



# Accessibility Plan 2023-2026



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## *Message from the Chair*

On behalf of the Municipality of the District of Clare's Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Council for the Municipality of Clare, I am pleased to present our first Accessibility Plan. This plan coincides with the Province of Nova Scotia's goal of becoming more equitable and barrier-free by the year 2030.

This initiative is the result of a collaboration between the Municipality of Clare, Clare's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate and members of the public by way of an online survey and stakeholder interviews in April of 2022.

The community of Clare strives to be welcoming, inclusive, and accepting to all people. Our plan reflects the Municipality's goal to be responsive to the needs of people of all abilities. With this in mind, please consider our Accessibility Plan as a "living document" *for* the people of Clare, *by* the people of Clare.

***Nadine Comeau***

Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

Councillor of District 7

Municipality of Clare

## *Introduction*

The Municipality of Clare's new Accessibility Plan for 2023-2026 outlines how the Municipality of Clare will continue to remove barriers and improve accessibility for persons with disabilities. This plan aligns with the objectives of the Province of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017), which is committed to being more equitable and barrier-free for all Nova Scotians.

Clare's Accessibility Advisory Committee is dedicated to assist the Province to achieve accessibility for Nova Scotians with disabilities by 2030 and to help make the Municipality of Clare a community for everyone.

## *Accessibility Advisory Committee*

In November 2021, the Municipality of Clare's Recreation Manager Tori Comeau was assigned the role of Accessibility Coordinator and tasked with working with the advisory committee. Members of the public at large, as well as key stakeholders with an interest in accessibility, were contacted. Announcements were placed in the local paper and on local radio, on the municipal website and on social media.

The Municipality of Clare's Accessibility Advisory Committee is comprised of three community members and three councillors. Three staff members also provide support to the committee.



Accessibility Advisory Committee members come from different backgrounds and from various areas within the Municipality of Clare and bring with them a desire to help those living with disabilities.

It is the responsibility of Clare's Accessibility Advisory Committee to advise Municipal Council on the implementation of accessibility standards and the development of the Accessibility Plan and accessibility reports.

### **Accessibility Advisory Committee Members**

- Councillor Nadine Comeau – Chair
- Councillor Brian Comeau
- Councillor Eric Pothier
- Edwin Deveau – community member
- Lonnie McNeill – community member
- Josanne Deveau – community member

### **Support Staff**

- Stéphane Cyr – Chief Administrative Officer
- Pam Doucet – Director of Community Development
- Tori Comeau – Accessibility Coordinator

# Definitions

**AAC:** 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. At least one half of the members of the advisory committee has a disability, represent a person with a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

**Barrier:** The Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia 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 by the Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia: “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.

**Infrastructure:** The “underlying structure” that makes a place liveable and keeps its systems working (roads, sewers, clean water, electricity, and more).

**Plain language:** Language a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.





## *Community Consultation*

The Accessibility Advisory Committee carried out an online survey and community stakeholder interviews in April 2022. A total of 54 community members responded to the online survey, and 6 stakeholder interviews were conducted. Information was provided to participants regarding the reason for the Municipality's work on this subject matter, along with its roles and responsibilities under the Province's Accessibility Act. Outcomes have been incorporated in this Accessibility Plan.

The disability community was included early on in the process and helped the Accessibility Advisory Committee collect important information from people who are directly affected by accessibility barriers in the Municipality of Clare, including information about specific areas of concern and priorities for action.

The plan will be reviewed every three years and public input is welcome at any time.

# Areas of Focus

**Transportation:** Equitable access to transportation service for everyone. Making it easier for everyone to get where they need to go.

**Built Environment:** Making public buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible.

**Employment:** Making workplaces accessible and supporting people with disabilities in finding meaningful employment.

**Goods & Services:** Ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services.

**Information & Communication:** Ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information they need.





# Transportation

## Our Commitment

The Municipality of Clare will work with local organizations to ensure that accessible transportation services are provided to people of all abilities.

