



ACCESSIBLE Yarmouth

**Town of Yarmouth
Accessibility Action Plan**

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



Thank you to the dedicated members of our Accessibility Advisory Committee and Town of Yarmouth staff members who spent many hours developing this action plan.

Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee are:

Appointed Elected Official Members

Councillor Derek Lesser
Councillor Gil Dares

Appointed Members At Large

Steve Nicholl (Chair)	Laurie d'Entremont
Jane Walker (Vice Chair)	Tania Boudreau
Sherrie Graham (Secretary)	Peter Hansen
Tracy Holmes-Carbonell	

Ex Officio Members

Mayor Pam Mood
CAO Jeff Gushue
Accessibility Co-Ordinator Natalie Smith

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1.0 Introduction

This Accessibility Action Plan was developed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) of the Town of Yarmouth.

The AAC provided advice to the municipal council of the Town of Yarmouth on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers experienced by people with disabilities. This included identifying barriers to municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee also worked closely with town staff on the development and oversight of this plan.

Message From Our Chair

Our province has the highest rate of people with disabilities in Canada. 30% of people in Nova Scotia live with some form of disability that include mobility, visual, hearing, learning, and more. The plan you are about to read looked at every kind of disability. To improve accessibility for the Town of Yarmouth, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) explored many different experiences and a wide range of accessibility issues.

This is the first Accessibility Action Plan for the Town of Yarmouth. It was directed by people with accessibility issues and people who work with others who have accessibility issues. The goal was to identify all barriers that make it difficult to access Town of Yarmouth services, information, employment, public buildings and spaces, and transportation.

Accessibility is a human right. Denying or making access difficult means we deny the rights of that person. The key to achieving accessibility goals is awareness and capacity building that support the rights of persons who face barriers to participation. As Chair of the AAC, I believe this action plan is a great first step toward achieving these goals and building an “Accessible Yarmouth”.

Thank you to those who spoke up about accessibility issues in Yarmouth. Thank you to the committee, who has worked hard to put this plan together.

Stephen Nicholl

Chair of the Town of Yarmouth Accessibility Committee

“This legislation will create a province where individual differences are celebrated and valued and where all persons can participate fully in their communities”

- Gerry Post, provincial accessibility advocate and Inaugural President of the Accessibility Directorate of Nova Scotia

2.0 What We Believe

The Town of Yarmouth works to ensure its programs, services, and facilities are barrier-free and show leadership by supporting the goal of becoming an accessible province by 2030 under the Accessibility Act of 2017.

3.0 Areas Of Focus

The Province of Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act (2017) requires public sector organizations to have an Accessibility Advisory Committee to develop an accessibility plan. The plan must be updated every three years.

The plan must include the following:

- Achievements to date in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in policies, programs, practices, and services.
- How we will identify, remove, and prevent barriers in policies, programs, practices, and services.
- How we will measure the effect of our work to improve accessibility.
- Removal of barriers over time.

In this plan we have identified commitments to improving accessibility within five (5) areas of focus. These priority areas include:

- Goods and Services
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Built Environment
- Transportation

3.1 Good and Services

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Town of Yarmouth. This includes ensuring there are policies, procedures, and tools in place to promote accessibility in customer service.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The following are some of the many services that the Town of Yarmouth delivers to the public:

- Meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees
- Providing customer service at Town Hall, Public Works, RCMP Town Detachment and Fire Hall
- Communication to the public (see Information and Communication Section)
- Developing and Maintaining facilities such as parks, trails, sports fields, and open spaces, playgrounds, a marina, and the Lake Milo boat club
- Providing grants and other administrative support to local community groups
- Maintaining streets, sidewalks, and active transportation trails, including winter maintenance (see Built Environment Section)
- Providing water and sewer services
- Providing emergency services, such as police, fire, and regional emergency management
- Providing and maintaining public parking lots and on-street parking
- Issue tenders and request for proposals to procure goods and services

Achievements

- Two of the municipal staff, the Junior Building Official and Building Inspector, have been trained through the Rick Hansen

Accessibility Foundation.

