

## **Public Sector Partnerships Expand Accessibility**

Justice

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Government is committed to improving accessibility and creating communities that are welcoming and supportive.

That's why changes are being made to require Nova Scotia municipalities, post-secondary institutions and other public sector bodies to address barriers and improve access for people with disabilities.

Beginning April 1, 2020, municipalities, villages, universities, the Nova Scotia Community College and provincial libraries will be designated as public sector bodies under the Accessibility Act. This will require them to establish accessibility advisory committees and prepare and implement plans on how they will meet accessibility standards once they are developed. Additional organizations will be designated beginning April 1, 2021. These include Regional Centres for Education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK Health Centre.

Resources are available, including a planning guide and templates. These tools were informed by a provincial-municipal accessibility working group, and work undertaken by the Town of Wolfville, which was selected as a demonstration site to pilot the development of a municipal accessibility plan. Working with public sector partners is part of the province's plan to be accessible by 2030.

"Collaboration is vital to achieving an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030," said Mark Furey, Attorney General and Minister of Justice. "These requirements formalize and build on work that is already happening within our communities, universities and other establishments and make clear the obligation to move forward, which is critical to ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are realized and that every Nova Scotian can participate in our society.

Quotes:

Nova Scotia's municipalities are committed to doing their part to advance accessibility throughout the province. Training workshops held earlier this fall for staff and elected officials allowed us to better understand what's required and to share with one another the great work that is already happening in this regard across our municipalities.

Pam Mood, president, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities and mayor of Yarmouth

Many regional libraries have services in place right now that are changing the lives of those living with disabilities. We are pleased to work with the Government of Nova Scotia and our respective municipalities to continue this momentum.

Eric Stackhouse, CEO, Pictou Antigonish Regional Library

Accessible post-secondary education allows everyone the opportunity to learn and find meaningful employment. It is because the right supports and resources were in place that I was able to earn my degree and secure a job here at Dalhousie University more than 20 years ago. Expanding these supports will mean fewer barriers and even more opportunities for others living with disabilities.

Michelle Mahoney, person living with a disability

Quick Facts:

public sectors bodies have one year to prepare plans and establish committees

designated entities may collaborate in the development of joint plans and committees. Plans must be updated every three years

government's accessibility plan outlines actions to ensure accessibility is considered in the development and delivery of government policies, programs and services, and within its workplace