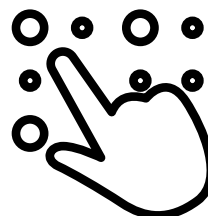
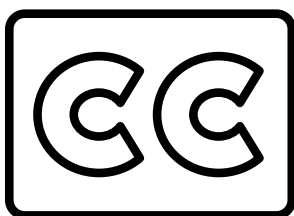
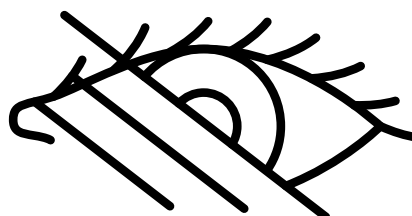
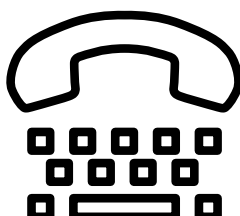
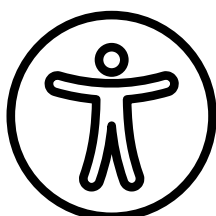
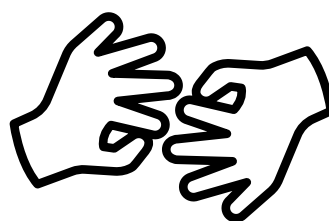


# Accessible East Hants



This plan has been designed and formatted to be more accessible to persons with disabilities.



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**Hearing Assistance Available**  
**Asistencia auditiva a su disposición**  
**Aide à l'audition**

This facility is equipped with a hearing assistance system. Please ask for a receiver.

Este establecimiento está equipado con un sistema de asistencia auditiva. Por favor solicite un receptor.

Cet établissement est équipé d'un système d'aide à l'audition. S.V.P. demandez un récepteur.



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# Welcome

In 2021, Council approved the first Accessibility Plan for the Municipality of East Hants. The Plan 'Accessible East Hants' outlined how the Municipality planned to meet the needs of those who face barriers to accessibility by identifying those barriers and setting out action items to remove them. Over the past four years, the Municipality has either completed and/or initiated work on the action items outlined in the 2021 Plan. The Plan has been amended to provide direction for the next three years from 2025 to 2028.

The Municipality has an Accessibility Advisory Committee which was created to guide the creation of the 2021 accessibility plan. A new Committee was formed in January 2025 with at least one half of the members of the Committee being persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities. This Committee reviewed the recent monitoring report card, which can be found in Appendix A of this Plan, and identified new action items to be included in the amended plan.

When preparing the original plan, public input was an important part that helped identify existing barriers in East Hants. In early 2025, we went back to the community when reviewing and updating the new plan. This is only the beginning in working towards an accessible East Hants. Community members are welcome to ask questions, voice concerns and make suggestions at any time with our Accessibility Coordinator. Updates to the plan will flow through the Committee to Council and a full update every three years will help the Municipality continue to address barriers to accessing municipal buildings, infrastructure and services.

To the Committee members who have helped create the Municipality's accessibility plan, Thank You.

Yours Sincerely

Councillor Walter Tingley  
Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee Municipality of East Hants







# Introduction

According to the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, Nova Scotia's disability rate is 37.9%, the highest disability rate in the country. The rate for Canada overall is 27%. That means the Nova Scotia rate is almost 11% higher than the national rate.

Among Nova Scotians with disabilities age 15 and older, 65.7% report a pain-related disability, followed by flexibility (44.1%), mobility (42.3%), and mental health related (41.0%) disabilities. Other reported types of disabilities include seeing (25.9%), hearing (24.4%), learning (22.5%), dexterity (20.5%), memory (17.0%), and developmental (4.7%). Respondents could report multiple types of disabilities.

## What is an Accessibility Plan?

[The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act](#) requires that municipalities create an Accessibility Plan. An Accessibility Plan provides details on:

- the progress made to date by the municipality to identify, remove and prevent barriers in its policies, programs, practices and services;
- action items to further identify, remove and prevent barriers in its policies, programs, practices and services;
- monitoring the successes of the Accessibility Plan.

For the purpose of this plan a 'Barrier' is anything that hinders a person with disabilities from participating in or accessing municipal buildings and public spaces, municipal information and communication, employment with the municipality, municipal services and public transportation.

This Accessibility Plan is an update to the original plan approved by Council in 2021. It will cover the years 2025 to 2028.

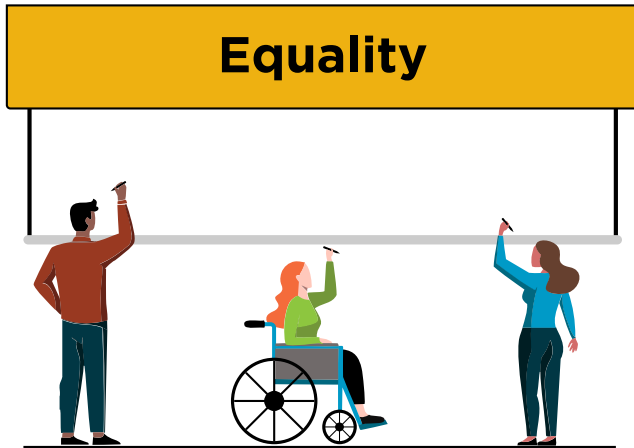
## Areas of Focus

We plan to improve accessibility in five areas.