- Customer service counters in Town Hall are at a height that is wheelchair accessible.
- Most forms of payment are accepted, including mail and online banking, which offers flexibility and options for those unable to come to Town Hall physically.
- Permits and applications are available in paper form as well as accessible online for processing by email for those who are unable to come to Town Hall physically.
- Recreational staff takes regular training for peoples with special needs (recurring training, summer staff training).
- The Yarmouth Fire Hall has been renovated to meet current accessibility standards (2020).

Barriers

- The Town's website does not fully meet the accessibility international standards (WCAG 2.0 AA) – (See Information and Communications Section).
- Staff are not equipped with information on services related to accessibility and disability.
- Not all staff are trained to provide accessible customer service delivery.

Policy

The Town of Yarmouth will deliver all goods and services without bias. No person shall be denied a service because of a disability.

Actions

Top Priorities

- Develop and implement a town-wide Accessible Customer Service Policy reflecting the policy under development by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.
- Establish a training plan for accessible customer service training to staff.
- Provide to customer service staff information on services related to accessibility and disability.
- Embed inclusion and accessibility into digital service design and

- ensure an inclusive and accessible by design approach.
- Provide opportunity for community input/consultation to improve access to services.

Other Priorities

- Where applicable, include an “Accessibility Lens”/Impact Analysis in reports to council and in consultant reports delivered to staff and council.



3.2 Information and Communications

Our Commitment

The Town of Yarmouth will endeavour to provide information and communications that are clear and accessible for people of all abilities.

Our Starting Point

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

- Meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees, which are open to the public
- Email, the town's website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, "Bang the Table" engagement platform (Get Involved Yarmouth), community notifications app "Alertable", and live-streaming council and committee meetings and videos
- Sandwich board, and signage boards to promote events and special town meetings
- Public awareness campaigns
- Print via mail-out inserts, letters, posters, newspaper advertisements and monthly articles
- Radio advertising of key events and public notices around traffic detours, water disruptions, transit delays, and other service matters

Achievements

- All agendas and minutes are accessible for screen readers except for some attachments that staff provide.
- Most page content on the town's website is accessible for screen readers.
- Agendas and minutes of all meetings are posted on the town website.
- Council meetings are live streamed to enhance access for people with disabilities to participate in, or view Council meeting discussions. After the meeting, people can listen to, or watch an archived copy on the Town's website.
- Meeting videos are posted on YouTube, which allows users to access closed captioning. Instructions for using closed captioning in the Chrome web browser in real-time during streamed meetings are also provided on the town's website.
- The town has upgraded all users to Microsoft Office 365 which includes many accessibility features.
- Council Chambers is on the main floor of the municipal office and allows barrier-free access to council meetings.
- The town implemented a community notification/alert mobile app to inform the public on service changes, road works, town meetings and other events. It also allows for receiving notifications via SMS and email.

- “Plain language” is consistently used for written communications, media releases, and advertisements.

Barriers

- There is currently no assistive equipment or interpretation available for hearing-impaired individuals to participate in public meetings, including meeting of Town Council and Advisory Committees. Video of meetings is available afterwards with closed captioning.
- While much of the content is accessible, the town website needs to be improved to be in line with the international standards (WCAG 2.0 AA).
- Forms and templates developed by the town need to be re-formatted so that they are not creating barriers to accessibility.
- Some material produced by staff is not plain language and at a level for the average reader.
- Staff are generally not trained to promote inclusion in communications.
- The Municipal Government Act sets limitations for certain public notices to be published in newspapers that may not be accessible to people with accessibility barriers.
- Streaming video and related technologies do not always work as intended.

