



Access by Design 2030

Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia



Cover Photo: Marwa Harb and her father Mohammad immigrated with their family from Syria to Nova Scotia in 2016. They have quickly become impactful, energetic contributors to their community. Mohammad recently received a national award from Canadian Blood Services for his work coordinating Syrian Canadian Donation Day, an event to encourage Syrian newcomers to donate blood.

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2018

Access by Design 2030
Department of Justice, September 2018.
ISBN 978-1-55457-881-8

Welcome Message

Last year, the Accessibility Act was passed and proclaimed, demonstrating our commitment to a more equitable and barrier-free province for all Nova Scotians. The Act recognizes accessibility as a human right and sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. This important piece of legislation outlines what we need to do as a province to improve accessibility and ensure that every Nova Scotian can participate in our society.

Almost 1 in 5 Nova Scotians over the age of 15 identify as having a disability. We anticipate that this number will grow as our population ages. These numbers underscore both the significance and timeliness of the Accessibility Act. This legislation is an important part of government's plan to build a stronger province that benefits all Nova Scotians. The Act establishes a framework for preventing and removing barriers in the built environment, education, employment, transportation, information and communication, and goods and services.

This document - Access by Design 2030 - provides a strategy for how we will work together as a province to accomplish this work. It will take all of us — government, businesses, communities, and individuals — working together to get there. We've been out speaking with Nova Scotians across the province, including persons with disabilities and their families, those who provide services to persons with disabilities, municipalities, and representatives from the non-profit, education, health, and business sectors.

Access by Design 2030 reflects what we heard during these consultations and from our Accessibility Advisory Board. The input we received has helped us define what an accessible, inclusive, barrier-free province means. It informed our decision to first focus on developing accessibility standards in education and the built environment. And it confirmed that collaboration across sectors, improving public awareness, and building capacity in accessibility are key to removing barriers.

Beginning this year, committees will be established to assist the Accessibility Advisory Board in making recommendations on the content of accessibility standards in the built environment and education. We will continue to consult with persons with disabilities and impacted stakeholders throughout the development of these standards.

Access by Design 2030 provides a roadmap for creating communities that are welcoming and supportive of all who want to participate, for creating places of employment where every Nova Scotian is provided equal opportunity to work and succeed, and for creating a province where prosperity and democracy thrive because of fair and equitable treatment. This is the province we can achieve if we work together.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Stephen McNeil
Premier of Nova Scotia

The Honourable Mark Furey
Minister Responsible for the Accessibility Act

Vision

Imagine a province where our individual differences are celebrated and valued. A province where persons with disabilities are supported to participate fully in their communities. A place where we recognize that abilities vary, but our capacity to participate is not limited by barriers. A province that thrives because there is equitable opportunity for all Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act sets out a plan for making this a reality for our province. It aims to improve accessibility in the areas of the built environment, education, employment, goods and services, information and communication, and transportation.

Important as this legislation is, it cannot succeed without a cultural shift in our province. We must understand barriers to accessibility and prevent and remove them. We must value the contributions of persons with disabilities, and recognize the rights of all Nova Scotians to participate in society. This cultural shift will require collaboration, innovation, and transformation among government, organizations, public and private sectors, communities, and every Nova Scotian.

We are committed to leading this change, and look forward to working alongside persons with disabilities and our partners across Nova Scotia to make it happen.

