

2025-2028

Town of Pictou Accessibility Plan



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Pictou Accessibility Advisory Committee

Updated May 2025 v2

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1.0 Introduction

In 2017, Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act to help make the Province more accessible for people with disabilities. The goal is to remove barriers and make Nova Scotia fully accessible by the year 2030.

The Accessibility Directorate is the part of the provincial government that oversees this work. It works with people with disabilities, towns and cities, businesses, schools, and others to help reach this goal.

In 2020, the Province decided that certain public organizations, including municipalities, must create and follow an accessibility plan. These plans must be reviewed and updated at least every three years.

This document is the updated Accessibility Plan for the Town of Pictou, created by the Accessibility Advisory Committee. It includes a progress section showing what has been accomplished so far, along with new goals for the future.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Town Council on how to find and remove barriers in town programs, services and buildings. It also helps develop and monitor this plan. The Town formed this committee to guide the creation of the plan that will improve accessibility. According to the Accessibility Act, at least half of the committee members must be people with disabilities or represent disability organizations. Pictou's committee meets this requirement.

As part of the planning process, the Town asked the public to share their concerns and ideas about accessibility. While the plan must be updated at least every three years, the Town welcomes feedback from the public at any time. This input is important to the Town and the committee.

For committee members and staff, being part of this work is a chance to learn, grow, and make a difference. We are proud of this plan and excited to see it put into action.

The Town also works with other local organizations to improve accessibility, even though they are not covered in this plan. These partners include:

- Pictou County Wellness Centre
- Pictou County Solid Waste
- deCoste Entertainment Centre
- Pictou Antigonish Regional Library
- Regional Emergency Management Organization

2.0 What We Believe

The Town of Pictou believes that strong communities grow when everyone feels included, treated equally, and able to enjoy a good quality of life—whether they live here or are just visiting. By making our town more accessible, we improve life not only for people with disabilities, but also for seniors, families with young children, people who need support, and others who may face barriers. When we remove obstacles in our buildings, services, technology, and social spaces, we create a community where everyone can take part fully in daily life. This helps build a stronger, more welcoming, and more diverse town for all.

3.0 Glossary of Terms

Access by Design 2030 (2018)

The provincial strategy for implementing the Accessibility Act. Access by Design 2030 provides a roadmap for government, businesses, and communities to work together to eliminate barriers to accessibility and make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030 (novascotia.ca/accessibility/access-by-design/). Also see the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2018-2021).

Accessibility Act (2017)

The provincial law enacted to achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities. The law defines the role and responsibilities of the Accessibility Directorate and the Accessibility Advisory Board, and addresses standards, compliance, and enforcement (nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf).

Accessibility Advisory Committee

A volunteer committee established by a municipality to advise municipal council about identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping the municipality become a barrier-free community that complies with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017). At least one half of the members of the advisory committee must have a disability or represent an organization that represents people with disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Board

A 12-member provincial board appointed by the provincial government to advise the Minister of Justice on accessibility and make recommendations on accessibility standards. The majority of board members are people with disabilities (novascotia.ca/accessibility/advisory-board/).

Accessibility Coordinator

A person appointed by municipal staff to support the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee in developing and implementing the municipal accessibility plan. The Accessibility Coordinator also liaises with the Town's senior management and provides consultation services to staff, from frontline workers to website developers.

Accessibility Directorate

The provincial body that is responsible for implementing and administering the Accessibility Act, supporting accessibility initiatives and advancing broader disability-related issues. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/).

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 communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice."

Disability

As defined in Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act: "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."

Equitable/equity

A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities.

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan

A multi-year plan setting specific priorities and commitments for achieving accessibility within the Government of Nova Scotia. The first plan was published in 2018 and covers the years 2018-2021 (novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan).

Plain language

Clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information (plainlanguagenetwork.org/).

Prescribed

Means “prescribed in the Accessibility Act General Regulations.” The Accessibility Act enables the government to use the regulations to identify which organizations must comply with certain requirements. These requirements include forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee and developing an accessibility plan within one year. The use of the word “prescribed” in legislation is intended to give wide authority for regulations to be made that set down a specific rule or direction.

RHF / RHFAC

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification).

