

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

TOWN OF CLARK'S HARBOUR

Welcome Message

In 2020, the Town of Clark's Harbour formed an Accessibility Advisory committee to carry out the requirements of the Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia (2017). The committee advises Town Council on identifying, preventing, and eliminating accessibility barriers to town programs, services, and infrastructure.

The mandate of the committee is to assist the town in the development of an Accessibility Plan and to help us become an accessible community for all to enjoy. The committee is comprised of two members of Council, one member with a disability and a person associated with a person with a disability. The Town of Clark's Harbour's Accessibility Plan is committed to meeting the needs of people who face barriers with accessibility. We will do this by identifying, removing, and preventing these barriers and by meeting the requirements of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

This plan is the result of the collaboration between Town Council, the Accessibility Committee, and members of the public. We encourage you to consider our Accessibility Plan a living document and to provide us with feedback, and to suggest changes, which will continually improve it.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility Act (2017)

The provincial law enacted to achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities. The law defines the role and responsibilities of the Accessibility Directorate and the Accessibility Advisory Board and addresses standards, compliance, and enforcement.

(nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf)

Accessibility Advisory Board

A 12-member provincial board appointed by the provincial government to advise the Minister of Justice on accessibility and make recommendations on accessibility standards. The majority of board members are persons with disabilities.

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/town programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping the municipality become a barrier-free community that complies with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017). At least one half of the members of the advisory committee has a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

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

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.

Braille

A reading and writing system for people who are visually impaired.

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. Equity recognizes and values differences, removing systemic barriers and accommodating individual differences, as needed.

Plain Language

Clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to communicate so that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information.

(plainlanguagenetwork.org/)

Retrofit

To add features that were not part of the original design.

Tactile

Related to the sense of touch.

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Clark's Harbour's Accessibility Plan was developed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee, staff of the Town of Clark's Harbour and public consultation and Town Council to whom advice was provided on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers experienced by people with disabilities in such areas as goods and services, information and communications, transportation, employment and built environment.

The Town of Clark's Harbour, like many other towns/municipalities/villages in Nova Scotia, is committed to ensuring equitable access to community life and participation in society for all people, regardless of their abilities and is committed to helping all people maintain their dignity and independence.

We believe in inclusion which involves equitable and equal access. Equality means everyone is treated the same; Equitable means everyone is treated fairly based on their needs and abilities. Therefore, we need to meet the needs of people who face barriers to accessibility but include everyone in that design. How do we do this? By identifying, removing, and preventing these barriers while meeting the requirements of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

GOODS AND SERVICES

Our Vision

We will work towards the goal of people of all ages and abilities having equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Town of Clark's Harbour.

Starting Point

Overview

The following are some of the many services the town delivers to the public:

- Emergency services, such as policing (RCMP), fire (jointly) and EMO (regional)
- Public wastewater treatment
- Solid waste collection and disposal (contract)
- Snow removal and maintenance of streets
- Animal control
- The use of public infrastructure such as buildings, boardwalks and parks/playgrounds
- Collection of property taxes and sewer services
- Customer service
- Providing information and communication to the public

Achievements to Date

- Property tax and sewer service payments are now available through on-line banking with four extra financial institutions, before it was only available through RBC
- Boardwalk is being made more accessible through rebuilding and replacing the wheelchair ramps (in progress)

- Buildings are totally wheelchair accessible with automatic door openers (except one, which is not currently open to the public)
- Park gazebo is wheelchair accessible
- Wheelchair accessible picnic table at the ballfield

Barriers

- Playgrounds/parks are not fully accessible
- staff members are not trained in alternative communication methods, such as American Sign Language
- no resources or funds are designated to offer alternative communication to persons that need them (sign language interpreter/speech interpreter)
- customer service counter is not wheelchair accessible.
- Ballpark washrooms are not fully accessible

Policy

The Town of Clark's Harbour will deliver all goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability.

Actions

- identify and remove or circumvent barriers
- record progress and evaluate successes and problems

Top Priorities

- promote disability-related programs and supports to the community
- provide general updates to the community and provide specific information upon request
- take steps to ensure that public parks/playgrounds are accessible

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Our Vision

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

Our Starting Point

Overview

The town delivers information to the public in the following ways:

- by mail, social media, website, phone, in-person, (at the office) and newsletters
- Council and committee meetings are open to the public

Achievements to Date

- Minutes of meetings are available on the town website
- Social media is easily navigated
- Upon request, information can be provided in large print
- Advertisements and notices are posted on social media and in some circumstances also placed in a local newspaper

Barriers

- No funds or resources are designated to offer alternative communications to people in need of them
- Staff are not trained in American Sign Language
- Currently no process in place for hearing impaired individuals to participate in public meetings
- Town website is not fully accessible

- Town employees are not trained to promote inclusion in communication
- Technology does not always work as intended/no access to technology/limited skills with technology

Policy

The Town of Clark's Harbour 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
- Use plain language
- Ensure the town's digital presence and information technology systems are designed for people of all ages and abilities

Actions

- Research various types of communication aids
- Identify other organizations who can provide services and supports relating to accessibility for town staff and the public
- Have signs in braille at town facilities identifying washrooms

TRANSPORTATION

Our Vision

The Town of Clark's Harbour will work with local organizations to ensure transportation services are provided to people of all ages and abilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town of Clark's Harbour does not currently have a transit system. A local organization currently provides this service to our residents.