## What We Believe

We believe in inclusion. At the Municipality of East Hants we want to provide equitable access, which means treating everybody fairly, based on their needs and abilities. This is different from equal access, which means treating everybody the same way, whatever abilities or needs they have.



We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face barriers to accessibility. We will do this by identifying, removing and preventing these barriers and by meeting the requirements of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act.

## Promoting Accessibility Awareness

- Promote the National AccessAbility Week (late May). This is an opportunity to promote inclusion and celebrate the contributions of Canadians with disabilities.
- Develop an Annual Accessibility Awareness Plan every year. The plan may include:
  - Organizing local events.
  - Highlighting external accessibility grants.
  - Finding local examples of the contributions of local residents with disabilities and the efforts of Canadians who are actively removing barriers.
  - Highlight how the Municipality is removing barriers.
  - Let the public know who to contact if they have questions or concerns about the accessibility of municipal buildings, infrastructure, or services.
  - Identify any 'areas of focus' for the year.









# Built Environment

## Our Commitment

To construct and maintain municipal infrastructure and buildings that meet the needs of the people and visitors in our community of all ages and abilities. We will also encourage citizens and the business community to make other public and private spaces accessible.

## Our Starting Point

### **Overview**

The Municipality of East Hants owns, leases and operates public facilities. The main municipal offices are located at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre which is shared with other tenants such as the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Nova Scotia Works and a branch of the Colchester East Hants Public Library.

The East Hants Aquatic Centre was completed in 2020 and provides a location for swimming classes, aquatic fitness, day camps, open swims and other recreational programming. The Municipality also has tourism properties where people from all over the world visit and enjoy the properties..

In addition to municipally-run properties there are other properties which are municipally owned but leased and run by community groups.

Other municipal infrastructure includes sidewalks, roads, parks, trails and street lights. The Municipality has buildings and properties which are related to providing public municipal infrastructure services such as water, wastewater, and solid waste management.

## **Progress**

- Lloyd E. Matheson Centre
  - Doors into the building have accessible power open function.
  - The Finance Department, which is our most visited area of the municipal side of the building, is on the ground floor.
- Parks
  - EZ Launch Dock system was installed in 2016 at Wickwire Station Park to help individuals launch and retrieve canoes and kayaks on the Shubenacadie River.
  - Fully accessible Surface Spinners installed at the Mount Uniacke Community Memorial Park and the Shubenacadie River Park.
  - Starting in 2018, all playground surfacing is certified accessible (wood fibre and rubber surfacing).
  - Starting in 2016, walkways are constructed with accessibility in mind. Using a surface of crusher dust or other material which gives a smooth finish and whenever possible, the selection of travel paths to meet recommended accessible grades.
  - New municipal trails are made with smooth materials like crusher dust, and whenever possible, travel paths are designed to meet accessibility guidelines.
  - A new municipal playground is planned for 2025 which will include accessible elements and rubber surfacing.
- Recreation
  - Opened doors in July 2020 to new Aquatic Centre with advanced accessibility features including:
    - Ramp entry into all three pool tanks.
    - Accessible change room with a ceiling-mounted lift and adjustable table.
    - Accessible door hardware and safety systems like panic buttons in washrooms to unlock doors.
    - Accessible outdoor splash pad attached to the Aquatic Centre
- Infrastructure
  - Since the year 2000, more than 19 kilometres of new sidewalks have been added to existing roads, and over 5 kilometers of sidewalks have been built on new roads for new developments.
  - Transportation standards were updated in 2020 to include accessible sidewalk features and increased the minimum sidewalk width to 1.8m.
  - Municipal staff met with CNIB to discuss sidewalk clearing standards.

- Visitor/Tourism Sites
  - Interpretive signage was designed at a height which allows for wheelchair access at Burntcoat Head Park.
  - Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre parking area is level and designated accessibility parking spots are provided.
  - There is a ramp into the Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre building.

## **Barriers**

- Parks
  - Costs for accessible products are charged a premium.
  - Recommended grades for walkways are hard to meet in some locations.
  - Finding products that are 'For Everyone'.
- Infrastructure
  - Asphalt sidewalks are subject to settlement and frost-heave, sometimes resulting in uneven surfaces.
- Visitor sites
  - No elevator or stair lift for the second floor of the Burntcoat Head Park Lighthouse. Second floor includes 'local history' information.
  - There is a steep grade from the parking area at Burntcoat Head Park to the lighthouse.
  - Access to the ocean floor at Burntcoat Head Park is not accessible.

## **Policies**

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Where appropriate, require accessible parking spaces in/ near public areas owned by the Municipality.
- Upgrade existing sidewalks to accessible standards where feasible and cost-effective.
- Consider accessibility when planning for new playgrounds or new playground equipment.

## **Action Items**

- Undertake an accessibility audit of the East Hants Aquatic Centre and consider whether to pursue the Rick Hanson Foundation Accessibility Certification.