Policies

The Town of Yarmouth will:

- Ensure the town’s digital presence (e.g. website and social media) and Information Communication Technology systems used to deliver and receive information are designed for people of a wide range of abilities.

Actions

Priorities

- Complete a review of communications policies, procedures, and practices to improve accessibility and ensure they are not creating barriers to accessibility with guidance from policies and guidelines developed by Communications Nova Scotia.

- Update the town's website to be in line with accessible international standards (WCAG 2.0 AA).
- Conduct a review of industry standards for Information Communication Technology (ICT) services, policies, practices, and procedures and leverage this information to strengthen the design, development and implementation of new ICT services, products, and systems to promote accessibility.
- Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.
- Review and ensure town brochures, pamphlets, forms, documents, and other web assets that were produced separate from the web assets that are used internally and externally are made accessible.
- Provide information on the town website of town buildings, trails, and parks which are accessible.

Other priorities

- Conduct a wayfinding signage review and develop action plan as appropriate.



3.3 Employment

Our Commitment

We will remove barriers to employment for people who seek a career with the Town of Yarmouth. Our workforce will reflect our diverse population. We will make our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees.

Our Starting Point

As of March 2021, the Town of Yarmouth employs 72 permanent employees. While the Town of Yarmouth administrative offices are located at 400 Main Street in Yarmouth, other worksites located throughout the town and some areas of the county include: the Public Works Building, Fire Hall, Compost Facility, Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants, and our Parks and Marina Facilities.

The Town can employ up to approximately 15 employees in casual positions in a year. These casual positions are generally seasonal, or students employed in summer months.

There are 7 elected representatives on Town Council, including the Mayor. Elected representatives must be Canadian citizens, at least 18 years old, and live in the community. The Council may appoint members of the public to serve on committees or task forces.

Achievements

- Members of staff who are able to work remotely from the office receive a portable computer with access to work documents, and office systems in order to carry out the business and services of the town. Computer users can use accessibility features to enhance accessibility.
- Members of Council receive a portable computer for reading agendas and Town documents. This makes reading more accessible because users can enlarge text, use screen readers,

and change the font size.

- Council Chambers is on the main floor of the municipal office and allows barrier-free access to Council meetings.
- The Council table is generally wheelchair accessible.
- The Public Works facility is wheelchair accessible.
- Town Hall is wheelchair accessible.
- The second floor at the Fire Hall is wheelchair accessible.
- Council Chambers Online internal system allows for online electronic access to all documents, reports, minutes, and Council activities. Users can review documents at one's own pace.
- Two municipal employees have completed the Rick Hansen program requirements.
- The town has upgraded all users to Microsoft Office 365 which includes many accessibility features.

Barriers

- Some 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 be accessible to all qualified candidates.

Policies

The Town of Yarmouth will:

- 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.

Actions

Top Priorities

- Provide information and training in the area of Diversity and inclusionary Planning to the Human Resource Coordinator.

- Review recruitment and training materials for hiring managers and provide training specific to the recruitment, selection and hiring of persons with disabilities.
- Provide training for all staff and council on inclusiveness and diversity.
- Review workplace emergency response plan with respect to physical barriers.
- Develop an Accommodation Policy based on the Employment Standards, Policy and Plans in development with the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.
- Build relationships with community groups that work with or support people with disabilities for discussion around barriers to employment.

Other priorities

- Survey the municipal workforce to get a baseline data on the abilities of employees.
- Share opportunities for accessibility training with residents and local businesses – online or in person with Town of Yarmouth staff training.
- Investigate strategies for non-traditional recruitment methods that may reach a wider and more diverse audience.



3.4 Built Environment

Our Commitment

We will ensure that town-owned, leased, and operated municipal buildings, offices, and public spaces are accessible.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town of Yarmouth owns, leases, and operates public facilities such as Town Hall, Frost Park, many sidewalks, parking areas, and a wide variety of other buildings, parks, and infrastructure (basic structures and systems that help the town run smoothly).