Achievements

- Financial support to the Sou'West Nova Transit Association to assist with the cost of providing affordable and accessible transportation to residents of the town.
- The town has provided financial support towards operational costs and fare reduction for town patrons.
- Adequate accessible parking spaces at town facilities
- The town has a Maintenance and Care of Streets by-law

Barriers

- Sou'West Nova Transit is not equipped or capable of providing rides to everyone in need and they require 24 hours advanced notice.
- No taxi service available in the town
- Only Main Street (Highway 330) has sidewalks/bike trails, all other streets too narrow to provide such

Policy

The Town of Clark's Harbour will:

- Continue to work with Sou'West Nova Transit and other community groups to address transportation issues for person with disabilities.

Actions

- explore taxi services if suggested by a potential new business owner
- continue to provide funding to SWNT for operating costs and fare reduction rates for town residents
- continue timeliness with removing snow from streets, sidewalks, parking lots and other town spaces

EMPLOYMENT

Our Commitment

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

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town currently employs 4 permanent employees. There are 4 elected council members and 1 elected mayor. Elected representatives must be Canadian citizens, at least 18 years of age and live in the Town. Council may appoint members of the public to serve on committees.

Achievements

- accessible space for meetings to be held in town hall (Council et al)
- documents can be provided in various formats (large font, etc.) upon request
- meeting rooms have tables which are wheelchair accessible
- offices in town hall are barrier free

Barriers

- council members are not supplied with their own digital devices for reading agendas and town documents.
- job postings do not currently state that we can accommodate persons with disabilities.
- staff are generally not trained to recognize barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Job postings are posted in traditional ways which may not be accessible to some individuals.

Policies

The Town of Clark's Harbour will:

- Take every effort, that is fair and reasonable, to offer barrier free workstations.
- Provide the necessary tools and materials to employees with disabilities to successfully do their job.
- Promote all municipal jobs in a variety of formats (online, printed, etc.)
- Add aids to allow those with disabilities to be able to overcome obstacles.

Actions

- Initiate plans to remove barriers that might hinder an otherwise capable employee to be an effective employee
- Discuss special accommodations with all job applicants
- Offer assistive technology and special accommodations to all employees in need
- Identify organizations and funding sources that may assist people with disabilities to find and maintain employment
- Take steps to inform persons with disabilities about non financial supports, such as Job Coaching and disability supports for post-secondary training, such as student loans

- Take steps to encourage various group, such as Department of Community Services, Tri-County Regional Centre for Education, Nova Scotia Community College, NS Works/Southwest Employment Services, municipal units, etc. to share information amongst themselves to help job seekers find employment

Top Priorities

- Ensure town buildings and facilities have wheelchair accessible entrances, washrooms and corridors
- Install tactile signs or railing for those with visual difficulties
- Ensure all job advertisements indicate the town is an equal opportunity employer and that applicants are encouraged to specify in their job application if special accommodations are required

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Our Commitment

Our public buildings and public spaces will be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, whether we own, lease or operate the space. We will encourage citizens, the business community and school to make their public and private spaces more accessible.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town owns, leases and operates a number of public facilities, such as the Town Hall, parks, playgrounds parking areas and a community (comfort) centre and other infrastructures.

Achievements

- Maintain town playgrounds, sports fields, parks and buildings
- Provide improvements when necessary
- All town owned buildings are wheelchair accessible
- Town hall and comfort/community centre have automatic door openers
- Boardwalks are under construction to bring the accessibility points up to code

Barriers

- Budget limitations
- Sidewalks/bike lanes are uneven, cracked and crumbling in some areas
- Crosswalks are not clearly marked, no lights, sounds or tactile indicators
- Some public washrooms are not fully accessible
- Accessible parking is limited
- Not enough signs for people with visual and hearing impairments
- Service counters not at accessible height

Policies

The Town of Clark's Harbour will:

- Gather information and form policies that will ensure accessibility to everyone

Actions

- Look for opportunities to construct and maintain more accessible public washrooms, where possible
- Review emergency management and building evacuation plans with accessibility in mind

- Assess each town parking lot to ensure an adequate number of accessible parking spaces are being provided
- Ensure that picnic tables and benches in public areas are accessible

Top Priorities

- Assess existing crosswalks to make sure they are accessible to persons with disabilities
- Provide an accessible service counter
- Consider a portion of the annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in public buildings and spaces

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Responsibilities

Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Review the Accessibility Plan at least every three years as required by the Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia
- Committee to meet at least annually to review progress and commitments contained in the plan

Council

- Recognize the significant cost and value of implementing this plan and municipal operational plans and seek adequate funding to allow the town to meet the requirements under the accessibility Act of Nova Scotia

Clerk/Treasurer

- Ensure the commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan are reflected and operationalized in town Accessibility Action Plans required as public sector bodies under the Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia

Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

- Mayor Rex Stoddard - Chair
- Deputy Mayor Trudy Quinlan
- Marlene Atkinson – resident
- Meredith Ross – resident