- Create guidelines on how to set up a room or area for functions, meetings and events. These will consider the use and location of furniture, easels, banners, etc.
- Conduct an accessibility review of Council Chambers and determine how to arrange the public gallery so that people with disabilities, including those in wheelchairs and people with loss of sight, can easily enter and move around the room.
- Investigate access to the picnic facilities at Burntcoat Head Park for accessibility options.
- To support people with Crohn's and Colitis, investigate the GoHere Washroom Access app for municipal bathrooms.
- Investigate and identify barriers for persons with a sensory disability.
- Review existing municipal bathrooms to identify possible locations for change tables for people with disabilities.
- Review the number of existing accessible parking spaces at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre.

### **Annually Completed/Ongoing**

- Promote the Province's Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the East Hants business community.
- Promote the Province's Community ACCESS-Ability Program to local community groups.
- Promote marked crosswalks in high traffic areas to increase pedestrian safety.
- Consider auditory and visual pedestrian features at new municipal signalized intersections.
- Locate pedestrian buttons or light controls over areas which are accessible.

# Accessibility Audit

This subsection has been created to help breakdown the accessibility audit and then removal of physical barriers in more manageable steps and to provide a plan for how this work will be undertaken.

A number of the action items in the Built Environment section of the 2021 Accessibility Plan were for accessibility audits for many of the municipal buildings. This work was not completed in the 2021 to 2025 time period. In 2024 Council committed \$30,000 to be used in combination to cover the cost of internal staff and/or an external contractor to complete this work on several municipal buildings. This work is crucial to identifying where physical barriers for people with disabilities exist. The completion of the audits will enable Council to identify where work is needed to remove identified barriers.

The Aquatic Centre audit is not included here because it is focused on deciding whether to pursue the Rick Hanson Foundation Accessibility Certification.

## Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Respond to the needs of people impacted by sight loss by considering the guidelines of the CNIB Clearing Our Path resources in the Accessibility Audits.
- Review access to buildings from parking lots as part of the Accessibility Audits.

## Actions Items

### Timeline of April 2025 to March 2026

- Undertake an accessibility audit of the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre.
  - Identify barriers to people with disabilities.
  - Review the ramps from the parking lot to the building.
  - Include a review of the accessible parking spaces
  - Identify work needed to remove barriers.
  - Identify cost of completing the work.
  - Identify what work can feasibly be carried out. Some work may not be financially realistic.
- Undertake an accessibility audit of the East Hants Sportsplex.
  - Identify barriers to people with disabilities.
  - Include a review of the accessible parking spaces.
  - Identify work needed to remove barriers.
  - Identify cost of completing the work.
  - Identify what work can feasibly be carried out. Some work may not be financially realistic.





## **Timeline of April 2026 to March 2028**

- Complete the work to remove specific identified barriers at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre.
  - Create workplan to complete the work.
  - Request approval of budget to complete the work.
  - Complete the work.
- Complete the work to remove specific identified barriers at the East Hants Sportsplex.
  - Create workplan to complete the work.
  - Request approval of budget to complete the work.
  - Complete the work.
- Undertake an accessibility audit of the Waste Management Centre.
  - Identify barriers to people with disabilities for the public and the staff sides of the property.
  - Identify work needed to remove barriers.
  - Identify cost of completing the work.
  - Identify what work can feasibly be carried out. Some work may not be financially realistic.
- Undertake an accessibility audit of the Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre and Burntcoat Head Park.
  - Identify barriers to people with disabilities for both the public side of the property and the staff side of the property.
  - Investigate access to the picnic facilities at Burntcoat Head Park for accessibility options.
  - Identify work needed to remove barriers.
  - Identify cost of completing the work.
  - Identify what work can feasibly be carried out. Some work may not be financially realistic.



# Employment

## Our Commitment

The Municipality of East Hants commits to supporting people with disabilities in finding meaningful employment and to making our employment practices and workplaces accessible for new and current employees of all ages and abilities.

## Our Starting Point

### **Overview**

As of March 2025, the Municipality of East Hants employs 95 permanent employees. The main worksite for most permanent employees is the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre in Elmsdale, NS. Other worksites include the East Hants Waste Management Centre in Georgefield, NS, and various water and wastewater facilities throughout the municipality. Permanent employees are also located at the Aquatic Centre and the East Hants Sportsplex.

The Municipality employs approximately 117 employees in casual positions which includes 68 at the Aquatic Centre and 24 at the Sportsplex. In 2024, approximately 22 seasonal or student employees were employed in the summer months in tourism, parks, recreation, and as summer labour. The Municipal Council of East Hants consists of a Warden and 10 other Councillors who represent each of the Municipality's 11 districts. The Council is the governing and legislative body for the municipality. The Council may appoint members of the public to serve on Committees or task forces.

### **Progress**

- Council Chambers has a microphone system allowing for use of earbuds for councillors with hearing impairment.
- Council Chambers is on the main floor of the municipal office and allows barrier-free access to Council meetings.
- Job advertisements include a statement detailing how to request an accommodation to assist in the application process.
- The interview scheduling process includes notifying candidates that an accommodation for interviews can be requested.

