



DIGBY ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2025-2028 - Approved June 2025



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Acknowledgment

This document was created in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We recognize that we are on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, who have lived on and cared for this land for thousands of years. We recognize their deep and enduring connection to the land, waters, and resources of Nova Scotia. We also recognize the 400+ year history of communities of African descent and the 52 African Nova Scotian communities throughout the region today.

Nova Scotia is home to many diverse communities that have shaped and enriched the province. We acknowledge that many people living in Nova Scotia have intersecting identities which may expose them to more than one form of discrimination.

Introduction

In 2017, Nova Scotia became the third province to pass accessibility legislation. The Nova Scotia [Accessibility Act](#) recognizes accessibility as a human right and sets a goal to make Nova Scotia an accessible province by 2030. The purpose of the Act is to prevent and remove barriers that restrict people with disabilities from fully participating in society.

The Act also enables the government to develop standards for accessibility. Provincial accessibility standards will be developed for the following: goods and services; information and communication; transportation; employment; the built environment; and education.

The Act requires public bodies, such as towns and municipalities, to form an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and to create an Accessibility Plan.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is required to engage with the community, draft the Accessibility Plan, implement the plan, and update the plan every three years. The mandate of the committee is to advise the Town and Municipal Councils on identifying, preventing, and eliminating accessibility barriers to municipal and town programs, services, and infrastructure.

The first Digby Accessibility Plan was approved in 2022. The plan included the



following:

- Areas of Focus: how we will identify, remove, and prevent barriers within transportation, goods and services, built environment, information and communications, and employment.
- A strategy to implement the plan including determining responsibilities, a timeline, and monitoring and evaluation.

The plan's refresh will consist of the same concepts with updates, and will also include:

- Achievements to date in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers.

The focus of the Accessibility Plan is on the infrastructure owned and managed by our units.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee, along with each participating unit, is committed to fostering a culture of accessibility and encouraging the prevention and removal of accessibility barriers in our community. We recognize accessibility as a human right. We intend to be a role model for the private sector and the broader community.

Commitment

We will work to ensure our programs, services, and facilities are barrier-free and show leadership by supporting the goal of becoming an accessible province by 2030 under the [Accessibility Act](#).

We recognize the unique challenges faced by many, and we are committed to fostering inclusivity, equity, and accessibility for all residents. We want to foster a community where every individual is heard, valued, and supported in their pursuit of well-being and opportunity.

Collaboration

The Municipality of Digby, Town of Digby, Villages of Weymouth, Westport, Tiverton, and Freeport, and the Digby Area Recreation Commission have joined together to form an Accessibility Advisory Committee and to draft, update, and oversee the Digby Accessibility Plan every three years.



Members provided advice on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers experienced by people with disabilities in the first version of this plan, and this refresh. This included identifying barriers to municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee also worked closely with staff on the development and oversight of this plan update. Each unit may release individual accessibility action plans based on their own needs, timelines, and budgets. But the committee will continue to meet to communicate and meet its mandate under the Act.

Community Engagement

We conducted an engagement survey to gather feedback and input. The Digby Accessibility Survey was open from June 9 to June 16, 2025 (8 days total). The survey was shared widely amongst the public; it was available to complete online, in-person, or over the phone. There were 65 responses primarily from residents, with a range of individuals including those with lived or observed experience with disability or accessibility barriers.

Most participants rated public buildings and facilities in Digby as “somewhat accessible,” while public spaces such as sidewalks and trails were also described as somewhat accessible, though a few noted they were not accessible or were unsure.

Common issues raised included difficulty accessing buildings and the need for improvements to sidewalks. Digital services such as the municipal website and online forms were generally seen as somewhat to very accessible.

Respondents suggested a range of improvements, including more ramps, better sidewalk conditions, improved signage, lighting, and enhanced public communication tools.

Awareness of local programs for residents with disabilities was limited, with many respondents unsure of what supports exist.

Most indicated they would be interested in participating in future accessibility consultations. The results from the Digby Accessibility Survey will help guide our efforts in addressing accessibility for the years to come.



Achievements to Date

The Municipality of Digby

- The [website](#) has been updated to better adhere to current Accessibility Standards.
- Staff created an [accessibility page](#) on the website, highlighting the Municipality's commitment to accessibility, action plan, contact information, etc.
- Information is shared in accessible formats wherever possible.
- Staff completed all audits of all Municipal-occupied buildings.
- Renovations to the administration counter to ensure user-friendliness and improve wheelchair accessibility.
- Constructed a brand-new accessible public washroom to meet the needs of all visitors.
- Lighting improvements in each room at the Municipal Office were made to better support residents and staff with visual impairments.
- Door handles were upgraded to lever-style designs.
- Plain language signage and benches have been placed on community trails to ensure clear navigation, resting intervals, mental and sensory breaks, and overall safety to all.
- Sidewalks were widened in Conway to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, and strollers.

The Town of Digby

- The [website](#) has been updated to better adhere to current Accessibility Standards.
- Wheelchair ramp installed at Town Hall with push button door openers at the front and rear of the building, and has one accessible washroom on upper level.
- Upgraded two washrooms at the Digby Station (inside) to be fully accessible and one accessible washroom with shower facility on the



exterior. Both doors are push button openers with fully graded exterior to allow for wheelchair access.

