

## **UPDATED ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

**2025-2028**

### **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](http://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.

[\(plainlanguagenetwork.org/\)](http://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

**2025 Update:** payments are now available through on-line banking through five financial institutions

- Boardwalk is being made more accessible through rebuilding and replacing the wheelchair ramps

**2025 Update:** This work is completed

- Buildings are totally wheelchair accessible with automatic door openers except one, which is not currently open to the public

**2025 Update:** The building that was not open to the public and not accessible has been sold, so no longer owned by the Town of Clark's Harbour

- Park gazebo is wheelchair accessible
- Wheelchair accessible picnic table at the ballfield

## **Barriers**

- Playgrounds/parks are not fully accessible

**2025-2028 commitment** - plans are being made for the 2026/27 fiscal year to update playgrounds/parks

- Staff members are not trained in alternative communication methods, such as American Sign Language

**2025-2028 commitment** – If ASL is requested by any member in the community for town meetings or events, the Town of Clark's Harbour will engage this service as needed. We will seek information from organizations like, Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians (SDHNS), Access

Language Services Inc., Maritime Association of Professional Sign Language Interpreters and neighboring municipalities for recommendations

- The Customer service counter is not wheelchair accessible.

**2025-2028 commitment** – the Town will get quotes to lower the counter or a portion of the counter, so it is at an accessible height for everyone.

- Ballpark washrooms are not fully accessible

**2025-2028 commitment** – Town will have an accessibility audit done to assess barriers and get quote to update washrooms.

## **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.

## **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**

- There may be funding concerns if alternative communications for persons with disabilities are requested
- Staff have not been trained in identifying and removing accessibility barriers in communication
- Town website is not fully accessible
- 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.

**2025-2028 Commitment:** Ensure all staff are trained so that information from the Town to our community is as accessible as possible for everyone.

- Hold all in person public meetings in barrier free locations

**2025 Update:** Meetings are held in the town office council chambers which are accessible

- Use plain language

**2025 Update:** This is on-going

- Ensure the town's digital presence and information technology systems are designed for people of all ages and abilities

**2025-2028 Commitment:** The Town of Clark's Harbour has a website and has a social media presence for events. Staff training will include becoming aware of accessibility and inclusion when communicating in digital platforms.

- Learn more about being inclusive in all communications

**2025-2028 Commitment** – Ensure Accessibility Foundations training is completed by all staff (half-day session that can be completed online)

- Have signs in braille at town facilities identifying washrooms

**2025-2028 Commitment** – request information about signage from the Accessibility Directorate and where it can be purchased

## **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 who request the service, and they require 24 hours advanced notice.
- No taxi service available in the town

## **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

**2025 update:** Cape Sable Transportation is a local service that assists residents in the Cape Sable Island and surrounding areas with transportation to medical appointments, errands and essential trips. It is part of Nova Scotia's community transit network, which provides accessible door to door service for rural communities.

- continue to provide funding to SWNT for operating costs and fare reduction rates for town residents

**2025 update:** funding is on-going

- continue timeliness with removing snow from streets, sidewalks, parking lots and other town spaces

**2025 update: on-going**

## **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**

- Our current job postings do not include language inviting applicants to inform us if they require accommodations during the recruitment process.
- 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:

- Make every effort, that is reasonable, to offer barrier free workstations if required.
- 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.)

## **Actions**

- Remove barriers that might hinder employees to be effective and productive at work.

**2025-2028 Commitment** – staff training in accessibility foundations will ensure all staff can identify and remove barriers

- Discuss accommodations with job applicants

**2025-2028 Commitment** - staff training in accessibility foundations and employment will ensure all staff are trained in accessibility in all areas, including employment

- Offer accommodations which may include assistive technology to employees or potential employees if required.

**2025-2028 Commitment** - staff training in accessibility foundations and employment will ensure all staff are trained in accessibility in all areas, including employment

## **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
- Town buildings have accessible parking
- Boardwalks are under construction to improve accessibility to code

**2025 Update** – Boardwalk has been completed

## **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
- 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

**2025 Update:** All but one washroom has been updated. The one that is not updated is an older washroom and much too small to be accessible.

- 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 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
  - **2025-2028 Commitment** – will get an estimate to lower the counter or a portion of the counter so it is accessible to everyone

- Consider a portion of the annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in public buildings and spaces

## **IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING 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 quarterly to monitor the progress on commitments in the plan and address accessibility concerns and input from the community

#### **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 Clay Kenney - Chair
- Deputy Mayor Irene Baker
- Marlene Atkinson – resident

## **2025 Community input -**

- An invitation for input from the public for the Accessibility Plan was issued in mid June via social media and on our website, with a deadline of July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

To date, the Town has not received any concerns or suggestions.

- A newsletter was sent to every resident in the Town of Clark's Harbour, via Canada Post, requesting committee membership. The reply was low,

The Town of Clark's Harbour will continue to request input about the accessibility plan and concerns about accessibility in the Town.

Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ with any accessibility concerns or suggestions to help make the town more accessible and inclusive place for everyone!