- Recruitment process includes standardized questions and a scoring process to remove bias.
- Onboarding process for new employees includes an overview of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and how to request an accommodation in the workplace.
- Council Chambers Online internal system allows for online and electronic access to all documents, reports, minutes, and Council activities. Users can review documents at one's own pace and exploring assistive technology is an option.
- Records Management project has been completed which moves from paper based processes to online or electronic documentation. This allows work to be shared electronically more easily. Users can review documents at one's own pace and exploring assistive technology is an option.
- Accommodation requests from prospective or current employees to-date have been managed on an individualized basis.
- Municipal sites have a Scent-Free Policy to support employees with environmental sensitivities.
- Emergency evacuation procedures for safe exit of the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre include sound and flashing light fire alarms.
- A municipal employee has completed the program requirements and is a qualified assessor with the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program.
- A centralized Accommodation fund has been established.
- Employee engagement surveys contain questions regarding accessibility.

## **Barriers**

- A number of municipally-owned sites are not barrier free.
- Municipal processes, systems, communications, and documents generally have not taken accessibility considerations into account and historical documents and processes may not be easily adaptable to assistive technology such as screen readers.
- Managers and staff are not trained in recognizing barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Traditional print and online recruitment methods are generally used, which may not reach or be accessible to all qualified candidates.

## Policies

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Offer accommodation during the recruitment process as requested.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all ages and abilities.
- Ensure accessibility and inclusion is considered when reviewing and developing programs or processes related to employment.
- Educate staff and build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion in our workplace.

## Action Items

- Develop an Accommodation Policy.
- Require managers and supervisors to take the Human Rights Commission training – Working with Abilities. Encourage all other staff to take the training. This action item is for existing and any new future staff.
- Provide training to Managers and staff to recognize barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Review the recruitment and selection process for barriers.
- Review the Municipality's performance management program and career development opportunities for areas where barriers may exist.
- Investigate strategies for non- traditional recruitment methods that may reach a wider and more diverse audience.

## **Annually Completed/Ongoing**

- Build relationships with community groups that work with or support people with disabilities for discussion around barriers to employment.
- Workplace emergency response plans shall consider physical barriers.





# Information and Communications

## Our Commitment

The Municipality of East Hants is committed to providing information and communication that is accessible to all. Plain, clear language is essential to providing the best service to our audiences.

## Our Starting Point

### **Overview**

The Municipality delivers information to the public in many ways, including:

- In-person at various municipal properties and includes meetings, customer service delivery, digital displays, etc.
- Digitally via email, website, social media, and videos.
- Telephone.
- Print via newsletters, letters, and where appropriate newspaper advertisements.

### **Progress**

- The easthants.ca website has been updated and now complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0 Level A) standard.
- Several municipal staff have been trained on the creation of accessible documents and plain language writing.
- Awareness building training opportunities have been available for staff to gain an understanding on the different types of disabilities.
- Council Chambers – There are hearing assistance devices for public use in our Council Chambers. A sign notifies the public that devices are available. They include ear buds and a neckloop for use with hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Council Chambers – For councillors, our microphone system allows use of earbuds for councillors with hearing loss.
- East Hants has upgraded computer users to Microsoft Windows 11 and MS Office 2024 which includes many accessibility features.
- Council Chambers is on the main floor of the municipal office and allows barrier-free access to Council meetings.



- An adjustable height podium to accommodate presenters who are seated or standing has been installed in Council Chambers and is accessible during meetings.
- Council meetings are live streamed to enhance access for people with disabilities to participate in or view discussions.
- An app is currently being updated to include information on accessible playgrounds and parks.

## **Barriers**

- Forms and templates developed by the municipality need to be re-formatted so that they are readable by screen readers. The size and colours of the documents also need to be considered so that they take into consideration other visual impairments.
- Some material produced by staff is not plain language and at a level for the average reader.
- Many people may not be aware of barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

## **Policies**

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Upon request, provide electronic documents in an accessible format based on the user's specific needs.
- Give priority to barrier-free locations for municipal events and meetings.
- Documents and web/digital content will be prepared using plain English for clarity and readability and will be written at a level no higher than Grade 8.
- Train staff to communicate with people of all ages and abilities.
- Continue to provide services online so that residents can access services virtually

## **Action Items**

- Review and modify as needed forms used internally and externally and assess level of accessibility.
- Produce a style guide to assist staff in writing using plain language and at a Grade 8 reading level.
- Create accessible documents templates for municipal documents which



will include but is not limited to letters and reports.

- Provide more services online so that residents with mobility issues can access services virtually.
- Turn forms into accessible documents.
- Complete a wayfinding signage review which will include signage in municipal parks.
- Undertake a plain language review of the signage at the East Hants Aquatic Centre.
- Investigate improving existing grant programs or establishing a new grant program to enable community meeting spaces and/ or comfort centres to enhance accessibility.
- Where appropriate, provide information on the municipal website of other parks and trails which are accessible but are owned by other organizations.
- Create a communication plan for how to reach people with a disability:
  - During an emergency; and
  - To encourage emergency preparation.
- Review and identify barriers to the public in attending, participating or following Council and Committee meetings.
- Create guidelines and provide training to municipal staff on holding accessible public meetings or events. The guidelines shall consider the location of the meeting, set-up of room, technology needs, communications before and at the meeting, any needed accommodations for those attending, etc.
- Review options for making American Sign Language (ASL) available where needed at community meetings, events, etc.

