

Minister's **ANNUAL REPORT**

on Accessibility

2022–2023



Minister's Annual Report on Accessibility 2022–2023

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Message from the Minister

Accessibility is a human right. Six years ago, Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act. This law makes clear our commitment to create an accessible province for persons with disabilities by 2030. Since the Accessibility Act came into being, we have reached a number of milestones on the path toward accessibility and inclusion. With this annual report, I am pleased to share progress made in 2022–2023.

Work is well underway to develop accessibility standards for five of six priority areas to identify, remove, and prevent barriers:

- Government continued to develop the accessibility standard for the built environment.
- The Accessibility Advisory Board submitted its recommendations for an accessibility standard for education.
- The Employment Standard Development Committee continued its work to develop recommendations.
- The Accessibility Advisory Board recruited members for the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee.
- The Accessibility Directorate started researching resources about accessible public transportation and transportation infrastructure, approved as the fifth accessibility standard area.

In 2022, we released Nova Scotia's second three-year accessibility plan. This plan shows government's growth in accessibility. The 2018–2021 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan had 23 commitments from eight departments. The 2022–2025

plan includes all departments, with six government-wide commitments. It has another 47 commitments overall.

We recognize the vital role of our partners working toward accessibility. These include municipalities and villages, and other prescribed public sector bodies. In 2022–2023, we continued to work with our partners and to support them to build capacity in their accessibility efforts. We launched an online resource hub, set up virtual gatherings, and developed the Accessibility Foundations training. We worked with the Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia to develop its Accessibility Support Program. We also provided funding to set up a disability partnership forum. This will help us strengthen our engagement with disability communities.

Collaboration is key to meeting our goal of an accessible Nova Scotia. Together we will create an equitable and inclusive province for persons with disabilities.

*Honourable Brad Johns
Minister responsible for the Accessibility Act*





Introduction: Toward an Accessible Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act in September 2017. The Act describes accessibility as a human right. It sets a goal of the province becoming accessible by the year 2030.

The Accessibility Directorate was set up within the Department of Justice in 2017. It addresses the concerns of persons with disabilities, oversees the Accessibility Act, and makes sure the Act is being carried out.

The Accessibility Advisory Board was set up in 2018. It offers advice and recommendations to the Minister of Justice about accessibility and how accessibility standards are developed. Most board members are persons with disabilities. They have expertise and experience in many areas of accessibility. They live in communities from across Nova Scotia. Some board members have experience with groups, businesses, and organizations that will need to follow the accessibility standards.

Access by Design 2030 is Nova Scotia's strategy to become an accessible province by the year 2030. This strategy was released to the public in September 2018. It sets six priority areas to identify, remove, and prevent barriers, and to make the province more inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Directorate Staff Positions as of March 2023



Accessibility Advisory Board Members as of March 2023

Rosalind Penfound (chair)
Max Chauvin (vice-chair)
Dr. Linda Campbell
Birgit Elssner
Denise DiGiosia
Ellen Johnson
Melissa MacKenzie
Lewis Pope
Marcie Shwery-Stanley
Anne Sinclair

We thank former board members Cynthia Bruce, David Caswell, and Andrew Jantzen, who left in 2022–2023, for their contributions.

Access by Design 2030 Priority Areas

1. Accessibility 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



Progress Made in 2022–2023

Access by Design 2030

Accessibility Standards Development

Through the Accessibility Act and Access by Design 2030, the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to developing accessibility standards. These standards will identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in

- built environment
- education
- employment
- delivery and receipt of goods and services
- public transportation and transportation infrastructure
- information and communication

Built Environment

In 2022–2023, government released the Accessibility Advisory Board's second phase of recommendations for an accessibility standard in the built environment to the public. A government interdepartmental working group, led by the Accessibility Directorate, finished reviewing the board's 134 recommendations. The recommendations are about identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to buildings and outdoor spaces, including the inside and outside of buildings, housing, wayfinding and signs, parks and recreation areas, and schools and public libraries.