Achievements

- Audit of Town Hall, Killams Marina building and grounds have been completed (see Appendices “B” for Audit Report Summary).
- The customer service counters in Town Hall are at a height that is wheelchair accessible.
- The newly renovated Fire Hall Auxiliary Meeting Room and events space is accessible.
- New sidewalk infrastructure projects completed in 2017 and 2021 with the Main Street streetscape bumpouts included accessibility into the design elements.
- New active transportation trails completed in 2019 to 2021 are designed to accommodate those with mobility aids.
- New sidewalk projects have installed tactile walking surface indicators at crossing intersections.
- Beacon Park & Yarmouth South Playground have accessible swings.
- New accessible washrooms were installed with a recent Lake Milo Boat Club renovation.
- Citizen feedback on Clements Avenue multi-use trail: trail is excellent and causes no issues – more are needed like that.

Barriers

- Disabled person using a wheelchair has issues with sidewalks/ cobblestones, potholes, cracks, that are very dangerous and uncomfortable.
- Some sidewalk transitions are rough or spaces between sidewalk tiles are broken.
- Some sidewalk easements are steep, especially if there is a hill involved.
- Not all crosswalks, curbs, and intersections are user friendly for the visually impaired.
- Lake Milo Boat Club event facility not accessible to the second floor.
- Lake Milo Boat Club swimming area and boat launch are not fully accessible.
- Some public trails (Broad Brook Wetland Park, Hartlin Trail portion at southern end, and Multi-use Rail trail) have gravel paths and are not wheelchair friendly.
- Trails have no adaptations for visually impaired persons.
- Frost Park is not accessible from Main Street.
- Entrances are hard to maneuver from a wheelchair in Town Hall.
- Not all staff are trained with knowledge and tools to work with people with disabilities.
- Some accessible parking spots do not provide appropriate area to disembark from vehicle or curb-cuts to directly access sidewalks.
- Street lighting/markings on sidewalk - different approaches to review (too dark, too light)
- Parks and playgrounds lighting/markings at night requires review.

Policies

The Town of Yarmouth will:

- Within 6 Months of acceptance of the plan, staff will advise council on a timeline, budget, and process for addressing priority items.
- Provide basic access for people of all abilities to public buildings, public washrooms, and at public parks.
- Ensure sidewalks and curb cuts within the downtown core

area are improved and maintained, as soon as possible, to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment, and provincial regulations.

- Provide accessible parking locations, and associated curb cuts, spread throughout the Core Area.
- Provide crosswalks and curb-cuts in areas where there are many pedestrians, such as near schools and parks.

Actions

Top Priorities

- Complete an audit of existing occupied spaces to determine accessibility issues and priorities and develop an action plan to achieve accessibility in these premises by 2030.
- Commit a portion of the town's annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in town-owned public buildings and spaces.
- Ensure all pedestrian buttons or light controls, such as those at intersections or pedestrian controlled crosswalks, are located over a flat area.
- Ensure that street furniture, sandwich boards and sidewalk planters are placed away from the path of travel and set back from curb cuts and sidewalks so that people can move freely.



- Put auditory, visual, and tactile markers that are the width of the curb-cut, painted yellow, at busy intersections where people cross the road – for example, within the core area and near schools and parks.
- Review Sidewalk Café and Street Disturbance Permits document to ensure it meets built environment accessibility standards.

Other Priorities

- Promote the province's Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce and to the Town's Business Community.

3.5 Transportation

Our Commitment

We will work towards ensuring universal access to public transportation for all people of a wide range of abilities in the Town of Yarmouth.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town of Yarmouth has a publicly funded transit service with one bus operating daily, providing a fixed route accessible service within town limits operating six days a week. The service was launched in 2016.

The Town's transit service also provides an option for people to flag the bus along the route in most areas where it is deemed safe to get on and off the bus. The transit bus is wheelchair accessible.

