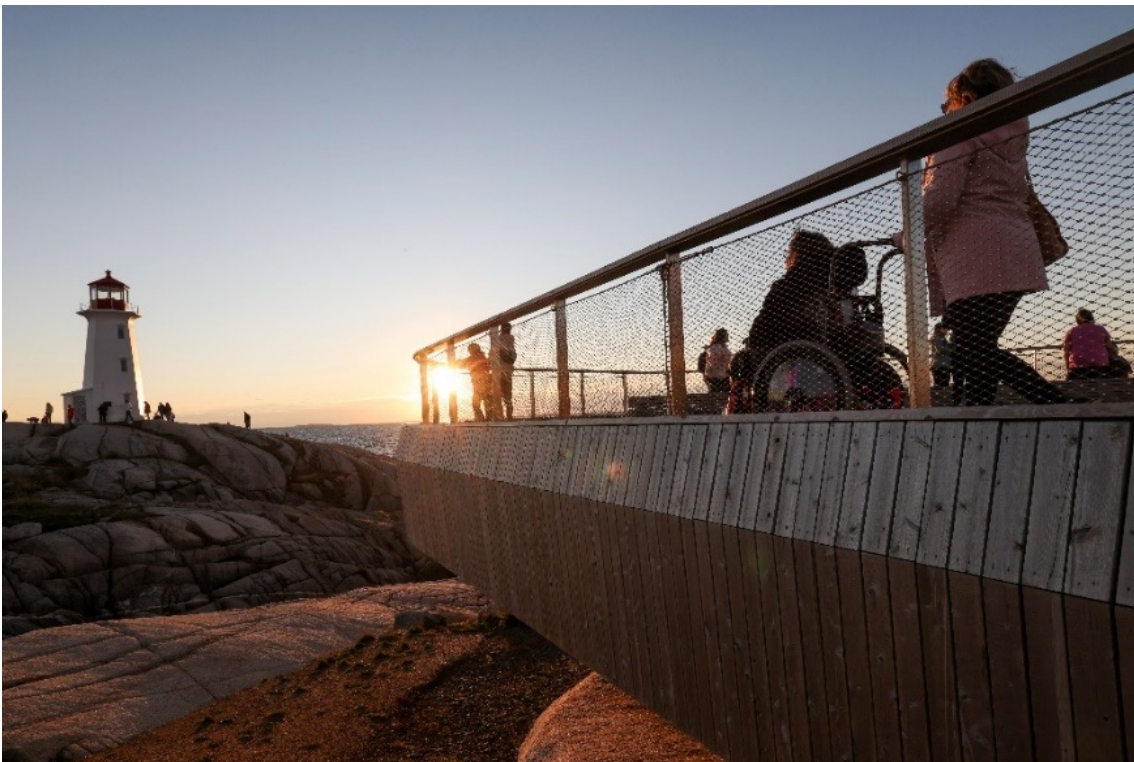
PRIORITY AREA 8: Accountability

To coordinate accessibility priorities across government, and to monitor and measure progress, government will

- appoint the next independent reviewer of the Accessibility Act to lead the second review

Justice will

- support the reviewer to complete their work
- track progress government has made on its Accessibility Plan
- use the Accessibility Act Compliance and Enforcement Framework



Conclusion

Guided by our third Accessibility Plan, government will continue to lead by example toward a more accessible and equitable Nova Scotia. We will continue to make and measure our progress across the province and across sectors.

We will show how we are meeting commitments in the 2025–2028 Accessibility Plan by releasing the Minister’s Annual Report on Accessibility. We will continue to develop and enact accessibility standards, and work with all departments and agencies to prevent and remove accessibility barriers as we carry out commitments in this plan.

We are especially grateful for the input from Nova Scotians with disabilities who contribute to the development of accessibility standards, accessibility plans, and other areas of our work. We invite all Nova Scotians to get involved and support this work.



Appendix:

Glossary of Terms

ableism

Discrimination of and social prejudice against persons with disabilities based on the belief that persons with typical abilities are better. It includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of persons with disabilities.

accessibility standards

The Accessibility Act allows the Government of Nova Scotia to develop laws to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. Standards are a set of rules that government, the public sector, and other organizations like businesses must follow.

barriers

Things that prevent persons with disabilities from fully and equally participating in society.

build capacity, capacity building

The process of developing an organization's strength and potential. This goes beyond carrying out tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.

consultation

A way that people give feedback (such as a meeting or survey) on something, such as a draft document.

departments, offices

A division of the Government of Nova Scotia that works on a specific subject or area. They include

- Office of Addictions and Mental Health
- Department of Advanced Education
- African Nova Scotian Affairs
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
- Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- Department of Emergency Management
- Department of Energy
- Department of Environment and Climate Change
- Office of Equity and Anti-Racism
- Executive Council Office
- Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Department of Finance and Treasury Board
- Department of Growth and Development
- Department of Health and Wellness
- Department of Intergovernmental Affairs
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration
- Office of L'nu Affairs
- Department of Municipal Affairs
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Opportunities and Social Development
- Public Service Commission
- Department of Public Works
- Office of Service Efficiency
- Department of Seniors and Long-term Care
- Department of Service Nova Scotia

equitable, equity

When everyone is provided the resources they need to be successful. Equity is not the same as equality, which is when everyone is treated the exact same way even if they have different or specific needs.

First Voice

The knowledge from any individual or group of people whose lived experience gives them expertise in that area.

intersectional, intersectional accessibility lens

Persons with disabilities have many different identities, experiences, and backgrounds that connect and overlap, and many experience marginalization and discrimination. When we do our accessibility work, we think about how it will impact these diverse communities of people.

plain language

Communication designed to make sure the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information.

prescribed public sector bodies

Organizations that are required through the Accessibility Act to develop accessibility plans and accessibility advisory committees. Also referred to as PPSBs. They include

- municipalities and villages
- universities and the Nova Scotia Community College
- regional public libraries
- the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
- the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
- Build Nova Scotia
- Regional Centres for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial
- Events East
- Invest Nova Scotia
- the IWK Health Centre and Nova Scotia Health
- the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation
- the Nova Scotia Museum
- the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency