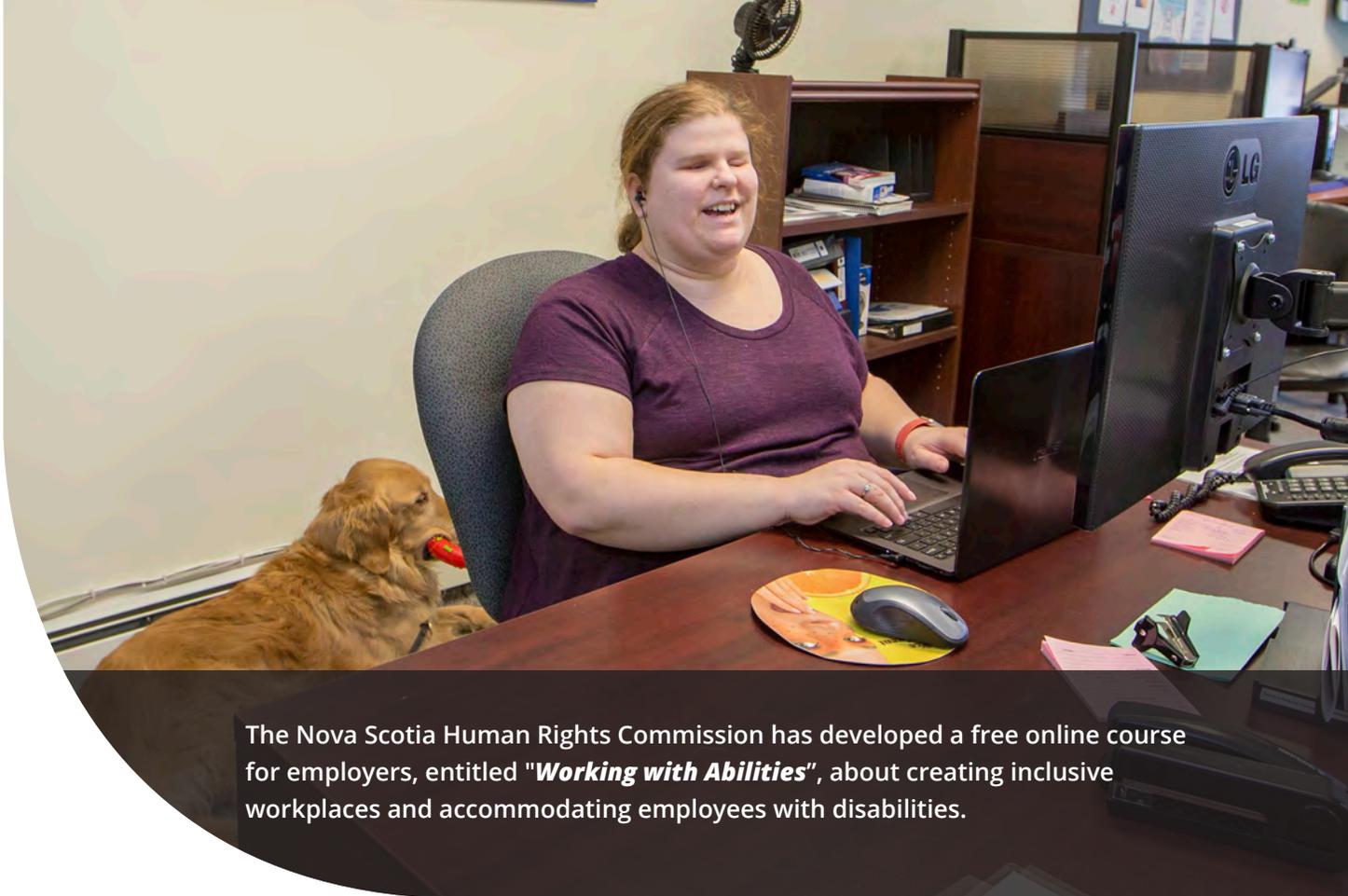


The number of Nova Scotians with disabilities will rise as our population ages.