4.0 Community Consultation

Feedback from the community was positive and helpful. Many of the suggestions have been achieved, and the remainder can be completed with good planning. The most common concerns were about streets and sidewalks. People mentioned:

- Poor sidewalk conditions
- Crosswalk safety
- Snow and ice clearing in winter
- Accessible parking

People also talked about buildings and public spaces. They said the Town is making progress and shared ideas for how to keep improving. Some people suggested continued efforts of the Town to celebrate and promote the services and spaces that are already accessible to people of all abilities.

5.0 Areas of Focus

This plan is built around five focus areas. These areas help us understand where we are now, what we have already done, and the actions we need to take next. They are guiding how we carry out the plan. The five focus areas are:

- Goods and Services – Making sure everyone can access and use town services and programs
- Information and Communications – Ensuring information is easy to find, understand, and use by everyone
- Transportation – Improving how people move around the town, including public and active transportation
- Employment – Creating inclusive and accessible workplaces
- The Built Environment – Making buildings, sidewalks, parks, and other spaces easier for everyone to use

5.1 Goods and Services

5.1.1 The Vision

The Town of Pictou wants to make sure that everyone can access the goods and services it provides, no matter their ability. To achieve this, the Town will use clear policies, helpful procedures and the right tools. These will help ensure that all services are delivered in a way that is accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to everyone.

5.1.2 Starting Point (2023)

The Town of Pictou provides many services to the public, including:

- Council and committee meetings
- Customer service at Town offices
- Recreation programs and events
- Maintenance of streets, sidewalks, parks and trails
- Building inspections, by-law enforcement and development services
- Support for community groups and economic development

5.1.3 Progress Made – Highlights (2023-25)

- Inclusive Hiring: Job postings now include a statement that the Town will provide accommodations to remove barriers during the hiring process
- Staff Training: Recreation staff received training on supporting autistic campers
- Accessible Communication:
 - Business cards are being updated to include Braille (10 of 14 completed)
 - Ongoing promotion of adaptive equipment through the Go Play loan program
- Expanded Equipment Access: Added an adaptive all-terrain wheelchair and skates to the free equipment loan program
- Inclusive Summer Camps:
 - Visual schedules, quiet tents, and pre-camp tours are now offered
 - A dedicated inclusion leader supports neurodiverse campers
- Community Support: The Go Play Fund is promoted through a summer donation drive
- Council Accessibility: Research completed on hearing loop devices for Council meetings; awaiting grant funding
- Youth Programs: Free, inclusive after-school and March Break programs are offered with equipment support
- Accessible Recreation: Seasonal guided hikes are offered at an easy pace with optional transportation
- Pool Accessibility: Battery replaced in the chair lift; new wheels being sourced for the aqua wheelchair

5.1.4 What's Next (2026-28)

- Finish updating all staff business cards to include Braille
- Accessibility Training:
 - Ensure 100% of councillors and senior staff complete the Working with Abilities training
 - Continue adding accessibility topics to annual staff and Council training plans
- Promote Adaptive Equipment:

- Keep promoting the Go Play loan program and its adaptive tools to staff, volunteers, and the public
- Expand the equipment loan inventory
- Support Inclusive Camps:
 - Continue offering quiet tents, visual schedules, and pre-camp tours
 - Maintain the role of a dedicated inclusion leader for summer camps
- Fundraising for Accessibility: Run the Go Play Fund donation drive each summer to support inclusive recreation
- Improve Council Accessibility: Install hearing loop devices for Council meetings, pending grant approval
- Maintain Accessible Recreation Spaces: Keep equipment at the Pictou Fisheries Pool in good working order, including the chair lift and aqua wheelchair

5.2 Information and Communication

5.2.1 The Vision

The Town of Pictou is committed to making sure that everyone can access and understand the information we share – no matter their ability. We aim to provide clear, easy-to-understand, and accessible communication across all platforms, including websites, printed materials, signage, and public announcements.