## Our Starting Point

### Overview

The Municipality of Clare does not currently have a public transit system. A local organization, *Le Transport de Clare*, provides transportation to residents.

### Achievements

- The Municipality provides an annual financial contribution to *Le Transport de Clare* to assist with the cost of providing affordable and accessible transportation to residents.
- *Le Transport de Clare* offers its services to residents living within the Municipality of Clare, and in Digby County.
- *Le Transport de Clare* fleet includes :
  - two wheelchair-accessible 18-passenger buses
  - one wheelchair-accessible 20-passenger bus
  - one wheelchair-accessible 22-passenger bus
  - one wheelchair-accessible 9-passenger van
  - one wheelchair-accessible 8-passenger van
  - one wheelchair-accessible 5-passenger van
  - one wheelchair-accessible 4-passenger van
  - one 6-passenger van
  - one 4-passenger SUV
- The Municipality has an [Ice and Snow Control Policy](#) to keep sidewalks and municipal parking lots clear in winter.



## Barriers

- *Le Transport de Clare* is not equipped or capable of providing immediate rides to everyone in need and they require 24 hours advanced notice.
- Affordability remains a concern for many users of *Le Transport de Clare*.
- *Le Transport de Clare* has a lack of drivers.
- There is currently no taxi service in the Municipality.
- The Municipality is geographically spread out, making it difficult for a public transportation system to operate.
- There are no crosswalks to safely cross the roads.

## Policies

The Municipality of Clare will:

- Continue to work with *Le Transport de Clare* to address transportation issues for persons with disabilities.

## Actions

- Project underway to extend sidewalk in Meteghan.
- Continue timeliness with removing snow from sidewalks, municipal parking lots and other municipal spaces.
- Continue to financially support *Le Transport de Clare*.
- Consider offering transportation to municipal programs and events.
- Explore possibility of crosswalks in high active transportation areas.
- Update existing Active Transportation plan.

## *Built Environment*

### **Our Commitment**

Public buildings and public spaces that are owned, or operated by the Municipality of Clare will be accessible to people of all ages and abilities. We will encourage citizens, the business community and schools to make their public spaces more accessible.

### **Our Starting Point**

#### **Overview**

The Municipality of Clare owns and operates several public facilities, such as the Municipal Office, Clare Health Centre, Clare Veterans Centre, Cultural Hub, Havelock Community Centre, Rendez-Vous de la Baie Welcome Centre, parks, trails, playgrounds, sidewalks, parking areas and other infrastructure.

#### **Achievements**

- Addition of accessible washrooms at Cape St. Mary's Lighthouse Park, as well as the beaches at the end of Maxwellton Road and Bourneuf Wharf Road
- Parking lot paved, including new accessible parking spaces at Cultural Hub.
- Service desks at Municipal Office and Clare Health Centre are at an accessible height.
- Develop expansion and renovation plans that include accessible elements at the Clare Health Centre and the Clare Veterans Centre.



## Barriers

- Budget limitations.
- Municipal buildings and facilities are not fully accessible:
  - Clare Veterans Centre has a ramp but no accessible door at the top, nor is there an elevator at the front entrance.
  - Parking lot and park grounds at Joseph-et-Marie Dugas Municipal Park in Belliveau Cove are bumpy and uneven.
  - The second floor of the Cultural Hub is not accessible.
  - There is no elevator at the Clare Health Centre to go between floors.
  - There is no elevator at the Municipal Office to go between floors.
  - There is no elevator at the Havelock Community Centre to go between floors.
- Municipal meeting rooms and washrooms are not fully accessible.
- Accessible parking in our public spaces is limited and not all spaces meet accessibility standards.
- There is no signage specific for people with visual and hearing impairments.
- There are no accessible playground items for persons with mobility issues.
- Areas outside of Meteghan, Meteghan River, Saulnierville and Church Point do not have sidewalks for safe travelling by foot, wheelchair or scooter (active transportation).
- Some sidewalks and walkways are uneven.
- Municipal beach shorelines are not accessible.