### **Annually Completed/Ongoing**

- Staff to be trained on the creation of accessible documents and plain language training as needed.
- Provide staff with resources on the staff intranet and provide accessibility awareness training.
- Provide more services online so that residents with mobility issues can access services virtually.
- Create and maintain a Resource Hub on the municipal website for people with disabilities. The Resource Hub will include information on non-municipal programs and resources that are available, for example information on the CNIB programs.







# Services

## Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equitable access to services delivered by the Municipality of East Hants. This includes ensuring there are policies, procedures and tools to promote the accessible delivery of services.

## Our Starting Point

### Overview

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

- The Municipality now owns and operates the East Hants Sportsplex which is a location for recreation programs and recreation facilities.
- Customer service counters at the Lloyd E Matheson Centre, the East Hants Aquatic Centre and the East Hants Sportsplex.
- Maintaining parks, trails and open spaces, including playgrounds and Visitor Information Centres.
- Recreation programming for youth;
- Aquatic programming.
- Targeted senior programming.
- Providing grants and other administrative support to local community groups.
- Swim programming adapted to different individuals' needs or abilities;
- Maintaining sidewalks, including winter maintenance to approved service standards (see Built Environment section).

### Progress

- One of the Municipal Building Inspectors has been trained and is qualified through the Rick Hanson Accessibility Foundation.
- Finance
  - Most forms of payment are accepted, including mail and online banking, which offers flexibility and options for those unable to come to the office physically.

- Recreation Services
  - Opened doors to newly built aquatic centre with high accessibility standards in July 2020.
  - District Recreation Fund grant that has allowed for groups to upgrade their accessibility standards.
  - Community Grant Program has section under recreation programming to support persons with disabilities attending sporting event.
  - The Adaptive Recreation Equipment Loan Program is a partnership with other municipalities in the Fundy region. This is a resource for families of children and youth who have a physical disability and/or individuals who would benefit from its use. This equipment will provide opportunities to borrow a variety of equipment to experience new leisure pursuits.
  - Special Olympics swimming program provided by the community at Milford Pool and has started at the East Hants Aquatic Centre.
  - Online recreation and aquatic centre program registration system.
  - An inclusion framework has been developed to help create a diverse and inclusive environment for recreation programs and services.
  - Recreation staff have been trained and hired to deliver programming to persons with disabilities which includes swim classes and day camps.

## **Barriers**

- Recreation Services
  - Given the size of the Aquatic Centre and staffing numbers, we are able to provide a select total number of swimming lessons, including inclusive lessons.

## **Policies**

The Municipality of East Hants will deliver all goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability.

## **Action Items**

### **Annually Completed/Ongoing**

- Where applicable, include an Accessibility Lens/Impact Analysis in reports to Council.





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Making Learning Accessible



# Transportation

## Our Commitment

We will work towards providing or supporting accessible transportation options for people of all ages and abilities in East Hants.

## Our Starting Point

### **Overview**

The Municipality of East Hants does not have a publicly funded transit service but has been exploring options for providing a fixed route service for residents of the corridor area of the municipality.

The Municipality began investigating the feasibility of providing a transit service with the preparation of a Corridor Feasibility Study which was prepared in 2012. Following on from the feasibility study, in 2015, a Transit Services Business Plan was prepared.

This document identified options on how the Municipality could provide a fixed route transit service for residents. More recently the current Business Plan for a fixed route services was updated and reviewed by Council in 2024.

The East Hants & Area Community Rider is a non-profit charitable service of which the Municipality is a partner of the program. Community Rider offers dial-a-ride transportation services to residents throughout the community and provides a door-to-door service. Community Rider has been providing transportation services to residents of East Hants since 2006. The organization currently operates five vehicles, three of which are wheelchair accessible.

## **Progress**

- The community has access to the East Hants & Area Community Rider which the Municipality partners with and provides some of the funding. Community Rider provides a valuable service for persons with disabilities and also the wider community.
- The Municipality has begun exploring options for an East Hants Transit Service.

## **Barriers**

- Without a fixed route transit service, people without a vehicle or who may not be able to drive a vehicle do not have access to predictable transportation options.

## **Policies**

The Municipality of East Hants will:

- Consider the needs of persons with disabilities if a new transit service in East Hants is pursued. This will include accessible design considerations for any future transit stops.
- Continue to support the East Hants & Area Community Rider as it provides a valuable service to residents of all abilities throughout the community.

## **Action Items**

- Continue to support the East Hants & Area Community Rider so that persons of all abilities have access to transportation throughout the municipality.







# Implementing the Plan

## Responsibilities

- Council is responsible for adopting and overseeing the Accessibility Plan.
- The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for receiving and responding to public concerns, complaints and suggestions.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for giving feedback and recommendations to Council.

## Schedule or timeline

The Municipality will complete the action items identified in this Plan by 2028. If between 2025 and 2028 all the action items have not been completed they can be considered for the next version of the Accessibility Plan.

We encourage members of the public and organizations representing people with disabilities to continue to help us identify barriers.