The Accessibility Directorate worked on drafting the proposed accessibility standard with members of the interdepartmental working group. The working group included representatives from nine government departments and offices:

- the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
- the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- the Department of Health and Wellness
- the Department of Justice
- the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables
- the Department of Public Works
- the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care
- the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness

The Built Environment Standard Development Committee will remain a committee of the board until public engagement on the proposed standard is finished.

The committee's recommendations are on the [Built Environment Standard Development Committee section of the Accessibility Directorate website](#).

Education

In 2022, the Education Standard Development Committee led subcommittee meetings to review feedback about its draft recommendations. This feedback came from public consultations with over 900 Nova Scotians.

After preparing its final draft recommendations, the committee submitted them to the Accessibility Advisory Board. In January 2023, the board submitted the recommendations to the Minister of Justice. The recommendations are for

- the early years (pre-primary programs, licensed childcare facilities, family home childcare agencies, Early Childhood Development Intervention Services, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority)
- public and private schools from primary to grade 12
- universities and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)
- private career colleges and language schools
- the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning

The committee's recommendations are on the [Education Standard Development Committee section of the Accessibility Directorate website](#).

The Education Standard Development Committee held its last meeting in January 2023. Its work was evaluated and will serve as an example in the future work of other committees.

In February 2023, government released the Decision-Making Guidelines for Accessible Education to the public. These guidelines will help the public and private education sectors develop and review education policies, programs, and services, including accessibility plans. The guidelines were developed with recommendations from the Accessibility Advisory Board, and support the principles outlined in the Inclusive Education Policy and the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework. They are available in American Sign Language (ASL), French, and English.

Employment

The Employment Standard Development Committee met throughout 2022–2023. It discussed issues related to accessible and inclusive employment and started to draft recommendations. It set up seven subcommittees to discuss

- career planning and job search
- recruitment, hiring, and onboarding
- retention and advancement
- fair pay and total compensation
- workplace accommodations and employment support services
- processes to return to work
- disability confident employers

To develop its recommendations, the committee met with representatives from community, the employment sector, and government. It reviewed what has been done in other jurisdictions. It also consulted with persons with disabilities.

Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services

From November 2022 to February 2023, the Accessibility Advisory Board recruited members for the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee. The Accessibility Directorate helped by reaching out to prescribed public sector bodies (PPSBs), disability organizations, and key interested and affected groups, and by using social media and other advertising.

Prescribed public sector bodies (PPSBs) are organizations that, under the Accessibility Act, are required to develop accessibility plans and to have accessibility advisory committees.

These include municipalities and villages, universities and the Nova Scotia Community College, regional libraries, Nova Scotia Health, the IWK Health Centre, and government agencies such as the Nova Scotia Museum.

Forty-nine Nova Scotians applied to join the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee. In March 2023, the board confirmed and approved recommendations for committee members.

The Accessibility Directorate researched and reviewed resources for the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee to use. It hired consultants to ask Nova Scotians, including those from African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, and other communities, what barriers persons with disabilities face when accessing services.

Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

In December 2022, the Accessibility Advisory Board advised the Minister of Justice that the fifth standard to be developed, starting in 2023, should be public transportation and transportation infrastructure. The Accessibility Directorate began researching and reviewing resources about this topic for the committee to use in its work once it is set up.

Information and Communication

The Accessibility Advisory Board recommended to the Minister of Justice that the sixth standard to be developed, starting in 2024, should be information and communication.

Awareness and Capacity Building

Public Awareness Campaign

The Access Includes Everyone multimedia campaign was launched in April 2022. The Accessibility Directorate and Communications Nova Scotia worked together on this new campaign. The campaign's goals include increasing awareness about accessibility as a human right; challenging stigmas about disability; and identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility. It will work toward these goals by sharing inclusive and diverse representations of disability.

Capacity building is the process of developing an organization's strength and potential. This goes beyond carrying out tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.

Access Includes Everyone features Nova Scotians with disabilities in their everyday lives: at work with colleagues, playing video games with friends, and driving with family. It includes three video ads, related media, and the new accessible.novascotia.ca website.

