

# Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Goods and Services

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

**May 2025**

The enclosed recommendations were developed by the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee and submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Board in March 2025.

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

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# Introduction

## Introduction to the Standard Recommendations for Accessible Goods and Services

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act underscores the province's commitment to ensuring that all residents can fully participate in public life by removing barriers to accessibility. As part of this vision, the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee (SDC) was tasked with creating actionable recommendations that support inclusive and barrier-free access to goods and services across public and private sectors.

This document outlines the standard recommendations for accessible goods and services, designed to address physical, digital, and systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. These recommendations emphasize proactive measures, effective communication, and comprehensive training to ensure accessibility is embedded within service delivery practices.

The recommendations span a wide range of key areas to create a comprehensive framework for accessibility. Highlights include:

- **Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery:** Ensuring timely and accessible communication about service disruptions and available alternatives.
- **Service Delivery Feedback Processes:** Establishing robust mechanisms for collecting and addressing feedback on accessibility.
- **Service Delivery Communications:** Promoting accessible communication practices for all service interactions.
- **Service Delivery Events:** Ensuring that events are inclusive and accommodate the diverse needs of participants.
- **Service Delivery Training:** Providing essential training to equip employees, volunteers, and leaders with the knowledge to deliver barrier-free services.
- **Use of Assistive Devices:** Supporting the use of personal and provider-supplied assistive devices.
- **Guide Dogs and Service Dogs:** Ensuring access for individuals who rely on guide and service dogs.
- **Support Persons:** Accommodating support persons to assist individuals with disabilities in accessing goods and services.
- **Sign Language Interpretation:** Offering high-quality interpretation services for effective communication.
- **Policies, Practices, and Procedures:** Establishing clear, actionable policies to uphold and maintain accessibility standards.

These recommendations reflect the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equality of opportunity for individuals with disabilities. They aim to create a foundation for sustainable and meaningful change in the delivery of goods and services, moving Nova Scotia closer to its goal of being an accessible province by 2030.

## **Background**

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act, enacted in 2017, recognizes accessibility as a fundamental human right and sets a goal for an accessible province by 2030. This legislation enables the government to establish accessibility standards in key areas, including:

- Built Environment
- Education
- Employment
- Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services
- Information and Communication
- Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

In June 2023, the government committed to developing an accessibility standard specifically for goods and services. The purpose of this standard is to prevent and remove barriers that hinder individuals with disabilities from accessing and benefiting from goods and services across Nova Scotia. The scope of the standard includes ensuring accessible service delivery by public and private providers, addressing physical, digital, and systemic barriers.

Under the Accessibility Act, the Accessibility Advisory Board (AAB) advises the Minister of Justice on the development of accessibility standards. To support this work, the AAB established the Goods and Services SDC composed of individuals with disabilities, representatives from service organizations, and other stakeholders. The committee's work focuses on developing recommendations for regulations that will improve accessibility and ensure inclusivity in service delivery.

## **The Standard Development Process**

The Accessibility Act outlines the following steps for developing accessibility standards:

1. The AAB establishes an SDC to assist them in developing recommendations on the content and implementation of the standard.
2. The SDC develops recommendations in consultation with community, sector, and government.
3. The AAB submits recommendations to the Minister of Justice. These recommendations are made publicly available.

4. The Minister prepares the proposed accessibility standard, adopting the AAB recommendations in whole, in part, or with modifications.
5. The Minister makes the proposed standard publicly available for comment for 60 days.
6. The Minister consults with the AAB with respect to any comments received, and revises the proposed standard, if necessary.
7. The Minister recommends the accessibility standard to the Governor-in-Council for approval as a regulation.

## **Approach to Developing Recommendations**

The Goods and Services SDC adopted a thorough and collaborative process to develop its recommendations, ensuring they address the diverse needs of Nova Scotians and align with the province's goal of accessibility by 2030.

The committee began its work by reviewing accessible customer service standards from other jurisdictions, including Ontario and Manitoba, which served as foundational models. These models were adapted through a combination of best practice research, jurisdictional analysis, and meaningful engagement with experts and individuals with lived experience to develop standard recommendations tailored to Nova Scotia's unique context.