## Monitoring

- Within 12 months of adoption of this amended Accessibility Plan procedures will be developed to assess the impact of the action items on accessibility for people with disabilities.
- The East Hants Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACAC) will prepare a Monitoring Report for Council each year. This report will measure the performance of the policies and actions in this plan. The Committee may also make recommendations to improve the plan.
- The Monitoring Report will be a public document. It will be posted on the municipal website.



## Evaluating

The Municipality will lead a review and evaluation of the Accessibility Plan every three years.

## Compliments, Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, pose a question, or express a concern about accessibility in the municipality. These should be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, the Coordinator will consult with the staff person responsible for the area of inquiry. The Coordinator's response will contain the reasons for the decision.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response from the Accessibility Coordinator. Council may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them, and will provide summary updates to the Advisory Committee. These updates will become part of the Advisory Committee's continual review of the Accessibility Plan, and may inform future changes.



# Glossary of Terms

**Accommodation:** for the purpose of this Accessibility Plan, “accommodation” and “reasonable accommodation” are used interchangeably. The fundamental nature of the duty to accommodate imposes a positive duty on employers to provide employees or job applicants with an opportunity to perform the essential duties of the job. It is an individualized process which, to the point of undue hardship, involves the removal or alleviation of barriers that prevent an otherwise capable individual from participating equally in the workplace because of a disability as defined by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Accommodation does not have to be perfect but it does have to be reasonable.

**Barrier:** something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act 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 communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice”

**Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program:** is a grant program offered by the Nova Scotia Government to enable businesses to apply for a cost-shared grant to make accessibility-related improvements.

**Community ACCESS-Ability Program:** is a grant program offered by the Nova Scotia Government to enable community groups to apply for cost-shared grants for accessibility related capital improvements.

**Disability:** a condition that makes it harder for a person to participate. The condition may always interfere, or only sometimes. Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act defines disability as “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.”



**Municipal Government Act:** provincial legislation that gives the broad authority to municipalities to govern in whatever ways the councils consider appropriate within the jurisdiction given to them by the Government of Nova Scotia.

**Neckloop:** is a loop of wire worn around the neck to enable listeners with telecoil-equipped hearing aids and cochlear implants to hear without the general room background noise.

**Plain language:** language a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.

**Recreation Programming:** recreation programs and opportunities that typically require registration fees, have set times, occur at predetermined locations, and expect a certain level of commitment by the participant (e.g. swimming lessons, day camp, instructor-led activities, etc.)

**Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification:** is a national rating system that measures and certifies the level of meaningful access of buildings and sites.

**Screen Reader:** is a form of assistive technology for persons with a visual impairment that renders text and image content as speech or braille output.

**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0:** is an internationally accepted web accessibility standard developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (WC3), an international team of experts. WCAG sets guidelines to make their websites more accessible.

# Community Engagement

Community engagement was an essential component in developing and updating the Accessibility Plan. The community experiences and uses municipal buildings, infrastructure and services. They are therefore in a position to identify what does and doesn't work for persons with disabilities.

## 2021 Accessibility Plan

During the development of the 2021 Accessibility Plan staff at the Municipality sought comments from the public, by asking them to help identify accessibility barriers they have noticed or experienced.

An open house was held at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre on November 5, 2019 from 3pm to 7pm. Efforts were made to reach out to as many people as possible, letting them know about the open house and inviting them to attend. The Accessibility Advisory Committee helped identify community groups and organizations representing people with disabilities and information regarding the Open Houses were sent to these groups. Around 40 people or groups were directly sent an invite and information was provided in our community development newsletter.

Posters were printed and displayed in various locations throughout the municipality inviting people to attend the open house. The Open House was also promoted on municipal social media accounts.

At the open house, community maps were printed for Mount Uniacke, Enfield, Elmsdale, Lantz, Milford, Shubenacadie and a large map printed of the whole of the municipality and people were invited to add comments directly on the maps. Paper copies of the survey were also available for people to complete. In addition to the drop-in open house, a table was set up at the East Hants Sportsplex beginning in January 2020 for two weeks. Maps and surveys were provided with an invite to provide feedback and comments.

In total, 47 people responded to the survey and these comments, along with comments provided on the maps, fed into the preparation of the 2021 Accessibility Plan. The public and community groups, some of which are organizations representing people with disabilities were invited to provide comments on the draft plan.

## 2025 Accessibility Plan Update

Building on the comments and input received for the 2021 plan, a survey was created to see if the public had any new comments regarding barriers in East Hants. The survey was available to complete on the municipal website. Social media was used to promote the survey. If a person was unable to complete the survey online, a telephone number to a person at the Municipality was provided and they could complete the survey for the person calling. The Accessibility Advisory Committee also requested that the survey be available as a paper version so that those people who weren't able to use the internet could still have the opportunity to complete the survey.