The Accessibility Directorate created a toolkit to help campaign partners support and take part in the launch. In May 2022, it hosted a session to give partners an overview of the campaign and to show them how to use the toolkit.

The Access Includes Everyone campaign continues to expand. It now includes a [video profile of Kaylie Adamski](#), who has cerebral palsy and sometimes uses a walker. In this short video, Kaylie speaks about her experiences as a person with a disability. She notes common challenges and how an accessible world not only makes things easier but also more equal.

A province-wide photo shoot took place in fall and winter. Thousands of photos were taken of persons with disabilities from a variety of backgrounds and in different locations across Nova Scotia. These photos will support initiatives to build capacity and awareness and to better represent the diversity of Nova Scotians with disabilities.

Access Awareness Week

The Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO) and the Partnership for Access Awareness Nova Scotia (PAANS) committee hosted Access Awareness Week 2022. The Accessibility Directorate supports the committee, which includes members from various sectors.

The theme for 2022 was Reflection and Renewal – 35 Years of Access Awareness: The Promise of Progress. Activities included a scholarship luncheon, a virtual speakers panel on the intersections of disability, the Mel Hebb Hourglass Action Awards, and a flag-raising and proclamation ceremony attended by the Minister of Justice.

The Accessibility Directorate, in its role as a member of the PAANS committee, helped to create a toolkit for PPSBs and community groups. The toolkit has information and resources on how to support and take part in Access Awareness Week, including a sample municipal proclamation.

First Voice refers to the knowledge from any individual or group of people whose lived experience gives them expertise in that area.

The Accessibility Directorate led several Access Awareness Week sessions for government employees, including a virtual event about inclusive leadership and creating accessible meetings and events. It also set up a [First Voice panel conversation on disability in the workplace](#), which was hosted by the Deputy Minister of Justice.

Online Resources

The Accessibility Directorate started developing the online [Resource Hub](#) to increase awareness about accessibility and disability in Nova Scotia. The hub is available to the public on the new Accessibility in Nova Scotia website. It includes webinars, guides, and promotional materials and toolkits.

Meetings with Provincial and Community Organizations

In 2022–2023, the Accessibility Directorate met with many organizations to engage, connect, and collaborate, including

- Mawita'mk Society to work on building relationships with the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia
- the Maritime Association of Professional Sign Language Interpreters to learn about its work
- various disability organizations to research the increased impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on persons with disabilities and disability organizations

Collaboration and Support

Accessibility Directorate staff took part remotely in the first Pan-Canadian Forum on Accessibility Standards in October 2022. The event was hosted by Accessibility Standards Canada. It included senior leaders from all provincial and territorial governments working together to develop a shared understanding of standards, decide what research is needed, and continue to build relationships.

Throughout 2022–2023, the Accessibility Directorate continued to support PPSBs to meet their commitments to develop accessibility plans and accessibility advisory committees.

Training

The Accessibility Directorate created Accessibility Foundations, training for PPSBs that covers basic concepts about disability and accessibility.

In March 2023, the Accessibility Directorate held two workshops for PPSBs, one for frontline staff and the other for managers. Participants learned how to lead the Accessibility Foundations workshop for their own staff, accessibility advisory committees, and communities or organizations.

Virtual Gatherings

The Accessibility Directorate set up virtual gatherings for accessibility leads and other staff at PPSBs who are developing and carrying out accessibility plans. These gatherings served to help PPSBs learn from each other, share successes and challenges, work on how to resolve common issues, and connect with the right Accessibility Directorate staff for support and advice. Topics included

- celebrating accessibility successes and learnings of PPSBs
- updates on the built environment, education, employment, and goods and services standards and the Responsive Compliance and Enforcement Framework

- updates on the Post-Secondary Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and a monitoring and evaluation tool for the municipal sector
- updates on carrying out accessibility plans, building awareness and capacity, and how capacity building is key to making progress toward accessibility goals
- updates on the Access Includes Everyone campaign and Access Awareness Week 2023
- updates on the 2022–2025 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan

Support for Prescribed Public Sector Bodies in Education

The Accessibility Directorate provided support to the Regional Centres for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial to draft their joint accessibility plan and set up their joint accessibility advisory committee.