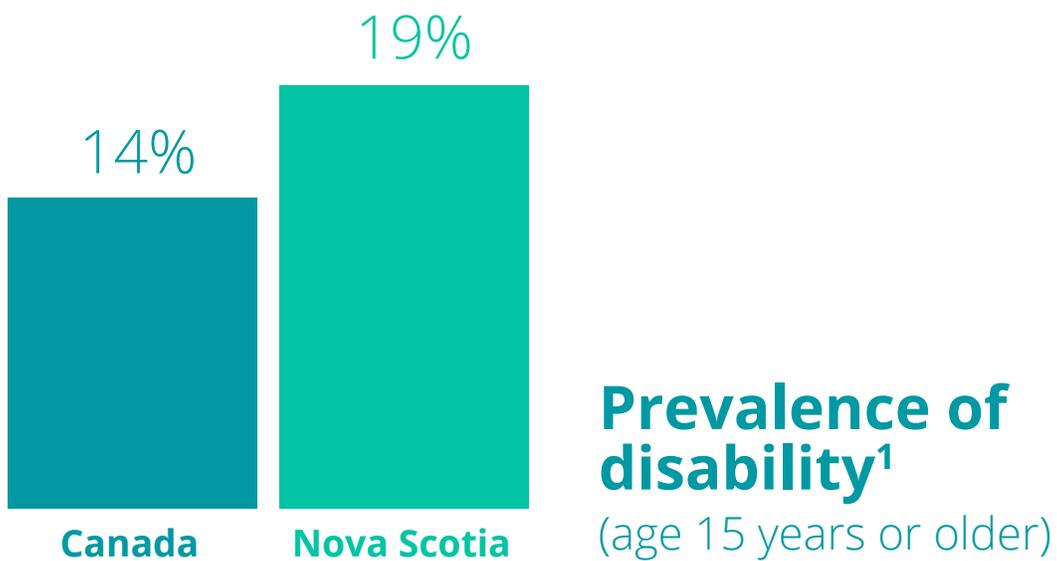
Background

Almost 19 per cent of Nova Scotians age 15 and older identify as having a disability (approximately 144,000 people)¹. This is the largest percentage of any Canadian province. Nova Scotia also has the largest percentage of adults over the age of 65, at 20 per cent². This percentage will increase to approximately 25 per cent of the population by 2030³. Since rates of disability are higher in older adults, the number of Nova Scotians with disabilities will rise as our population ages.

-
1. Statistics Canada (2012). Canadian Survey on Disabilities.
 2. Statistics Canada (2017). Population by broad age groups and sex, percentage distribution (2016) for both sexes, Canada, provinces and territories, 2016 Census.
 3. Nova Scotia Department of Seniors. (2017). SHIFT: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population.



The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission has developed a free online course for employers, entitled "**Working with Abilities**", about creating inclusive workplaces and accommodating employees with disabilities.



Prevalence of disability¹
(age 15 years or older)

1. Statistics Canada (2012). Canadian Survey on Disabilities.



BayRides, a community transit operator based in St. Margaret's Bay, will purchase an accessible bus using grant funding from the Department of Municipal Affairs' **Accessible Transportation Assistance Program**.

The Accessibility Act

In 2017, Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act, becoming the third Canadian province to adopt accessibility legislation. The act recognizes accessibility as a human right, and outlines how we will improve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers. It sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

The province's Accessibility Directorate is responsible for putting the new law into practice, and for addressing issues related to accessibility and disability.

An **Accessibility Advisory Board** makes recommendations to government on accessibility, and advises on the development of accessibility standards. The majority of board members are persons with disabilities.



Halifax Regional Municipality named Will Brewer the town crier for Olde Town of Halifax. He is believed to be the first town crier in Canada who has Down syndrome.

Public Consultations

To inform the development of this strategy, government consulted with Nova Scotians between December 2017 and June 2018. Over 1,500 Nova Scotians provided feedback through targeted focus group sessions, an online questionnaire, public engagement sessions, direct submissions, and stakeholder meetings.

We heard from persons with disabilities and their families; organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities; representatives of the non-profit, education, health, and business sectors; and municipal and provincial government staff and elected officials. The Accessibility Advisory Board also provided recommendations for this strategy.

This input helped us understand the issues faced by Nova Scotians with disabilities, determine priorities for developing accessibility standards, and identify the actions we need to take to become an accessible province.

A summary of these consultations can be found in [***What We Heard: Accessibility in Nova Scotia.***](#)

Purpose

This document outlines priorities and key actions, providing a framework for how the province will achieve its goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. It also highlights some of the work that is already underway across the province to improve accessibility.

Principles

Access by Design 2030 is based on the following principles:

Human Rights and Social Justice: Work will be guided by principles of human rights and social justice, including respect for difference, dignity, independence, and autonomy; equitable access and opportunity; non-discrimination; and full participation and inclusion in society.

Engagement and Collaboration: Work will be guided by the experience of persons with disabilities. It will be supported by the strength of existing community-based programs and the development of collaborative, cross-sectoral initiatives.

Coordination and Harmonization: Accessibility initiatives and strategies will align across organizations and all levels of government. Current practices will be integrated into the work.

Innovation and Modernization: Innovation and modernization will be employed in the development of initiatives and the allocation of resources.



Nova Scotia Community College is partnering with the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF), with funding from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, to deliver the **RHF Accessibility Certification™ Assessor Training Course**. The first 20 assessors graduated in summer 2018. Photo credit: NSCC

Outcomes

We aim to achieve the following outcomes:

Nova Scotians are aware of the rights of persons with disabilities, understand the impact of barriers to participation, and take action to prevent and remove barriers.

Persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia have equitable access to:

- Buildings and outdoor spaces in which Nova Scotians live, work, learn, and play
- Inclusive public and post-secondary education
- Employment
- Information and communication
- Goods and services
- Transportation within and between communities

Priorities

We will achieve an accessible Nova Scotia by focusing on the following priorities:

1. Standards Development
2. Awareness and Capacity Building
3. Collaboration and Support
4. Compliance and Enforcement
5. Monitoring and Evaluation
6. Government of Nova Scotia – Leading by Example

1. Standards Development

We will develop and implement accessibility standards to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities in the following areas:

Built Environment

Standards in this area will address how to make buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible to all. These standards may address gaps in current regulations.

Education

Standards in this area will help to create learning environments in which all students can participate. These standards could address how students with disabilities get the instruction and learning materials they need. The standards will apply to primary, secondary, and post-secondary education.

Employment

Standards in this area will support persons with disabilities in finding meaningful employment. The goal is to ensure equal access to employment for persons with disabilities.

Goods and Services

Standards for delivering and receiving goods and services may address how service providers interact with and are trained to serve persons with disabilities. This may include how persons with disabilities access goods and services, including the use of assistive devices.



The Inverness Development Association made Inverness Beach the most accessible beach in Atlantic Canada, using funding from the **Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage's Recreation Facility Development Program**.

Information and Communication

Standards in this area will help to ensure all Nova Scotians can receive and share the same information. They may consider accessible formats (for example, braille, American Sign Language, or large print), accessible websites and technologies, and standards for communicating with persons with disabilities.

Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

Standards in this area will help make it easier for everyone to travel in both rural and urban Nova Scotia. These standards will not apply to forms of transportation regulated by the federal government, such as travel by air and rail.

Other Areas

We may also develop and implement accessibility standards in other areas, if prescribed under the act.

The Standards Development Process

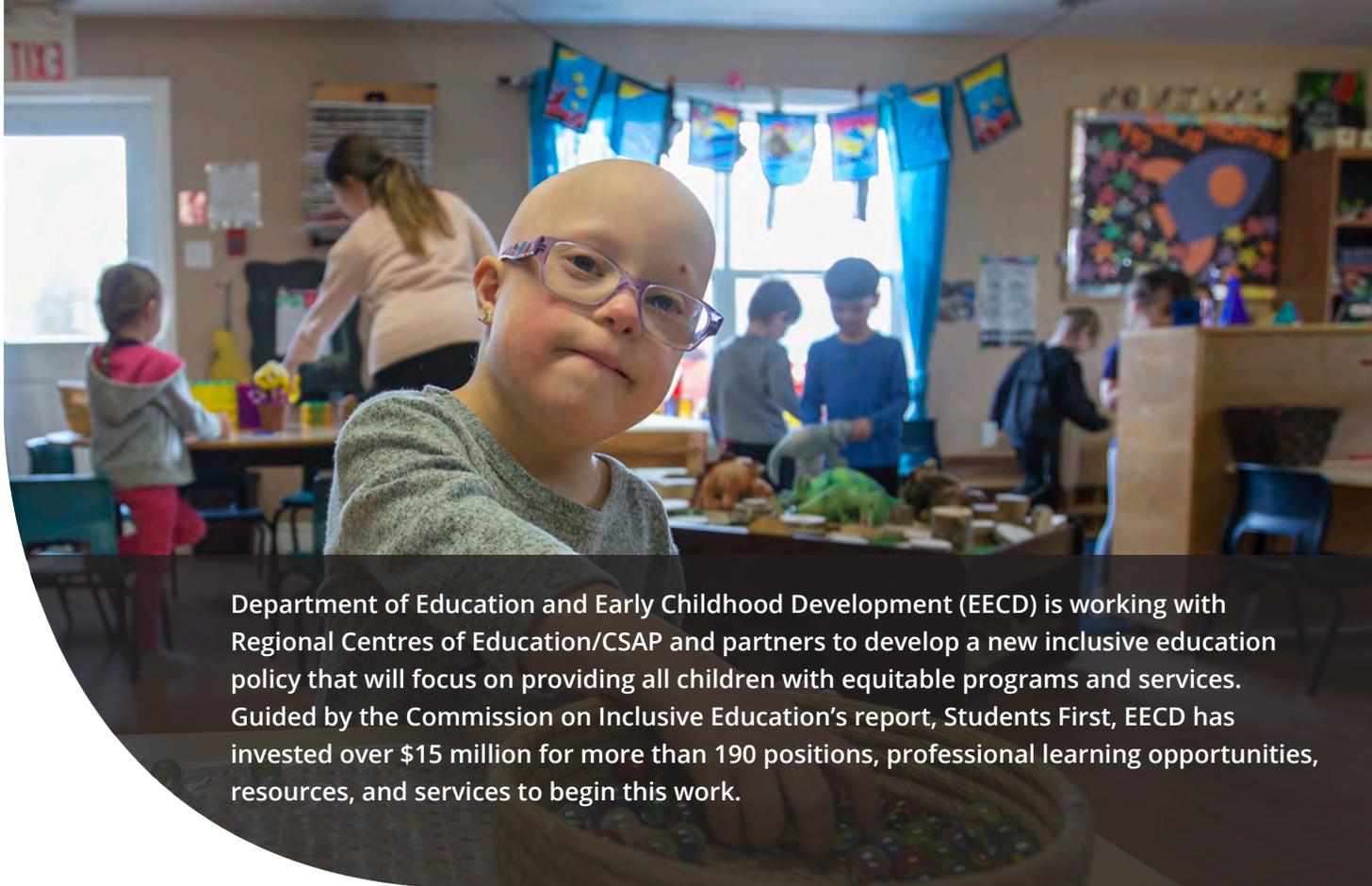
The Accessibility Advisory Board will recommend to the minister what should be included in each set of standards. To do this, the board will establish standard development committees. At least half of the members of each committee will be persons with disabilities or representatives of organizations that represent persons with disabilities. Committee members will also be representatives of organizations that could be impacted by the standards, and government departments that have responsibilities related to the standards.