To ensure the recommendations reflect the diverse needs of Nova Scotians, the AAB and SDC launched an engagement process to gather input from key groups. These included individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals, organizations supporting persons with disabilities, goods and services providers, prescribed public sector bodies and government departments. Feedback was collected through virtual consultation sessions and written submissions between October 14 and November 26, 2024.

The feedback gathered during consultations was incorporated into the recommendations, ensuring they are actionable, realistic, and responsive to the needs of all Nova Scotians. These recommendations will serve as a critical step toward developing a goods and services accessibility standard.

## **Applicability and Scope**

It is recommended that all businesses, organizations, and public entities that provide goods and services in Nova Scotia must comply with the recommended goods and services accessibility standard with specific exemptions for micro-businesses under defined criteria.

Recognizing the diverse capacities of businesses across Nova Scotia, it is recommended that micro-businesses of fewer than 5 employees are exempt from the standard where:

- The business operates entirely online and provides no physical access points.
- There are no employees, and the business is operated solely by the owner, with minimal external engagement.

The standard recommendations aim to ensure equitable access for all, including persons with disabilities. It is recommended that those businesses that do not meet the definition for micro-businesses but have fewer than 10 employees or annual revenue below \$500,000 may adopt alternative measures that achieve the same accessibility outcomes as prescribed in the standards but may be more feasible given their size and resources.

The remainder of this document outlines each recommendation for the goods and services accessibility standard in detail. Each recommendation includes specific actions and requirements for goods and services providers to ensure accessibility in areas such as service disruptions, feedback processes, training, and inclusive policies. Together, these recommendations provide a roadmap for achieving accessible goods and services across Nova Scotia by 2030.



# Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery

Temporary disruptions to services can significantly impact accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This recommendation ensures that goods and services providers proactively notify the public of disruptions and provide alternatives wherever possible, maintaining access to critical services.

## **Recommendation 1: Temporary Disruption of Service Delivery**

If there is a temporary disruption in service delivery, whether expected or unexpected, the goods and services provider must give notice of the disruption to the public as soon as it is reasonably possible. For expected disruptions, pre-scheduled notifications should be provided.

The notice of temporary disruption must include:

- The nature of the disrupted service.
- The reason for the disruption.
- The anticipated length of the disruption.
- Contact information.
- A description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The goods and services provider must:

- Prominently display the temporary disruption notice in an accessible area on the premises, which is owned or operated by the goods and services provider.
- Post the temporary disruption notice online on a public digital platform such as the organization's website, email notifications to affected users and/or active social media feeds.
- Notify people that this document is available on request in accessible formats.
- Provide a copy of the document to anyone who requests it in accessible formats.

Where circumstances make immediate notification challenging (e.g., fire or online service outages), the goods and services provider should take reasonable steps to inform the public using alternative means as soon as possible.

This recommendation applies to temporary disruptions on physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, and digital spaces (e.g., email, websites, social media feed, etc.).

# Service Delivery Feedback Process

A well-structured feedback process is essential for identifying and addressing accessibility issues in service delivery. This recommendation ensures that individuals can provide feedback easily and that the goods and services provider respond in a timely and transparent manner.

## **Recommendation 2: Service Delivery Feedback Process**

Every goods and services provider must establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the accessibility of its service delivery and accessibility of the feedback process itself. This process should consider both the physical and digital spaces in feedback on service delivery.

Every goods and services provider must:

- Make information about the feedback process available to the public in accessible formats.
- Offer multiple ways for people to provide feedback (e.g., phone, in person, online). Email must be included as an option for submitting feedback and receiving responses. Additional methods must be made available upon request to ensure communication occurs in the format most accessible and comfortable for the individual (e.g., American Sign Language, spoken, plain language).
- Acknowledge receipt of feedback within 72 hours, providing a confirmation of receipt and an initial timeline for response.
- Respond with a plan to address the issue within 20 days of receiving the feedback.
- Provide regular updates, especially for issues that may take longer to resolve, and ensure complaints are addressed within a reasonable timeframe based on the nature and requirements of the issue.
- Keep a record of the feedback received, including the actions taken to address it and the time taken to resolve each issue.
- Give individuals the opportunity to communicate concerns and provide feedback on the feedback process itself.