## Policies

The Municipality of Clare will:

- Ensure that all new municipal buildings (including major renovations) meet the Rick Hanson Foundation Accessibility Certification.

## Actions

- Conduct accessibility audits for all public facing municipal infrastructure.
- Renovate the Clare Veterans Centre entrance, including the implementation of accessible features.
- Expand the Clare Health Centre to include an elevator and accessible washrooms.
- Upgrade Wentworth Lake Municipal Park with accessible features (washrooms, picnic shelters, signage).
- Look for funding opportunities to support infrastructure renovations for accessible entrances, washrooms, etc.
- When picnic tables and benches are placed in public areas, ensure they are accessible.
- Promote the Province's Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to local businesses and organizations.
- Assess existing crosswalks, in cooperation with the Department of Transportation, to determine accessibility.
- Commit a portion of the annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in public buildings and spaces.
- Provide adequate lighting in municipal parking lots.
- Widen doorways and install power door buttons or automated sliding doors at municipal building entrances.
- Ensure all service desks are an accessible height.
- Continue to lobby for accessible improvements to Mavillette Beach Provincial Park.



## *Employment*

### **Our Commitment**

We will remove barriers to employment for people of all abilities who seek a career with the Municipality. We will make our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees of all abilities.

### **Our Starting Point**

#### **Overview**

The Municipality currently employs 25 permanent full-time employees, 7 permanent part-time employees, 5 contract employees and approximately 6 seasonal employees. There are 8 elected representatives on Municipal Council, including the Warden. Elected representatives must be Canadian citizens, at least 18 years old and live in the Municipality.

#### **Achievements**

- Members of Council have access to digital devices for reading agendas and municipal documents. This makes reading more accessible as users can zoom in on text, change font size, and language.
- Simultaneous language translation is available during council meetings, upon request.
- Municipal work culture promotes work-life balance.

#### **Barriers**

- Some workspaces are not accessible.
- Job postings do not currently state that persons with disabilities can be accommodated.

- Accessible parking spots at some municipally owned facilities do not meet all accessibility standards.
- None of the municipal vehicles have adaptive devices.

## Policies

The Municipality of Clare will:

- Offer accommodation during recruitment, if needed.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all abilities. This includes providing assistive devices so that employees can succeed at their jobs.
- Work with employees to build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion.

## Actions

- Familiarize employees with accommodations and potential wage subsidies.
- Make work areas more accessible and inclusive.
- Consider strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience with future job postings.
- Include statements in job postings to ensure applicants are aware that accommodations can be provided.
- Consider further work engagement opportunities with Inclusion Clare, a social enterprise for adults with disabilities in the community.
- Identify organizations and funding sources that may assist people with disabilities to find and maintain employment.
- Improve policies, and practices to enable and encourage the recruitment, selection and advancement of people with disabilities in their employment at the Municipality.



## *Goods and Services*

### **Our Commitment**

We will ensure that residents and visitors of all abilities have equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Municipality of Clare. We will strive to ensure that there are policies, procedures and tools to promote the accessible delivery of goods and services.

### **Our Starting Point**

#### **Overview**

The following are some of many services the Municipality of Clare delivers:

- Building inspection, fire inspection, by-law enforcement, animal control.
- Recreational programming and facilities.
- Public wastewater.
- Solid waste collection and disposal.
- Economic Development and Community Development services.
- Services to new migrants and immigrants.
- Emergency services such as EMO.
- Investment in the delivery of the Senior Safety Program.

#### **Achievements**

- Clare Health Centre – delivery of primary health care services in French and English.
- Access to sledge hockey gear.
- Senior Safety Program services are brought to the community (home visits).



## Barriers

- Budget limitations to keep up to date with current services.
- Lack of fully accessible recreation programs.
- As a rural community, we are limited on resources due to our geographic location.

## Policies

The Municipality of Clare will deliver goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability. We shall commit to make municipal goods and services accessible to all.