When developing standards recommendations, the Accessibility Advisory Board must consult with

- Persons with disabilities
- Organizations representing persons with disabilities
- Those affected by the proposed standard
- Government entities with responsibilities related to the proposed standard

All Nova Scotians may also submit comments about the proposed accessibility standards before they are adopted by government.

Key Actions	Lead Department(s)	Partners
<p>Begin developing standards in the built environment and education in 2018. Begin implementing these standards by 2022. Standards will first apply to the Government of Nova Scotia, to public sector bodies second, and, finally, to other entities (such as the private sector).</p>	<p>Justice (Accessibility Directorate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility Advisory Board • Standards Development Committees • Office of Regulatory Affairs, Departments of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal; Education; Labour and Advanced Education
<p>Begin developing the remaining standards areas (employment, information and communications, goods and services, transportation) at a rate of one per year, beginning in 2021. The Accessibility Advisory Board will recommend the order in which they will be developed.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility Advisory Board • Standard Development Committees
<p>Assess the need to develop a provincial accessibility standard for health care and continuing care.</p>	<p>Justice (Accessibility Directorate) Health and Wellness</p>	



Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) is working with Regional Centres of Education/CSAP and partners to develop a new inclusive education policy that will focus on providing all children with equitable programs and services. Guided by the Commission on Inclusive Education's report, Students First, EECD has invested over \$15 million for more than 190 positions, professional learning opportunities, resources, and services to begin this work.

2. Awareness and Capacity Building

We will build capacity in accessibility, and increase awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and barriers to participation.

Key Actions	Lead Department(s)
Develop public awareness campaigns to increase understanding of accessibility, human rights, accessibility standards, and barriers to participation.	Communication Justice (Accessibility Directorate)
Work with partners in education to integrate information about disability rights and accessibility into relevant school curriculum areas as they are renewed and developed.	Education and Early Childhood Development
Develop resources and training to support the public sector, private sector, and community organizations to comply with the Accessibility Act.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)
Provide resources and training to build capacity in accessibility across sectors.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)

3. Collaboration and Support

We will collaborate with partners and stakeholders to ensure accessibility and the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are central to policy development, and program development and delivery.