# Service Delivery Communications

Accessible communication is key to ensuring inclusive service delivery. This recommendation focuses on ensuring that the goods and services provider's communication practices are clear, effective, and accessible to all, addressing both physical and digital communication needs.

## **Recommendation 3: Service Delivery Communications**

This recommendation aims to ensure that the goods and services provider's communication practices are accessible to people with disabilities. This could include but is not limited to providing information in multiple formats and ensuring that signage and information displays are clear and accessible. Each goods and services provider must train staff to understand different communication needs and the basics of accessible communication. Specialized training (e.g., learning sign language) is not required. The goal is to help staff recognize when specific communication needs arise and know how to provide or arrange the right support.

Each goods and services provider must ensure that when communicating with a person with a disability, the communication takes into account the person's disability.

# Service Delivery Events

Public events must be accessible to all members of the community. This recommendation ensures that event notices, venues, and participation methods are designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities, fostering inclusivity and equal access.

## **Recommendation 4: Service Delivery Events**

Every goods and services provider who holds events must ensure that the notice of the event is accessible. This includes ensuring that notices are available in multiple formats and that options are available on request.

This applies to events on the goods and services provider's physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, and digital spaces.

This recommended standard applies to events that are:

- Public-facing or open to members of the public.
- Designed to engage the community, provide services, or share information.

Small, private, or informal gatherings that are not open to the public (e.g., staff-only meetings, social gatherings unrelated to service delivery, or spontaneous discussions) are excluded.

Every goods and services provider who holds events must ensure that:

- Any registration for an event is accessible.
- Accessibility options are proactively promoted in event communications. This includes clearly outlining how to request specific accommodations, such as sign language interpreters or assistive devices, and providing deadlines for such requests when necessary.

Every goods and services provider must take reasonable measures to ensure that the event is held in a physical or digital space that is accessible. This includes:

- Seeking out accessible venues or digital platforms as a first priority.
- Providing information about the accessibility features of the chosen venue or platform.
- Offering alternative formats or participation methods if a fully accessible venue or platform is not available. For example, providing a livestream for a physical event that is not fully accessible.
- Documenting efforts to secure an accessible space and explaining why it was not possible if an accessible venue or platform could not be found.

Every goods and services provider must ensure that the communication needs of persons with disabilities are met on request. This may involve but is not limited to providing real-time access to communication (e.g., live captioning, Sign Language Interpretation) and ensuring these options are promoted and available on request.

# Service Delivery Training

Proper training equips goods and services providers to meet the accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities. This recommendation outlines essential training requirements to ensure that staff, volunteers, and leadership are prepared to deliver inclusive and barrier-free services.

## **Recommendation 5: Service Delivery Training**

Every goods and services provider must ensure that the following people receive service delivery training, whether new or current:

- Employees
- Agents and regular volunteers
- Management and leadership
- People who participate in, or are responsible for, the development or implementation of the goods and services provider's policies.
- All other people who provide service delivery on behalf of a goods and services provider.
- Board Members
- Elected Officials

Every goods and services provider must ensure that training content is provided in accessible formats if requested and includes:

- A review of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.
- A review of the Accessibility Act.
- A review of the requirements in the Goods and Services Standard.
- How to interact and communicate with individuals who are Deaf and those with disabilities, considering all methods of communication, including plain language and sign languages.
- Consider awareness of disability, including visible and invisible, episodic and temporary ones.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a support person or service dog.
- How to use any equipment or assistive devices available on the goods and services provider's premises, or otherwise provided by the goods and services provider, online or in person, that may help with service delivery for people with disabilities (e.g., a scooter provided by a grocery store for shopping).
- What to do if a person with a disability finds barriers when accessing the provider's service delivery.

- How intersecting identities may impact service delivery.
- These interactions include phone, in person, and virtual communication methods.
- How to identify, remove, and prevent barriers in service delivery, whether this is done by humans or are through computers, or artificial intelligence.