The NSCC led work to complete and launch the Post-Secondary Accessible Teaching and Learning Guide. The Accessibility Directorate provided funding and advice to develop this resource. Through text, videos, infographics, and downloads, the guide provides basic information about accessible teaching and learning for post-secondary staff, faculty, and students.

Mount Saint Vincent University led work to complete and launch the Post-Secondary Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The Accessibility Directorate provided funding and advice to develop and release this resource. It provided instructions to staff from universities and the NSCC for using the framework at their institutions and for starting discussions to set up the framework to monitor its progress and impact.

Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia

In March 2022, the Accessibility Directorate provided two years of funding and advice to develop the Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia (AMANS) Accessibility Support Program. The funding led to the hiring of an AMANS accessibility program support coordinator. The coordinator has

- completed the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program
- conducted an environmental scan and needs survey of municipalities and villages
- set up a steering committee
- developed an accessibility guide for the AMANS fall 2022 conference
- started developing the AMANS Municipal Accessibility Support Program website, including resources
- started a community of practice

A community of practice refers to a group of people with a common interest in a topic and who work together to share best practices.

Disability Partnership Forum

The Accessibility Directorate provided two years of funding to help create a disability partnership forum. The forum's work will build on the cooperation, collaboration, and communication between government and disability organizations in the Bill 59 Alliance. The Bill 59 Alliance helped to create the Accessibility Act.

The forum aims to

- help disability organizations increase their capacity
- identify creative and collaborative opportunities
- develop resources and contribute to policy directives by using what has been learned from successful and effective initiatives, projects, and ideas
- strengthen relationships between government and partner organizations

Additional Support

The Accessibility Directorate provided project management support to Nova Ramp Up, a collaboration between the John Howard Society of Nova Scotia; the Nova Scotia Department of Justice's Correctional Services division; and the Planning for Equity, Accessibility, and Community Health Research Unit at Dalhousie University. Nova Ramp Up provides customized ramps to eligible businesses. A Business ACCESS-Ability grant from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage funded the project.

Accessibility Directorate staff attended sector-specific conferences. They met with representatives of various organizations, including CNIB, the 2023 North American Indigenous Games Planning Committee, and Laing House, which supports young people living with mental illness.

Compliance and Enforcement

In May 2022, government approved the Responsive Compliance and Enforcement Framework and the plan to carry out the framework. The Accessibility Directorate posted the framework on its website in summer 2022. The Minister of Justice appointed a director of compliance in August 2022.

The Accessibility Directorate hired a vendor to research how to create and set up a digital database for reporting and tracking compliance and enforcement under the Accessibility Act.

Most sectors will need to follow the accessibility standards when they become law. This is called compliance.

There must be ways to make sure the Accessibility Act and accessibility standards are followed. This is called enforcement.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Quality of Life Index and Framework Development

In December 2022, the Accessibility Directorate provided funding to the NSLEO to develop the Quality of Life Index for People with Disabilities and to produce a baseline report. The NSLEO is developing the index through an advisory council. The council includes persons with disabilities, Mi'kmaw people, African Nova Scotians, those who are currently or recently incarcerated, legal experts, and members of community organizations.

Public Opinion Survey

In March 2023, the Accessibility Directorate took part in a public opinion telephone research survey. This was the fifth year in a row that it took part in this survey. The survey asked Nova Scotians about their awareness of disability and accessibility issues, their experiences with barriers to accessibility, and the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities.

According to the survey:

- 9 in 10 respondents knew that accessibility is a human right in Nova Scotia
- 3 in 4 said that accessibility is very important to them
- 6 in 10 knew that the province has a goal to be accessible by 2030
- 3 in 4 respondents with disabilities are comfortable telling others about their disability
- 1 in 3 respondents interact daily with someone who has a disability
- 96 per cent of respondents knew that disabilities can be both invisible and visible
- 86 per cent knew that barriers are more than access to buildings and public spaces

The most common barriers noted by respondents with disabilities included those in the built environment, employment, and communication; stigma and negative attitudes about disability; and lack of access to supports for daily living.