Achievements

- Two town-owned transit buses in operation are accessible (low-floor kneeling and electric ramp).
- Transit bus stops are located in high traffic locations as well as stops that provide community essential services such as: hospital,

shopping mall, grocery stores, community college, high-school, downtown business district and some seniors homes.

- Buses feature priority seating.
- An accessible bus shelter installed in downtown location in 2021.

Barriers

- Buses do not provide for front, side, and rear mounted electronic destination signs; audible exterior bus route identifier annunciation; and interior “next stop” annunciation.
- At bus stop locations, no transit information is available and in alternate formats.
- At bus stop locations, no shelter or seating available, with exception to new bus shelter on Main Street at Alma Square (2021).
- Some bus stops are not directly connected the pedestrian network.
- Some bus stops are not located at a paved road shoulder allowing pedestrians safe passage to subdivision streets, bicycle paths and other facilities as available.

Policies

The Town of Yarmouth will:

- Ensure the transit service will provide universal access to meet the needs of people of all abilities.



Actions

Top Priorities

- Conduct a review and audit of bus stops against the Canadian Standards Association (CSAA) Standard B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment and develop an action plan as appropriate.
- Install on buses, electronic destination signs; audible exterior bus route identifier annunciation; and interior “next stop” annunciation.
- Conduct a review of current training content and practices addressing accessible customer service, and disabilities awareness and develop training plan as appropriate.
- Provide transit information in accessible format(s).
- Increase the number of accessible bus shelters.
- Provide for public access a real-time trip planning tool to help riders plan trips and meet existing transit schedules.

4.0 Implementing the Plan

4.1 Responsibilities

- Council is responsible for adopting and overseeing the Accessibility Action Plan.
- The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan, reporting to Council, and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for working with all staff to ensure continual work towards meeting all plan goals, receiving, and responding to public concerns, complaints, and suggestions.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for participating in tri-annual updates of the plan and making recommendations to Council.

4.2 Schedule or Timeline

Within 6 Months of acceptance of the plan, staff will advise council on a timeline, budget, and process for addressing priority items.

4.3 Monitoring

- The Town of Yarmouth Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) 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 town's website.

4.4 Evaluating

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

4.5 Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, post a question, or express a concern about accessibility in the Town. 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 CAO and staff person responsible for the area of inquiry.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response. 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 on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the advisory committee's continual review of the Accessibility Action Plan and may inform future changes.

4.6 Promoting Accessibility Awareness

Promoting awareness throughout the municipality about the importance of accessibility.

- Promote National Accessibility Week (late May).
- Plan a local event to highlight local examples of Accessibility.
- Develop and Annual Accessibility Awareness Plan every year. The Plan may include:
 - Organizing local events.
 - Highlighting external accessibility grants.
 - Identifying local examples of the contributions of local residents with disabilities and the efforts of Canadians who are actively removing barriers.
 - Highlight how the town is removing barriers.
 - Identify who the public can contact if they have questions or concerns regarding accessibility of municipal buildings, infrastructure, or services.
 - Identify any 'areas of focus' for the year.



5.0 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”

Barrier-free: means that a building and its facilities can be approached, entered, and used by persons with physical and sensory disabilities. - *National Building Code of Canada 2015 Volume 1*

Built Environment means the human-made space in which people live, work, learn and play and includes buildings, rights-of-way, and outdoor spaces.

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.

6.0 Reference Documents

The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities – Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate December 2019

Access by Design 2030 – Department of Justice September 2018

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018-2021

Recommendations to the Government of Nova Scotia on Accessibility Standards in the Built Environment Phase 1 – October 26, 2020

Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces – Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate April 2020

Wolfville Access by Design – An Accessibility Plan for 2019-2022

East Hants Accessibility Plan

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Town of Yarmouth Community Consultation Final Report

7.2 2021 Town Buildings and Public Spaces Audit Summary Report