The Government of Nova Scotia must curate or develop resources to assist employers in meeting the requirements of the accessible goods and services standard. These resources, including training materials, must be available via a central resource hub for employers before the standard is enacted and available in accessible formats.

People with lived or living experience of disabilities must be actively involved in both the development and provision of training. Their involvement can take various forms, such as:

- Direct participation in creating and delivering training.
- Providing consultation and guidance to ensure the training is effective and inclusive.

Additionally, employers must not rely solely on government-provided materials in instances where specialized training is required for specific services offered. Employers must ensure that additional or customized training is provided when the general training does not adequately cover the specific needs and services of the employer. This ensures that all specialized training needs are met and that the training is relevant to the unique demands of the service provided.

The goods and services provider must ensure training is provided:

- As soon as is reasonably possible, after the person has been assigned the duties, or if the person is already performing the duties, when the standard applies to the goods and services provider.
- Refresher training must be provided at least every three years to ensure that all individuals stay informed about updates to accessibility standards, policies, and best practices.

# Use of Assistive Devices

Assistive devices are any equipment, hardware, software, apps, computers, or devices used in physical or virtual spaces. These devices may be used by people to help them with all aspects of life.

## **Recommendation 6: Assistive Devices**

Each goods and services provider must recognize that a person with a disability may use assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers to access, use, and benefit from service delivery, and the measures and practices that the organization implements must reasonably accommodate the use of these devices.

Each goods and services provider must ensure staff are trained to:

- Recognize and accommodate assistive devices brought by individuals.
- Provide guidance on the proper use of assistive devices made available by the provider.

Refresher training should be provided at least every three years to ensure continued knowledge of updates to policies, and changes in assistive technology.

This recommendation applies to both devices that the person already uses and brings with them to the goods and services provider (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, computer devices, or magnifiers) and devices that the goods and services provider may provide to the public (e.g., on-site wheeled mobility devices, automatic doors, or widgets on their website for voice-to-text).

If the goods and services provider requires the use of a specific assistive device for accessing services, then the provider must waive payment of the amount, if any, for the use of that device.

If this causes undue hardship, then a reasonable fee may apply. The goods and services provider must ensure that advance notice is given about the fee amount, if any, for the use of assistive devices.



# Guide Dogs and Service Dogs

In developing these recommendations, the Goods and Services SDC engaged in extensive discussions about the inclusion of guide dogs, service dogs, service animals, and emotional support animals. The committee recognizes the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities and the importance of balancing inclusion with clarity and enforceability.

Based on the consultation(s) and to align with current Nova Scotia legislation, the committee is proposing to the AAB to limit the current recommendations to guide dogs and service dogs.

While guide dogs and service dogs are recognized under Nova Scotia legislation, including the Blind Persons' Rights Act and the Service Dog Act, which establish clear standards for training and certification, there is currently no equivalent framework for service animals or emotional support animals in the province.

The committee acknowledges that some individuals with disabilities require the use of emotional support animals or service animals that are not dogs to mitigate their disability. The lack of certification standards for service animals and potential misuse of provisions related to service animals or emotional support animals could undermine the rights and experiences of individuals who rely on trained, certified guide or service dogs. Furthermore, given this disparity on certification and training, goods and services providers may also experience a lack of clarity when providing services to persons whose service animals accompany them.

As training and certification requirements for service animals are developed, it will be essential that future engagements explore how to support the needs of individuals who may benefit from the companionship and calming presence of emotional support animals (e.g., individuals with mental health conditions, sensory processing disorders, etc.), while also addressing concerns about training and certification.

To ensure the current recommendations remain practical and enforceable within existing frameworks, the focus of the current recommendation is limited to guide dogs and service dogs as defined in the Nova Scotia Blind Persons' Rights Act and the Service Dog Act.

## **Recommendation 7: Guide Dogs and Service Dogs**

Each goods and services provider, in their policies, must recognize that a person with a disability may use a guide dog or service dog to remove or reduce barriers to access and/or use and benefit from service delivery. The measures and practices that the organization implements must reasonably accommodate the use of guide dogs and service dogs.