Accessibility Act Review

In October 2021, government appointed Dr. Katie Aubrecht to lead the first independent review of the Accessibility Act. From April 21 to September 16, 2022, Dr. Aubrecht's team consulted with persons with disabilities, organizations that serve them, and others affected by the Act. Almost 800 people took part in reviewing the Act and progress made toward making Nova Scotia accessible. Over 40 per cent identified as having a disability.

This public review will give government and Nova Scotians valuable feedback on what changes are needed to make sure the province is on the right path to becoming accessible by 2030. The reviewer will release a report in spring 2023.

Government of Nova Scotia – Leading by Example

The Nova Scotia government is the largest program and service provider in the province. As well, many Nova Scotians are employed by the provincial government.

To meet the goal of Nova Scotia becoming an accessible province, government must lead by example. Through the Accessibility Act and Access by Design 2030, all government departments have committed to be leaders in accessibility. In 2022–2023, government released its second accessibility plan and government departments launched initiatives to improve accessibility across the province.

Accessibility Plan

The [2022–2025 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan](#) was released in December 2022. The Accessibility Act requires the provincial government to have an accessibility plan and to update it every three years. The plan must outline specific actions to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in government policies, programs, and services. Government's second plan builds on the progress made in its first plan, which came to an end in December 2021. It shows what government will do over the next three years to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers for persons with disabilities.

The Accessibility Directorate worked with the Accessibility Interdepartmental Committee and an advisory subcommittee to develop the 2022–2025 plan. The Accessibility Interdepartmental Committee includes representatives from 26 government departments, offices, and agencies. The advisory subcommittee includes representatives from eight government departments. Half of its members are persons with disabilities.

The 2022–2025 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan includes eight priority areas that align with provincial accessibility standard areas. It has six government-wide commitments for all departments and agencies to support. All departments have made commitments that align with their mandates and priorities for equity, diversity, and inclusion. Forty-seven individual and joint commitments were made. The plan also includes guiding principles to carry it out across government in a consistent way.

Accessible Public Infrastructure

In 2022–2023, government continued to improve public infrastructure accessibility in several sectors.

The Department of Public Works continued to review existing government-owned buildings and spaces to identify accessibility issues and priorities. It will use this information to create a database that will track compliance with the Accessibility Act and note what buildings and spaces need retrofits.

The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage invested in projects to increase accessibility and inclusion at sites across the province.

- In New Glasgow, the department invested \$2 million for retrofitting the town library to become the New Glasgow Destination Centre, an accessible, inclusive community hub. The improvements will make the site more accessible to underserved communities in the area, including seniors and persons with disabilities.
- In Glace Bay, it invested \$6 million to create the Glace Bay Youth and Community Centre, a new community hub offering vulnerable families and youth a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive space to find services and supports.
- In Truro, it invested \$2.67 million toward major renovations and accessibility upgrades at the historic Truro Amateur Athletic Club grounds, including a barrier-free baseball field. The project will meet the 2030 Rick Hansen Foundation gold accessibility standards.
- In Yarmouth, it invested \$4 million to expand the Mariners Centre, including creating more accessible and inclusive sport and recreation spaces.
- It invested \$18.3 million for upgrades at 14 community rinks across Nova Scotia, including accessibility improvements at Antigonish and Eskasoni First Nation arenas.

The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables continued to make infrastructure improvements at camping and day-use provincial parks. Nova Scotia now has 29 provincial parks with accessible features. Improvements made in 2022–2023 include

- an all-gender, accessible washroom at Dollar Lake Provincial Park
- three accessible campsites at The Islands Provincial Park
- an accessible beach mat at Ellenwood Lake Provincial Park

The Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing invested an additional \$5.3 million for programs to help more Nova Scotians make the repairs and accessibility upgrades needed to continue living safely and comfortably in their own homes.

