

Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Employment

Plain Language Summary

*Submitted to the Minister of Justice
by the Accessibility Advisory Board*

July 2024

This is a summary of recommendations developed by the Employment Standard Development Committee and submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Board in April 2024.

The Accessibility Advisory Board reviewed, made amendments, and approved the recommendations for submission to the Minister of Justice.

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In April 2024 the Employment Standard Development Committee gave recommendations to the Accessibility Advisory Board.

The Board looked at the recommendations. They made some changes. They sent the recommendations to the Minister of Justice.

The Minister will use the recommendations to make the Accessibility Standard for Employment.

Introduction

Nova Scotia has an Accessibility Act. It says Nova Scotia should be an accessible province.

The Minister of Justice makes accessibility standards. These are rules for making places and activities accessible.

The Minister works with the Accessibility Advisory Board. They are accessibility experts. They tell the Minister what they think should be put in the standards.

The Act says employment should be accessible. People with disabilities have the right to work. They should be able to find jobs. The places they work should be accessible.

The Accessibility Advisory Board made a new committee. It is called the Employment Standard Development Committee. The Committee asked people what should be in the standard. They talked to these different groups.

- People with disabilities
- Government groups
- Employers
- Workers

The Committee made recommendations. These are ideas about things that should be in the standard. These ideas will help make sure employment is inclusive. Everyone will be accepted in the workplace. Barriers will be removed. People with disabilities will be able to work.

The ideas are about the following things.

- Making accessible workplaces
- Removing barriers for people with disabilities
- Helping people with disabilities come back to work

There are ideas for employers. There are ideas for the government. Some are for new rules. Others are ways to make things better.

The committee thinks the new standard should be brought in over time. They think that some rules should be made right away. Some should be made later. There should be some different rules for small employers.

This is a summary of what the Committee said.

Section 1: Employers

These are the ideas for employers. They can make workplaces more accessible.

Emergencies

It is important to be ready for emergencies. Everyone needs to be kept safe. If there is an emergency at work, people need to get out safely. This includes people with disabilities.

Employers need good emergency plans. Plans must follow the points below.

- Plans must include people with disabilities.
- Employers must talk to people with disabilities when they make the plan.
- Plans must be up to date.
- If a person with disabilities starts work, the plan must be changed to include them.
- Plans must say how people with disabilities can get out safely.
- Plans must say how people with disabilities can find shelter.
- Plans must be accessible. They should be in different formats, like Braille and Plain Language.

Hiring

There are many steps to take when an employer hires people. Here are some of those steps.

- Advertise the jobs
- Take the applications
- Interview people
- Decide who to hire
- Bring people into the workplace
- Teach them how to do their job

This section has ideas to make these steps accessible. This will make sure workplaces include all kinds of people. It will make sure people with disabilities are treated fairly when they look for work.

- Information about jobs should be accessible. It should be in different formats, like audio, video and plain language.
- Employers should tell everyone that they want to be accessible.
- Employers should put out information about how they are making the workplace accessible.

- Employers should help people with disabilities apply for jobs if they need it.
- Jobs should be posted online. This will make them more accessible.
- Employers should look at different ways to decide who to hire.
- Tests and interviews should be accessible to all people.

For every job, employers say what people have to be able to do. These are called qualifications. Some of these things are harder for people with disabilities. This can make it harder for them to get these jobs.

Some of these things are not important. They are things that can be done another way. They are things that can be done by another worker.

The employer should only state the things the job really needs. It should not include things that are not important.

For example, some jobs say the worker has to have a driver's license. This can make it harder for some people with disabilities. Only people whose job is to be a driver really need a license. Most workers do not. They can find other ways to get around. Job ads should not say they need a license if it is not needed for their job.

Removing barriers

This section has ideas to make workplaces accessible. These come from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. They make sure employers make their spaces accessible. They make sure that workers with disabilities get the help and support they need.

Every workplace needs rules for support and help for people with disabilities. Employers need to talk to them about what they need. They need to include people with disabilities when they decide how to make workplaces accessible.

Keeping employees at work

This section is about keeping people at work. It is also about helping people during their career. It includes training them and helping them take on bigger jobs.

- Employers should teach everyone about inclusion and accessibility. This is important for people who hire workers. It is important for people who supervise workers.
- Training plans should include what people with disabilities need.
- Programs to help people learn new things need to be accessible. This includes programs to teach people new jobs.
- Employers and leaders need to make sure workplaces are accessible. This is part of their job. It should be part of their work plans.

- People should get help to fill out forms if they need it.
- When a person with disabilities leaves a job, employers should talk to them. They should find out why they are leaving. They should ask if there were problems with accessibility or support.

Coming back to work

Sometimes workers need time off. This could be because they are sick. It could be because they have a disability. Employers need to help when they come back to work.

Employers need clear rules for this. They need plans and policies for the following areas.

- How people return to work
- How to help people start their job again
- How a person can change their job if they need to
- How to make personal plans with each worker

This will make it easier for people to return to work. It will make employees feel better if they need to take time off.

Section 2: Government

These are ideas for the Government.

The Government can help employers. They can give them the following support.

- Plans and documents
- Resources
- Money
- Advice

These will help employers follow the rules.

The Government can do things differently. Government should do the following.

- Bring together programs that help people with disabilities at work.
- Give more support to people with disabilities at work.
- Help people with disabilities during their whole career.
- Make sure everyone is paid fairly.
- Think about disability when they make new rules and programs.

The most important ideas for the Government are as follows.

- Help employers feel good about including people with disabilities.
- Help young people with disabilities who are starting to work.
- Make accessible programs to help people find work.
- Make accessible programs to teach people how to manage money.
- Support people with disabilities when they change jobs or leave jobs.
- Teach employers how to support people with disabilities.
- Teach support workers to help people with disabilities at work.