In Nova Scotia, we have the Service Dog Act. This recommended standard is intended to complement but does not supersede the provisions of the Blind Persons' Rights Act or the Service Dog Act.

Organizations need to ensure that any signs, rules or webpages that say, "no dogs" or "no pets" are changed to say, "no dogs, except guide dogs or service dogs" or "no pets, except guide dogs or service dogs".

Guide dogs and service dogs must be trained and certified to perform specific tasks to assist a person with a disability. Training must be conducted by a person or establishment specializing in the training of guide dogs or service dogs.

If a person with a disability has a service dog with them, the goods and services provider must ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the dog, and that the person with a disability always has access to the guide dog or service dog.

This applies to physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, where the public, and third parties, can access service delivery except where dogs are excluded by law from premises.

If a guide dog or service dog is excluded by law, the goods and services provider must inform the person of the law, and then in consultation with the person, must ensure that an alternative, or other measures is available, so that the person can obtain, use or benefit from the service delivery.

The goods and services provider must not charge a fee for the guide dog or service dog. If this causes undue hardship, then a reasonable fee may apply. The goods and services provider must ensure that advance notice is given about the fee amount, if any, for the guide dog or service dog.

The person with the guide dog or service dog is responsible for its actions while on the premises of the goods and services provider.

# Support Persons

Support persons play a vital role in helping individuals with disabilities access and benefit from services. Their role is distinct and separate from that of sign language interpreters, as they provide different forms of support tailored to individual needs. In some cases, an individual may require both a support person and a sign language interpreter. This recommendation ensures that policies accommodate the presence of support persons and eliminate financial and procedural barriers to their assistance.

## **Recommendation 8: Support Persons**

Each goods and services provider, in their policies, must recognize that individuals with disabilities may need support persons to remove or reduce barriers to accessing, using and benefiting from services. A goods and services provider's policies should reasonably accommodate the use of support persons.

This applies to physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, where the public, and third parties, can access service delivery. This can also include people using assistive devices to access support people, and other digital or virtual means of support (e.g., a telepresence or virtual support).

If a person with a disability has a support person(s) with them, the goods and services provider must:

- Ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together.
- Ensure that the person with a disability always has access to the support person.

In some cases, a goods and services provider may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons. If so:

- The goods and services provider must first consult with the person with a disability to explore all alternatives.
- If no alternatives are available and the person with a disability consents, the goods and services provider may require a support person, but only if it's necessary to protect the health or safety of the person or others.
- The goods and services provider must document the justification for requiring a support person and outline how the determination was made, including any applicable health or safety assessments.

The goods and services provider must not charge a fee for a support person, or persons to be admitted to, or present, at the premises or online. A support person must be admitted free of charge in all cases where they are actively assisting an individual with a disability. If the support person is not providing direct support, regular admission fees apply.

If this causes undue hardship, then a reasonable fee may apply. The goods and services provider must ensure that advance notice is given about the fee amount, if any, for the support person, or persons.

If the goods and services provider requires a support person, or persons to accompany the person with a disability on the premises, then the goods and services provider must waive payment of the amount, if any, for the support person, or persons.

The goods and services provider must comply with relevant legislation that may require that a support person be of a certain age if age restrictions are applied by law to individuals accessing, using, and benefiting from services (e.g., the Liquor Control Act).

# Sign Language Interpretation

Sign language interpreters play a crucial role in facilitating effective communication between Deaf and non-Deaf individuals to ensure inclusive and accessible interactions.

It is important to note that sign language interpreters are not support persons. They are professionals who are provided to facilitate communication between Deaf and non-Deaf people.

Sign language interpreters can be either Deaf or hearing. In some cases, they work together as a team to provide accurate and culturally appropriate interpretation.

Sign language interpretation services can be used synchronously with assisted services, devices, and/or supports.

## **Recommendation 9: Sign Language Interpretation**

Each goods and services provider must ensure that sign language interpreters are made available upon request. The responsibility for the cost of these services must not be placed on the Deaf individual.

The following applies only to prescribed public sector bodies.