The Department of Community Services purchased two custom designs for modular homes that will help Nova Scotians with disabilities move into accessible, energy-efficient small option homes sooner. This is part of government's commitment to community living and to phasing out large institutions. Construction of the first five modular homes began in the summer of 2022 in the Annapolis Valley, the South Shore, Halifax, and Cape Breton.

Small option homes are community-based housing units where three to four persons with disabilities live independently with day-to-day support services from qualified staff.

Modular homes are built in sections called modules at a factory rather than at a building site.

Accessible Education

The Department of Advanced Education made changes to the provincial student loan program to help make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible for students and graduates in Nova Scotia. It also invested \$112 million to build new affordable and accessible campus housing at three NSCC campuses in Dartmouth and Stellarton.

Accessible Employment

Government continued its work to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.

The Accessibility Directorate set up a First Voice panel conversation, hosted by the Deputy Minister of Justice, about the experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace. A video of this conversation was broadcast during Public Service Week. It is available, including with ASL, on a [new public website about accessibility awareness](#).

In 2022–2023, the Public Service Commission

- partnered with the Department of Public Works and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to carry out employment systems review (ESR) pilot projects, then used the results to develop resources and tools for helping other departments with their ESRs
- made updates to the Employment Equity Policy and the Fair Hiring Policy

- added questions about accessibility to the 2022 *How's Work Going?* survey, which collects employee feedback about their workplace
- launched a voluntary self-identification tool to collect data on equity recruitment and retention and on employee demographics
- added 100 new employees from diverse designated groups, including persons with disabilities, to government's pool of participants for hiring panels

The Public Service Commission Learning Centre offered disability and accessibility modules to employees across government. Departments also set up their own training, including the accessibility module from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration's inclusive leadership training.

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration partnered with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion to develop a 40-hour program on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Fundamentals. By spring 2023, 40 business leaders had completed the training through the Workplace Education Initiative. In 2022–2023, two cohorts of employer engagement specialists and employment development specialists received the Certificate of Inclusive Leadership.

Accessible Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services

The Accessibility Directorate helped over 160 Nova Scotians, including persons with disabilities, with a wide range of queries. Topics included transportation, service animals, recreation, income assistance, human rights, housing, mental and physical health, goods and services, government's accessibility plan, updates on accessibility standards, funding, assistive devices, advocacy, and accessible communications and events.

Government released an updated emergency preparedness guide in spring 2022.

Are You Ready for an Emergency? Guide for Persons with Disabilities and Older Adults in Nova Scotia provides general information and specific tips. The guide is available on the Emergency Management Office website as a PDF in English and French and as a video with ASL.

The Department of Health and Wellness is creating a health equity framework. It is working with diverse groups of Nova Scotians to do this. As part of this work, the Department of Health and Wellness and health system partners launched an online survey. Communities that may have experienced racism and discrimination in the healthcare system, including persons with disabilities, were asked to share feedback. Core themes from this work were turned into a set of emerging action priorities. Survey findings and actions were then shared with the public. The Department of Health and Wellness will deliver the framework in summer 2023.

In October 2022, the Office of Addictions and Mental Health launched a confidential, toll-free telephone line (1-800-307-1686) offering peer support for Nova Scotians 18 years and older with mild mental health or substance use concerns. Callers can speak directly with someone who can relate to their experience and is there to listen.

The Department of Seniors and Long-term Care invested more than \$8.6 million for 12 innovative projects to support seniors in their homes and communities, including

- six demonstration projects for new models of home care in four areas of the province that include low-income seniors housing, in partnership with Housing Nova Scotia
- four adult day program demonstration projects with added support for clients with dementia and other more complex needs
- funding for the Red Cross Health Equipment Loan Program to buy more assistive devices
- funding for Caregivers Nova Scotia to engage unpaid caregivers to understand and assess support needs

The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage invested \$10.1 million to promote healthy living and inclusive and accessible programming, and to improve sport and recreation infrastructure:

- \$3 million for the Banook Canoe Club to make its infrastructure more accessible
- \$5 million for Sport Nova Scotia to provide accessible sports equipment and programs for athletes with disabilities, and to remove financial barriers for children and youth
- \$635,000 for the Springfield Lake Recreation Centre to upgrade its baseball field and to improve accessibility within the facility

In fall 2022, the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage helped Sport Nova Scotia launch the Parasport Loan Program. The program helps expand parasport programming to underserved communities across the province. It provides all parasport equipment needed, leadership training for staff and volunteers, and a six-week introductory guide to six parasports: para hockey, wheelchair basketball, goalball, boccia, wheelchair tennis, and wheelchair curling. It is free for community sport organizations, municipalities, and non-profit organizations involved in parasports.

Accessible Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

Government invested funding for transit service providers across Nova Scotia, including

- one-time grants totalling \$396,000 to support 20 community transportation providers that offer accessible door-to-door ride services and community-based transportation
- almost \$2 million to support 20 door-to-door community transportation services through the Community Transportation Assistance Program
- \$2.9 million for 7 municipal and community organizations that provide fixed route transit services to use for capital purchases, like new buses, through the Public Transit Assistance Program
- \$10.9 million for transit service providers throughout the province, including 20 community transit operators and 8 fixed route operators, to help make sure Nova Scotia communities have safe, accessible, and efficient public transit options

Accessible Information and Communication

In 2022–2023, Communications Nova Scotia helped to carry out and assess the Access Includes Everyone campaign. The campaign had 7,217,191 impressions served and 39,090 clicks to the campaign website.

- 14 per cent of Nova Scotians surveyed recalled seeing or hearing the campaign
- 85 per cent of those who recalled the campaign said it made them “aware that access includes everyone”
- 87 per cent of those who recalled the campaign said it made them “aware that everyone benefits when people with disabilities are included in all aspects of everyday life”

In media, an impression is the number of times content is displayed to users (such as readers or viewers). It measures how often the message is shared.

Communications Nova Scotia provided training for government staff on accessible design. This included how to use alt text, colours, symbols, and patterns in the most accessible way possible. The agency also delivered a session on accessibility in government communications to the Canadian Public Relations Society of Nova Scotia.

Business and Community ACCESS-Ability Programs

In 2022–2023, the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage continued to support businesses and communities work toward accessibility.

The Business ACCESS-Ability Program provided \$1 million in funding to help 47 projects, including Barra Shores, An Escape for Every Body. This new barrier-free recreation retreat on the Northumberland Shore includes a fully accessible cottage with accessible gravel trails, a barrier-free cement firepit patio, and mobility equipment such as a lift.

The Community ACCESS-Ability Program provided \$1 million in funding to help 58 projects. These included \$50,000 to the Centre for Equitable Library Access for an accessible communication and information project, \$41,500 for the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth for an accessible look-off at Forchu lighthouse, and \$38,000 for Acadia University to improve campus washroom accessibility.



Celebrating Progress

Collaboration is key to meeting the goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. Government recognizes the valuable contributions of organizations and communities around the province in 2022–2023, including the following highlights.

Peggy's Cove Rated Gold for Accessibility

The dramatic experience at Peggy's Cove is now more accessible to the over 700,000 people who visit the iconic site each year. In August 2022, Peggy's Cove became the first tourism destination in Atlantic Canada to achieve a gold rating in accessibility. This is the top score available under the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program. The new accessibility features were developed based on extensive community input. They include an accessible viewing deck; wayfinding throughout the village, pathway, and parking lot; enhanced accessible washrooms; and fishnet-inspired railings on the deck that allow clear views to the unique landscape for those with lower viewing perspectives. Tourism Nova Scotia and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency provided funding for the viewing platform.

Accessibility Built Into Bridgetown Street Beautification

A \$1.8-million makeover of Queen Street in Bridgetown has resulted in improved function, accessibility, and appearance. Funded by the provincial and municipal governments, the work included replacing sidewalks to meet accessibility needs. Six new streetlights were also added to improve visibility and safety. The project, which covered 172 metres from Granville Street to Centennial Drive, is a wonderful example of how communities can include accessibility in their beautification projects.