Key Actions	Lead Department(s)	Partners
Prescribe other public-sector bodies, such as municipalities, post-secondary educational institutions, and Crown corporations, under the Accessibility Act.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)	
Assess existing programs that provide support for the hiring, training, accommodation, and advancement of persons with disabilities in the workplace, and identify opportunities to improve them.	Labour and Advanced Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Organizations
Assess and harmonize existing government programs that provide access to assistive devices and supports, assistive technology, and interpreting services, and identify opportunities to improve them.	Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departments of: Community Services; Education and Early Childhood Development; Health and Wellness; Labour and Advanced Education Community Organizations
Explore new and enhance existing public transportation models that will support equitable access to inclusive, accessible, affordable transportation options across Nova Scotia.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departments of: Communities, Culture and Heritage; Municipal Affairs; Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Community Organizations Municipalities
Establish a partnership between academia, government and communities for accessibility research and knowledge translation.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-Secondary Institutions Community Organizations
Promote built environment initiatives, such as the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nova Scotia Community College

4. Compliance and Enforcement

We will monitor and enforce compliance with the Accessibility Act and standards.

Key Actions	Lead Department
Establish an immediate focus on compliance with existing regulations related to accessibility.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)
Establish compliance and enforcement mechanisms, including appointing a Director of Compliance and Enforcement, and utilizing inspectors to monitor and enforce compliance with the Act and standards.	

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

We will establish and implement processes to evaluate and improve accessibility standards and initiatives.

Key Actions	Lead Department
Work with government departments and partners to develop implementation plans to demonstrate accountability and monitor progress toward this strategy's outcomes.	Justice (Accessibility Directorate)
Establish evaluation processes to measure the efficacy and impact of accessibility initiatives.	
Undertake a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the Act and the accessibility standards in 2021, and every 5 years.	



The Honourable Kevin Murphy, Speaker of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, is the first Speaker in the Commonwealth with a physical disability.

6. Government of Nova Scotia – Leading by Example

We will demonstrate leadership and become a model for accessibility by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility in Government of Nova Scotia programs, services, policies, and infrastructure.

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2018-2021)

Government will develop and implement multi-year accessibility plans beginning in 2018. The first **Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2018-2021)** has been developed. Some highlights of these commitments include the following:

Communications and Service Delivery

- Launch a new Government of Nova Scotia website that is focused on the users' needs and meets international accessibility standards.
- Develop new training resources for staff about accessibility and disability issues.
- Develop a government-wide accessible customer service policy to ensure service delivery is consistent across government.
- Promote accessibility in government procurement processes.
- Explore the possibility of establishing accessibility navigators to help persons with disabilities access information and services.



Government has committed to improving accessibility for persons with disabilities at provincial parks, beaches, campgrounds, and sportfishing sites.

Built Environment and Outdoor Spaces

- Conduct a review of spaces owned and leased by government to determine their accessibility issues and priorities, and develop an action plan to make them accessible by 2030.
- Incorporate clauses into new government leases for occupied spaces to ensure landlords meet the current Nova Scotia Building Code accessibility requirements.
- Improve the accessibility of Nova Scotia courts, including the Amherst Supreme Court, Digby Justice Centre, Halifax Law Courts, and Annapolis Royal Court House.
- Improve accessibility for persons with disabilities at provincial parks, beaches, campgrounds, and sportfishing sites. Provide barrier-free access to at least one provincial beach in every region by 2021.

Employment

- Ensure government training materials for hiring managers include information about recruiting and hiring persons with disabilities into Nova Scotia's public service

Supporting Businesses and Communities

- Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage will continue to provide funding for accessibility improvements to community organizations, municipalities, and businesses through the Community ACCESS-Ability and Business ACCESS-Ability grant programs.

Timelines

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
Built Environment Standards Development			Built Environment Standards Enacted	Built Environment Standards Implementation - NS Government*									
				Built Environment Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies*									
				Built Environment Standards Implementation - Other*									
Education Standards Development			Education Standards Enacted	Education Standards Implementation - NS Government									
				Education Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies									
				Education Standards Implementation - Other									
			Third Standards Development	Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government								
					Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies								
					Standards Implementation - Other								
			Fourth Standards Development	Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government								
					Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies								
					Standards Implementation - Other								
			Fifth Standards Development	Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government								
					Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies								
					Standards Implementation - Other								
			Sixth Standards Development	Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government								
					Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies								
					Standards Implementation - Other								
Awareness and Capacity Building													
Government of Nova Scotia Leadership - implement accessibility plans													
Collaboration and Support - public sector bodies, community organizations, private sector, and other stakeholders													
Compliance and Enforcement													
Monitoring and Evaluation			Legislated Review	Monitoring and Evaluation				Legislated Review	Monitoring and Evaluation				

*Implementation timelines will vary by standards area



For more information on accessibility in Nova Scotia, please
visit novascotia.ca/accessibility