All prescribed public sector bodies must make sign language interpretation services available upon request, ensuring effective communication and full participation for all Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

To ensure high-quality services, the sign language interpreters provided must be members of the Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI). CASLI members adhere to a code of ethics and ethical practice, guaranteeing professionalism and reliability.

All prescribed public sector bodies must have a policy and procedure for requesting and providing sign language interpretation services. This policy must apply to all departments and services within Nova Scotia that interact with the public, including but not limited to healthcare, education, public services, and events.

The policy must include a statement of commitment to providing equal access to information and services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. The policy must also include:

- Details on how requests can be made.
- Information on the advance notice required for requests for sign language interpreters.
- Procedures for accommodating urgent or emergency requests.
- Who is responsible for processing requests, scheduling sign language interpreters, and ensuring that all parties are informed of the arrangements.

- Details on how confidentiality will be maintained for requests and the information shared during the interpretation. This should be in accordance with privacy laws and regulations.
- Methods for receiving feedback from Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals on the interpretation services.
- Processes for handling and resolving complaints or concerns.
- A commitment to annual reviews and updates to reflect changes in regulations, best practices, or community needs.

All prescribed public sector bodies must ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and the procedure for requesting sign language interpreters.

The cost of sign language interpretation services will be covered by the prescribed public sector body. The Government of Nova Scotia must provide adequate funding to prescribed public sector bodies to be able to support these services.

# Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Clear policies, practices, and procedures are key to successfully putting accessibility standards into action and ensuring accountability. This recommendation ensures goods and services providers create, document, and regularly update their policies to follow the standards once they are finalized.

## **Recommendation 10: Policies, Practices, and Procedures**

Every goods and services provider must develop, implement, and maintain one policy, or multiple policies, that document how the goods and services provider achieves, or will achieve accessibility, in person and virtually, through meeting its requirements in each of the sections of this recommended standard:

- Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery
- Service Delivery Feedback Process
- Service Delivery Communications
- Service Delivery Events
- Service Delivery Training
- Use of Assistive Devices
- Guide Dogs and Service Dogs
- Support Persons
- Sign language Interpretation

Each policy must include the corresponding practices and procedures that show how the goods and services provider will meet the requirements outlined in each section of this standard. These policies, practices, and procedures must also align with the duty to provide reasonable accommodations under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

The policy (or policies) must include a statement of commitment to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, without cost, wherever possible.

In developing, implementing and maintaining the policy (or policies), practices, and procedures, every goods and services provider must try to ensure they are consistent with four principles:

- a. The goods, services or facilities must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b. The provision of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities must be integrated with the provision of goods, services or facilities to others, unless an

alternative measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods, services or facilities.

- c.** Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods, services or facilities.
- d.** When communicating with a person with a disability, the goods and services provider must do so in a manner that considers the individual's identified barriers or accessibility needs.

Every goods and services provider must:

- Notify people that the policy (or policies) is available on request and must provide a copy of the document to anyone who requests it.
- Make the document(s) available in accessible formats.
- Prominently display the policy in an accessible area on the premises.
- Post the information online, on a website, online information page, or other public site (including social media). If a website is not available, the policy must be shared through alternative means, such as printed materials or by email upon request.

Policies, practices, and procedures must be reviewed and updated at least every three years to reflect changes in accessibility standards, best practices, or organizational changes.

Small businesses (i.e., fewer than 10 employees or annual revenue below \$500,000) with limited resources may align reviews with significant operational changes instead of adhering to a fixed timeline, provided updates are made promptly when gaps are identified.



# Glossary of Terms

## **Accessibility Services**

Programs, services, processes, and policies related to accessibility accommodations, communication, language interpretation, assistive technology, and others that ensure access to goods and services.

## **Accessible**

Free of substantial barriers that hinder enjoyment in all aspects of life, allowing equal access to services, information, and physical environments. When a space or item can be used or experienced by the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age, and other forms of human difference on an equivalent basis with others.