53 people completed the survey. All of the comments that were received were reviewed by the Accessibility Coordinator and were presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The comments received can be summarized as follows:

- The comments received that were relevant to the Plan update were discussed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Coordinator. These comments helped highlight where there are barriers that have not yet been identified in the Accessibility Plan. Where appropriate, these comments assisted in creating additional Action Items for the updated plan. An example of which was regarding emergency management procedures being a communication barrier. Examples of these comments include:
  - emergency management procedures is a communication barrier;
  - wayfinding signage in municipal parks are a communication barrier; and
  - ramps into the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre are a built environment barrier.
- There were comments received through the survey which have not resulted in new action items and these can be broken out into the following 3 categories.
- Many were comments that were already covered by Action Items in the plan. An example is specific comments were received relating to barriers identified in municipal buildings or properties and these will be reviewed during the audits planned for many of our buildings (e.g. barrier free entrances and washrooms);



- There were some comments which were outside the scope of the accessibility plan. An example of this type of comment was that there was a need for more bike lanes. Comments that fall within this category have been provided to the relevant municipal departments;
- There were some comments relating to properties located in the Municipality of East Hants but were not properties that are owned or maintained by the Municipality, for example, private property, businesses, etc. The Accessibility of private properties and businesses for example is outside the scope of the Accessibility Plan. An ongoing action item in the plan however is the promotion of the provincial grants available to community groups and businesses.

A discussion with the CNIB in January 2025 has led to some additional Action Items in the Plan.

The Corridor Community Options for Adults (CCOA), supports adults considered to live with intellectual disabilities through programming and social enterprises. This local organization reviewed the draft plan and provided feedback to the municipality.

# Appendix A

## Accessibility Report Card



## Draft - Report Card - Accessibility Plan

Covering progress up to March 2025



Means - has been completed



Means - in progress



Means - not started












Means - ongoing

### Built Environment









<b><i>Action item</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>	<b><i>Fiscal Year to be started</i></b>	<b><i>notes - issues/challenges</i></b>
Undertake an accessibility audit of the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre and East Hants Aquatic Centre		2024/25	Council has committed \$30,000 to complete the Accessibility Audit of the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre, East Hants Sportsplex and the Aquatic Centre.
Undertake an accessibility audit of the East Hants Aquatic Centre and consider whether to pursue the Rick Hanson Foundation Accessibility Certification		2024/25	This is currently being undertaken.








Undertake and prioritize an accessibility audit of municipal tourism properties - Burntcoat Head Park and Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre		Not yet planned	Challenges with staff resources has impacted this action item. This is a lower priority than audits on other properties.
Undertake an Accessibility Audit of the Waste Management Centre		Not yet planned	Challenges with staff resources has impacted this action item.
Continue to build accessible playgrounds and walkways		No defined date/ongoing	Installed 3 playgrounds with accessible surfacing in 2023 and a fully accessible spinner at Shubenacadie.
Locate pedestrian buttons or light controls over areas which are accessible		No defined date/ongoing	
Identify where doorways could be widened and automatic power door buttons or sliding doors could be provided at the public access for municipal buildings and municipal public washrooms		2024/25	Concerns raised from users of the LEMC regarding public washrooms. Plans to add automatic door openers. Accessibility audit will identify other doorways which need addressing.
Consider auditory and visual pedestrian features at signalized intersections.		No defined date/ongoing	
Investigate access to the picnic facilities at Burntcoat Head Park for accessibility options.		Not yet planned	Accessibility will be a challenge at Burntcoat due to the topography, should complete the Accessibility Audit first.
Consider adding accessible parking requirement to the Land Use Bylaw where it is not required under the Building Code		2022/23	This was added to the amendments to Land Use Bylaw which was approved in 2023.
Consider accessibility when preparing a Municipal Housing Strategy		2024/25	Report presented to Housing Working Group regarding Accessibility and Housing.

Review accessible parking provision at Burntcoat Head Park and Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre	✓	2021/22	Accessible Parking signs added at the FTIC and Burntcoat.
Investigate how to identify quick bathroom access points	✗	Not yet planned	
Investigate and identify barriers for persons with a sensory disability	✗	Not yet planned	
Fully accessible playground in 10 years	✗	2024/25	Plans for a playground with accessible elements and surfacing to be constructed in 2025.
Undertake an accessibility audit on municipally owned buildings that are leased by community groups	✗	Identified as 'Other Priorities' in Plan	
Promote the Province's Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the East Hants business community	↻	No defined date/ongoing	On going promotion as part of business support service and marketing efforts.
Promote the Province's Community Access-Ability Program to local community groups.	↻	No defined date/ongoing	
Promote marked crosswalks in high traffic areas to increase pedestrian safety.	↻	Identified as 'Other Priorities' in Plan	




## Employment









<b>Action item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Fiscal Year to be started</b>	<b>notes - issues/challenges</b>
Conduct a formal review of municipality owned facilities with respect to barriers to employment		2023/24	Should fall in line with the accessibility audits of various facilities.
Develop an Accommodation Policy		2022/23	Research completed, policy in development for 2025.
Establish a centralized Accommodation fund		2022/23	Created in 2023 in HR General, and is standard part of budget go-forward.
Provide training for Managers on accommodation and supporting candidates or employees who request accommodation		2023/24	Under review
Employee Engagement Survey will contain questions around Accessibility		2022/23	Second survey was completed in November 2024, built on to accessibility questions from Survey 2022 and added additional questions around EDI.
Provide training for all staff on inclusiveness and diversity		2022/23	Respect in the Workplace rolled out 2024, will occur for new staff and all every 2 years. Overview of accessibility February 2023 (Lisa Snyder). EDI Committee reviewing options on Unconscious Bias.
Develop an understanding of assistive technologies for the workplace		2022/23	On-going learning. Have signed a contract with a translation service for ASL as needed. Connected with AMANS specialists for support.
Build relationships with community groups that work with or support people with disabilities for discussion around barriers to employment		No defined date/ongoing	On-going; doesn't have end date. Currently working with CCOA on joint strategies.