## Actions

- Purchase more accessible recreation equipment for loan (Mobi mat, hippocamps)
- Work with, include and consider Inclusion Clare clients when organizing recreation programs and events.
- Train the staff who are responsible for delivering accessible services to people with diverse abilities.
- Provide an adapted listing of municipal programs and services for people of all abilities and update it annually.
- Where applicable, include an “Accessibility Lens” in reports to Council.



## *Information and Communications*

### **Our Commitment**

We will ensure that all information and communications delivered by the municipality will be clear, and accessible for people of all abilities.

### **Our Starting Point**

#### **Overview**

The municipality delivers information to the public in several ways, including:

- By mail, the municipal website, social media, in-person, radio, local newspaper, flyers.
- Council and committee meetings, which are open to the public.

#### **Achievements**

- Communication and information are presented in both French and English.
- The community can view agendas and minutes of meetings on the municipal website.
- Council meetings are recorded and aired on Eastlink Cable and posted on the municipal YouTube channel.
- By having access to the Municipality's motions to recommend, the community is given enough notice to give feedback and participate in discussions before Council members vote on their decisions.
- All online forms are easily navigated.
- A municipal newsletter is prepared quarterly and is posted on the municipal website and circulated by way of Canada Post. Copies are also made available at the

Municipal Office and the Rendez-Vous de la Baie Welcome Centre.

- Advertisements and notices are all posted on the municipal website, on social media and in some circumstances also placed in a local newspaper. Some advertising is also done by way of radio.
- The municipal website is designed to be accessible, it includes keyboard navigation, colour contrast, cross-device compatibility, etc.

### Barriers

- Currently there is no process in place for hearing impaired individuals to participate in public meetings.
- Municipal employees are not trained to promote inclusion in communication.
- For residents, technology does not always work as intended, some might not have access to technology, and some might have limited skills with technology.
- Plain language is not consistently used in written material.
- No staff member is trained in alternative communication methods, such as American Sign Language (ASL).
- No resources or funds are designated to offer alternative communications to people who need them, such as ASL interpretation.



## **Policies**

The Municipality of Clare will:

- Provide information in an accessible format or with communication supports that consider a person's specific needs, upon request.
- Hold all in-person public meetings in barrier-free locations.

## **Actions**

- Train relevant staff in inclusive communications and plain language.
- Provide modified editions of key municipal resources – in large print and/or in plain language – on request. (Recreation Newsletter, by-law services)
- Research various types of communication aids.
- Have signs in braille at municipal facilities identifying washrooms.
- Reach out to Canadian National Institute for the Blind and Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians for their expertise.
- Attempt to have an ASL Interpreter at public municipal meetings, when requested.
- Continue to upgrade and improve the municipal website to maintain accessibility.

# *Implementing the Plan*

## *Responsibilities*

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 Clare become an accessible community and meet its obligations under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee will review the Accessibility Plan at least every three years as required by the Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to review progress and commitments contained in the plan.
- Municipal Council is responsible for adopting and overseeing the Accessibility Plan.
- Municipal Council must recognize the significant cost and value of implementing this plan.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for receiving and responding to public concerns, complaints, and suggestions.
- The Chief Administrative Officer ensures the commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan are reflected and operationalized in municipal Accessibility Action Plans required as public sector bodies under the Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee will prepare a report card for Council by March 31 of each year. This

report card will measure the performance of the policies and actions in this plan.

## *Responding to Community Feedback*

The Municipality of Clare's Accessibility Plan is considered a "living document" *for* the people of Clare, *by* the people of Clare, which will be revised every three years. Comments and suggestions from the public are welcome at any time.

- Anyone can pose a question, lodge a complaint or express a concern about accessibility within the Municipality of Clare. These should be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator.
- Anyone can appeal to the CAO if they are not satisfied with the response from the Accessibility Coordinator. The CAO may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complaint.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions and concerns submitted, and will provide summary updates to the Advisory Committee on a regular basis.