## **Accessible Formats**

Current, quality print, electronic, audio, or visual material that is formatted so that all people with disabilities and Deaf people can equitably access the information presented. This may include (but is not limited to) ensuring compatibility with appropriate assistive technology, captioning, described video, large print, plain language, braille, translation and interpretation to sign language, easy read, and video transcripts. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **Actively Assisting**

Refers to a support person directly and purposefully providing the necessary assistance to enable an individual with a disability to access, use, or benefit from a service. Examples of "actively assisting" could include but are not limited to:

- Helping with mobility (e.g., guiding or stabilizing the individual, pushing a wheelchair).
- Assisting with communication (e.g., facilitating conversations, reading documents aloud).
- Providing personal care (e.g., helping with eating, toileting, or managing medication).
- Offering guidance or clarification during complex procedures or activities.
- Assisting individuals with cognitive or neurological disabilities (e.g., helping someone with autism navigate social interactions, manage sensory challenges, or stay focused during an activity).

## **Assistive Devices**

Equipment, hardware, software, apps, or other devices used to aid people with disabilities and Deaf people in both physical and digital spaces, allowing them to participate in and enjoy all aspects of life. This may include but is not limited to wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, computer devices, or magnifiers.

## **Barrier**

Anything that hinders or challenges the enjoyment of all aspects of life for people with disabilities and Deaf people. Barriers may be systemic, structural and individual, and can take the form of physical barriers, architecture, information, communications, attitudes, technology, policies, or practices. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)<sup>1</sup>

## **Deaf**

A sociological term referring to those individuals who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on sign language. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **deaf**

A medical/ audiological term referring to those people who have little or no functional hearing. May also refer to people who are medically deaf but who do not necessarily identify with the Deaf community. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **Disability**

A physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full enjoyment of all aspects of life. Some people may not have a diagnosed disability but still experience accessibility barriers. Others who experience accessibility barriers may not identify as having a disability. This may include people who are Deaf, those who identify as neurodivergent, those who have a chronic illness or condition, and others. In this document, the term "people with disabilities" is intended to include all people who experience accessibility barriers.

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<sup>1</sup> Attitudinal barriers are unfair or negative opinions about others based on their disability or the intersection of disability with race, gender, and age. These attitudes develop over time and are influenced by both internal and external experiences. Attitudinal barriers can hinder effective communication, understanding, and connection with others.

## **Digital Space**

Any online platform used by the goods and services provider. This may include but is not limited to email, websites, or social media feeds.

## **Disruption of Service Delivery**

Temporary interruption or change of services provided by the goods and services provider, whether expected or unexpected, that affects physical premises or digital spaces.

## **Equity/ Equitable**

Equity means ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access and participate in the full enjoyment of all aspects of life. This means expecting and welcoming diversity, understanding and addressing discriminatory and exclusionary systems, practices, and policies, and removing specific and diverse barriers to access and participation. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **Event**

An event is any organized gathering, meeting, or activity initiated by a goods and services provider, intended for public participation or attendance, whether held in physical or digital spaces. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Conferences, seminars, and workshops.
- Public meetings, town halls, and forums.
- Cultural, recreational, and social activities.
- Training sessions and educational programs.
- Webinars, virtual meetings, and online presentations.

### **Exclusions:**

The following are generally excluded from this definition:

- Private gatherings not open to the public.
- Informal, spontaneous meetings without prior organization.

## **Goods and Services Provider**

A goods and services provider refers to any organization, business, or entity that offers goods, services, or facilities to the public, either directly or indirectly, regardless of its size, sector, or type of ownership. This encompasses public sector providers (e.g., government departments, publicly funded institutions), private sector providers (e.g., retail stores, professional service firms), nonprofit and community organizations (e.g., charitable

organizations, advocacy groups), online or digital providers (e.g., e-commerce sites, online education platforms), and event or space operators (e.g., venues for public use, rental providers for events). These providers are responsible for ensuring their services are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities, in compliance with Nova Scotia's accessibility legislation.

## **Guide Dog**

A guide dog is defined, in accordance with the Blind Persons' Rights Act, as a dog specifically trained to assist individuals with visual impairments.