Review workplace emergency response plans with respect to physical barriers.		No defined date/ongoing	On-going - added as lens in part of annual review.
Review recruitment and selection process for barriers		2022/23	All job postings include an accessibility contact for support. Job Descriptions being moved into an accessible template.
Review performance management and career progression processes for barriers		2023/24	
Investigate strategies for non-traditional forms of recruitment		2023/24	Work underway, job descriptions being updated to accessible template
Research implementing a Voluntary Self-Identification Questionnaire		2023/24	Being reviewed as part of the work being done on the NS Dismantling Racism and Hate Act.

#### Information and Communications

<b><i>Action item</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>	<b><i>Fiscal Year to be started</i></b>	<b><i>notes - issues/challenges</i></b>
Ensure the new easthants.ca website is in compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level A		2022/23	New website launched in January 2024.
Inventory forms used internally and externally and assess level of accessibility		Not yet planned	large undertaking - creating accessible documents training has been provided.
Staff will be trained on the creation of accessible documents and plain language writing		2022/23	Training undertaken in February 2023 on content and word. Further training may be identified pending resources.

Continue to provide staff with resources on the staff intranet and provide accessibility awareness training		2023/24	Some accessibility awareness training has been provided. Plan should be created to provide new staff an introduction to accessibility awareness.
Produce a style guide to assist staff in writing using plain language and at Grade 8 reading level		2023/24	A style guide has been started as part of the brand manual update. It will incorporate some accessibility aspects.
Provide more services online so that residents with mobility issues can access services virtually		No defined date/ongoing	
Wayfinding signage review		Not yet planned	
Turn forms into accessible documents		Not yet planned	This is waiting the completion of the brand standards manual update.
Investigate improving existing grant programs or establishing a new grant program to enable community meeting spaces and/ or comfort centres to enhance accessibility		2022/23	Diversity and inclusion policy passed which outlines a need for policy review with respect to inclusion. Not yet reviewed grant program.
Provide information on the municipal website of municipal buildings, trails and parks which are accessible. For example, the EZLaunch Dock at the Wickwire Station Park.		2022/23	Currently being worked on. Plan to be completed before Spring 2025.
Where appropriate, provide information on the municipal website of other parks and trails which are accessible but are owned by other organizations.		Not yet planned	May be added to 'outdoor fun map'

## Services

<b><i>Action item</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>	<b><i>Fiscal Year to be started</i></b>	<b><i>notes - issues/challenges</i></b>
In process of developing an inclusion framework that reduces the barriers for individuals with disabilities to participate in recreation and leisure programs in East Hants	✓	2021/22	approved by council in March 2022
Train and hire staff who are responsible for delivering programming to persons with disabilities.	✓	2021/22	One Recreation Inclusion Staff was hired in 2022. In 2023, all Summer Recreation staff were trained to provide inclusion programming.
Where appropriate, include an accessibility lens/impact analysis in reports to Council	✗	Identified as 'Other Priorities' in Plan	



## Transportation

<b><i>Action item</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>	<b><i>Fiscal Year to be started</i></b>	<b><i>notes - issues/challenges</i></b>
Review the current business plan for a fixed route transit service within the corridor area of the municipality	✓	2022/23	Update to business plan has been reviewed by Council.
Continue to support the East Hants & Area Community Rider so that persons of all abilities have access to transportation throughout the municipality	↻	No defined date/ongoing	Grant increase in 2022 from \$15,000 to \$50,000

## Updates since November 2023

### Built Environment

- In 2024 Council committed \$30,000 to be used in combination to cover the cost of internal staff and/or an external contractor to complete this work on several municipal buildings. The process of auditing the buildings has begun with the Aquatic Centre first.
- East Hants Sportsplex is under municipal ownership and this building will be included in the accessibility audits.
- Concerns were raised from users of the LEMC regarding the doors on the public washrooms. Plans to replace with automatic door openers.
- Report has presented to Municipal Housing Working Group regarding Accessibility and Housing.
- Plans are being developed for an accessible playground in the municipality - to be constructed in 2025.

### Employment

- Research on an accommodation policy has been completed. The policy is in development for 2025.

- Second Employment Engagement Survey was completed in November 2024- this built on to accessibility questions from previous survey.
- Respect in workplace training was rolled out in 2024. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee are reviewing options on Unconscious Bias.
- All job postings include an accessibility contact for support. Job descriptions are being moved into an accessible template.
- A voluntary self-identification questionnaire is being reviewed.

#### Information and Communications

- New website launched in January 2024 - in compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level A.
- Mapping application being worked on to provide the public with information on what parks, trails, etc. have accessible elements - plan for this to be completed by Spring 2025.

#### Transportation

- Update to business plan for a fixed route transit service has been reviewed by Council.

#### Promoting Accessibility Awareness

- The national AccessAbility week was recognized in May 2024 which included an event at the East Hants Sportsplex, social media promotion on the public facing side but also on the staff workplace site.