- Constructed two accessible public washrooms in the downtown area with push button openings.
- Built a rear accessible ramp with push button door opening, established two accessible washrooms upstairs, and installed a fully accessible washroom with shower downstairs at the Digby Fire Department.
- Relocated the wheelchair parking spots for better access to the sidewalk on Water Street.

Digby Area Recreation Commission

- Installed accessible entrance doors to the arena, as well the interior doors from the lobby to the rink.
- The new splash park was designed and constructed to be a fully accessible space, with an accessible washroom and picnic table under a gazebo.

Action Plan

The Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan identified five areas of focus for accessibility. These are as follows: Transportation; Good and Services; Built Environment; Information and Communications; and Employment. We will continue to work towards equitable access in each of these areas of focus to help identify, prevent, and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities. We will meet the standards as set out by the province for accessibility in each of these areas. Our focus will be on the infrastructure owned and managed by our units.

We will prioritize the following actions:

Goods & Services

We are committed to ensuring that residents and visitors with disabilities have equitable access to the goods and services that are provided in our community.



- a. We are committed to providing assistive technology to customers that require additional support while conducting business at our buildings and public spaces (screen readers, hearing loop enabled microphones, etc.).
- b. We are committed to plain language in our public facing documents (water bills, tax bills, newsletters, etc.).

Built Environment

We are committed to ensuring that residents and visitors with disabilities have equitable access to our buildings and outdoor spaces.

- a. We will commit a portion of our capital budgets to all new construction and renovation project budgets to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in our owned public buildings and spaces.
- b. When possible, we will incorporate 2030 standards when repairing and maintaining existing infrastructure.
- c. We will continue to improve accessibility in parks and open spaces (i.e., installing accessible picnic tables, ramps, and other amenities).

Information & Communications

We are committed to ensuring that residents and visitors with disabilities are able to equitably access information and communications provided by our units.

- a. We are committed to purchasing assistive technology to be available for all individuals to participate in public meetings.
- b. Make large-print versions of documents upon request.
- c. Provide closed captioning and transcripts for video content.
- d. Choose locations that are accessible for all meetings or events (i.e., single-level, ramps, elevators, etc.)

Employment

We are committed to being equitable employers and supporting the careers of those employees with disabilities.

- a. Hiring managers will complete the “Breaking Barriers: The Art of Inclusive Hiring” and “Accessibility Foundations” training offered by SeaChange CoLabs.



- b. All job advertisements will only list the essential qualifications and skills as requirements that are necessary for performing the job.
- c. All applicants will be advised that individual accommodations can be arranged for all stages of the recruitment process.
- d. We will provide reasonable accommodations to all employees (i.e., assistive technology, modified duties, or ergonomic furniture as needed).
- e. Ensure municipal facilities (offices, kitchens, bathrooms) are fully accessible.
- f. All employees will partake in regular training on inclusive communication, accommodations, and legal obligations.

Transportation

We are committed to ensuring that residents and visitors with disabilities have equitable access to the transportation that is provided in our community.

- a. We are committed to conducting a feasibility study for our transit system with the hopes to improve access to transportation for all residents throughout the district.
- b. We will work with public transportation to conduct a review of wayfinding signage at transit stops to improve accessibility.
- c. We will work with public transportation to increase the number of accessible bus shelters.
- d. We are committed to improving and increasing the quantity of accessible parking spaces.

Monitoring & Communication

The Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) will play a fundamental role in overseeing the implementation and progress of the Digby Accessibility Plan. The CAOs will ensure that the plan is integrated into the policies, programs, and services. This includes overseeing the training, monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives, and ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately to support the goals of the plan.

Additionally, the CAOs will regularly meet with the Accessibility Coordinator for updates and will report on the progress of the plan to Councils, and work to



implement the plan across all departments. Councils are responsible for adopting and overseeing the Accessibility Action Refresh Plan.

The Accessibility Coordinator will be responsible for working with all staff to ensure continual work towards meeting all goals, as well as receiving, and responding to all public concerns, complaints, and suggestions. Members of the public can consult with the Accessibility Coordinator if needed. A record of concerns or comments will be kept so that this data can be considered when updating the plan every three years.

Any member of the public can make a request to the Accessibility Coordinator to make a presentation to Council or to submit a letter or material for review.

Timeline

The priorities outlined in this plan refresh will be completed over the next 3 years (2025-2028).

Conclusion

The Digby Accessibility Plan reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive and barrier-free community for all residents and visitors. This plan outlines strategic actions across five key areas: transportation, goods and services, the built environment, information and communications, and employment. By addressing barriers in these areas, we aim to ensure equitable access, enhance participation, and promote dignity for individuals of all abilities.

Continued evaluation and adaptation of this plan will ensure it remains responsive to the evolving needs of our community.



Definitions

Accessibility Act - 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.

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 the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. 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 Coordinator - A person appointed to support the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee in developing and implementing the Accessibility Plan.

Accessibility Directorate - The provincial body that is responsible for implementing and administering the Accessibility Act, supporting accessibility initiatives and advancing broader disability related issues.

Barrier - 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.

Built Environment - means the human-made space in which people live, work, learn and play and includes buildings, rights-of-way, and outdoor spaces.

Chief Administrative Officer - The administrative head of a municipality, acting as a liaison between the elected council and the administrative staff that



oversees the day-to-day administrative operations of an organization. They are responsible for ensuring that the organization's policies and programs are implemented effectively and efficiently.

Disability - 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.

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.

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. 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.