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a way of looking at how all the different parts that make up a person (i.e., their gender, race, class, disability, etc.) can come together to affect how they are treated in society. It helps us understand how these different aspects can lead to both advantages and disadvantages for a person. Intersectionality helps us see and address the various ways people can face discrimination or privilege based on these different factors. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Employment)

## **Plain Language**

Communication is in plain language when it is written or presented in a way that is easy for the intended audience to understand. This means the words, structure, and design are clear, helping people quickly find the information they need and use it effectively. For example, this includes using short sentences, avoiding jargon and technical terms or complex words. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Employment, Adapted from What is plain language?)

## **Service Dog**

As defined in the Service Dog Act, a "service dog" is a dog that is trained to perform specific tasks to assist a person with a disability and is certified as a service dog.

## **Sign Language Interpreters**

Sign language interpreters are not support persons. They are professionals who are provided to facilitate communication between Deaf and non-Deaf people. Sign language interpreters can be either Deaf, hearing, or a combination of both. Sign language interpretation services can be used synchronously with assisted services, devices, and/or supports.

## **Support Person**

An individual who accompanies a person with a disability or Deaf person to assist with communications, personal care, or accessing and benefiting from service delivery, whether on physical premises or through digital means.

## **Undue Hardship**

An action requiring significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of a number of factors. These factors include the nature and cost of the accommodation in relation to the size, resources, nature, and structure of the goods and services provider.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Undue hardship is determined on a case-by-case basis. The burden of proof that an undue hardship prevents removal of a barrier rests with the goods and services provider on reasonable grounds communicated promptly to the person impacted.

# Appendix – List of Members

## Current Members

- **Travis Gunn, Chair**  
Chief Operating Officer, MacQuarries Pharmasave Group, Scotsburn
- **John Smith, Vice-Chair**  
Chair, Annapolis County Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility (IDEA) Committee, Bridgetown
- **Kimberley Bernard**  
Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, Halifax
- **Colin Campbell**  
Manager of Equity Programs and Initiatives, Department of Health and Wellness, Halifax (until October 2024)  
Director, Government and Community Relations, African Nova Scotian Affairs (from October 2024)
- **Kim Bates Cusack**  
Accessibility Advocate, Bateson
- **Natalie d' Entremont**  
Director, Recreation Services, Municipality of the District of Argyle, Lower West Pubnico
- **Louise Gillis**  
Immediate Past President at Canadian Council of the Blind, Sydney
- **Rick Goodman, KC**  
Non-practicing Advisor, Patterson Law and Chairperson, Accessibility Committee, Abercrombie Golf Club, New Glasgow
- **Lui Greco**  
Lead, Information Technology and Accessibility, CNIB, Eastern Passage
- **Janice Hussey**  
Coordinator, Disability Support Program, Department of Opportunities and Social Development, Halifax
- **Misty James**  
Director of Recreation, Municipality of Barrington
- **Jordan Keddy**  
Policy Analyst, Privy Council Office, Government of Canada, Waverley
- **Cassie Manuel**  
Physical Activity Consultant and Inclusion Specialist, Dartmouth

- **Jorge Mora**  
Manager Fund Accounting, SS&C Fund Services and Multiple Sclerosis and Disability Advocate, Bedford
- **Steven William Murgatroyd**  
Canadian Forces Retired Sergeant, DND and High Performance Director, Archery Nova Scotia, West Hants
- **Zoh Qureshi**  
Faculty Member, Nova Scotia Community College
- **Justin Read**  
Instructor, NSCC, Halifax
- **Steve Roy**  
Project and Administrative Coordinator, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Dartmouth
- **John Turner**  
Environmental Lab Technician and Disability Advocate, Halifax
- **Hannah Wood**  
CEO, Fulcrum Accessibility Consulting, Halifax
- **Michelle Simpson**  
Director, Corporate Strategy, Service Nova Scotia- Procurement

## Past Members

- **Lisa Snider, Chair**  
Senior Digital Accessibility Consultant and Trainer, Access Changes Everything Inc, Halifax
- **Alex Oragui**  
Manager, Diversity and Sustainable Procurement, Department of Service Nova Scotia Internal Services, Halifax
- **Jen Christofi**  
Manager, Inclusion and Accessibility, Nova Scotia Liquor Commission, Halifax