Mi'kmaq Honour Song Translated into Mi'kmaw Sign Language

The Honour Song Translation project is a collaboration between Deaf Mi'kmaw signers, Mi'kmaw Elders, and others to create a version of the Mi'kmaq Honour Song in Mi'kmaw sign language. It required going back and forth between four languages: spoken Mi'kmaw, spoken English, ASL, and Mi'kmaw signs. Deaf Mi'kmaw signers Holly Green and Sheila Johnson brought together their collective knowledge of old Mi'kmaw signs, Maritime sign language, and ASL to create the Mi'kmaw sign language lyrics. Several Elders provided Mi'kmaw language knowledge support. Holly also performed the sign language version of the Honour Song, originally composed by Mi'kmaw Elder George Paul, in a [video](#) created by the NSCC. The video screened at the 2022 Atlantic International Film Festival.

Legacy of the Mobility Cup

For over 15 years, the Northern Yacht Club in Sydney has run Sail Able, an adapted sailing program designed to introduce those with physical or intellectual disabilities to the sport of sailing. In summer 2022, the club hosted the Mobility Cup. This is a Canadian international regatta for sailors with disabilities, held in a different province each year. Infrastructure improvements made at the regatta for the Mobility Cup included a wider gangway to make the marina's two-dock system completely accessible, two new lifts for people who need help getting in and out of boats, and accessible showers. Thanks to community support and sponsorship, the club was also able to purchase two more adaptable sailboats. This legacy will help the club to continue to grow and develop its Sail Able Program.

Accessible On-Demand Taxi Service Now Available in Halifax

In the fall of 2022, Extra Care Taxi began offering the first accessible on-demand taxi service in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Customers can book trips for any time of day, seven days a week, by phone, on the Extra Care Taxi website, or through its app. The company operates nine accessible vehicles at standard taxi rates. As well as completing criminal background and vulnerable persons checks, all drivers take compassionate care training. Extra help is always available to customers, from support to get into a vehicle or to load a mobility device to having groceries carried to the door.

Canadian Blind Hockey Hosts Barrier-free Sports Camp for Kids

The 2022 Canadian Blind Hockey Summer Development Camp included a multi-sport camp for kids. Saint Mary's University hosted the multi-sport camp, which was free for blind children and youth ages 6 to 17. Participants did not need prior skating or hockey experience. Each day included an hour of skating and hockey in the morning, followed by one or two additional sports in the afternoon, such as beep baseball and kickball, tandem cycling, swimming, equestrian, rowing, and more. The event also included a showcase game between the Canadian National Blind Hockey Team and a team with Saint Mary's Huskies and former professional players.



Plans for 2023–2024

Work on the accessibility standards will continue in 2023–2024.

Government will release the proposed accessibility standard for the built environment to the public for review. The Minister of Justice will consider this feedback before work on the standard concludes.

The Accessibility Directorate will continue to review recommendations for the accessibility standard in education. It will work with staff from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; the Department of Advanced Education; and the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration to draft this standard.

By December 2023, the Employment Standard Development Committee will consult with the public on its draft recommendations. The committee will finalize them in early 2024. The Accessibility Advisory Board will provide feedback and final approval on the recommendations in 2024.

In 2023–2024, the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee will start its work. Recruitment for the Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure Standard Development Committee will begin. Research will begin on resources for the Information and Communication Standard Development Committee.

The first independent review of the Accessibility Act will be complete and shared with the public.

Many PPSBs from the second cohort are expected to deliver their first accessibility plans in spring 2023. The Accessibility Directorate will support them to meet their accessibility commitments under the Accessibility Act and to carry out their accessibility plans.

The Accessibility Directorate will continue with Accessibility Foundations training and to support trainers. It will host virtual gatherings focused on topics such as inclusive workplaces and accessible communications. It will develop new training on accessibility barriers and solutions. It will continue to expand the Access Includes Everyone awareness campaign.



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2022–2023