5.2.2 Starting Point (2023)

The Town shares information with the public in many ways:

- Public meetings (in-person and online) for Council and Committees
- Email updates, the Town website, social media, newsletters, posters and print media
- Phone calls, radio, and in-person conversations with staff

By 2023, the Town had made several improvements:

- Agendas and minutes for meetings are posted online
- Council meetings are live streamed with closed captioning, and recordings are available for 72 hours
- A newsletter is mailed to residents three times a year, and an electronic version is available in English
- Residents can complete business transactions online
- The Council Chambers is physically accessible
- The Town website was updated with an accessibility tool and now meets most Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

5.2.3 Progress Made – Highlights (2023–2025)

- Plain Language Training: 3 out of 7 key staff members completed training in plain writing and inclusive communication
- Accessibility Web Page: Phase 1 of a new accessibility resource page was launched on the Town website
- Awareness Campaigns: Social media campaigns during Accessibility Month and other key dates
- Community Recognition: Ongoing flag raisings and proclamations for events like NS Access Awareness Week and Disability Pride Week

5.2.4 What's Next (2026–2028)

- Complete Staff Training: Continue training the remaining staff in plain language and inclusive communication
- Meeting Accessibility: Increase public awareness on how to request support to participate in Council or Committee meetings
- Digital Accessibility: Ensure all digital communications, including emergency alerts, are screen-reader friendly
- Emergency Planning: Finalize building evacuation plans that consider accessibility needs
- Accessibility Database: Complete and promote a database of public buildings and their accessibility features

5.3 Transportation

5.3.1 The Vision

Everyone in Pictou should be able to get around the community safely, affordably and independently. Transportation options should be accessible and inclusive. This includes support for people with disabilities, seniors, and those without access to a personal vehicle.

5.3.2 Starting Point (2023)

In 2023, the Town of Pictou did not have a publicly funded transit system. However, several supports were in place:

- CHAD Transit: A non-profit service offering transportation for people of all abilities, including seniors and those needing help to get to appointments or events; the Town provided annual funding to support this service
- Taxi Services: A Taxi Bylaw allowed businesses to operate in Pictou and included rules to reduce barriers for people with physical disabilities
- Accessible Parking: Designated parking spaces were available in key public areas
- Sidewalks and Crosswalks: The downtown area included sidewalks and crosswalks to support pedestrian movement
- Private Taxi Operators: Residents could access transportation through privately run taxi services

5.3.3 Progress Made – Highlights (2023–2025)

- Public Transit Pilot: The Town is participating in a regional pilot project for public transit in Pictou County
- Taxi Business Growth: Promotion of taxi business opportunities led to three active taxi companies operating in Pictou

5.3.4 What’s Next (2026–2028)

- Bus Shelter Improvements: Plans are in place to upgrade bus shelters to make them more comfortable, safer, and easier to use—especially for people with mobility challenges

5.4 Employment

5.4.1 The Vision

People of all abilities should have fair and equitable access to jobs with the Town of Pictou, as well as opportunities to serve on Council or advisory committees.

5.4.2 Starting Point (2023)

The Town of Pictou had about 20 permanent employees and around 15 seasonal or part-time staff. There were 5 elected Council members and between 20 to 30 citizen representatives serving on advisory committees.

What is in place:

- Council members receive technology that makes reading easier by allowing text to be enlarged or fonts to be changed
- Job postings include a standard message explaining how applicants could ask for accommodations during the hiring process
- Citizen representatives can receive meeting materials electronically
- Staff have access to ergonomic assessments to make workstations more comfortable and safer
- Funding is available for desks that can be adjusted to different heights
- Accessible parking spaces meet all required standards
- Accessible washrooms are available at the Fisheries Training Pool, Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plant
- The Fisheries Training Pool also has a fully accessible changeroom with a shower and adult change table

5.4.3 Progress Made – Highlights (2023–2025)

- Clear Accommodation Process: All job postings now include a standard message explaining that accommodations are available during the hiring process; a single contact person handles all accommodation requests to keep the process consistent
- Accommodation Fund: An annual budget line was added in 2024–25 to support workplace accommodations; this funding is now part of the Town’s ongoing operating budget

5.4.4 What’s Next (2026–2028)

- Inclusive Hiring Practices: Review hiring processes to make sure they are fair and accessible for people with disabilities
- Accessibility Training: Provide training for staff and Council members on accessibility, disability awareness, and inclusive communication
- Flexible Meeting Options: Offer different ways for citizen representatives to take part in meetings
- Workplace Reviews: Check Town buildings and workspaces regularly to find and fix any barriers to accessibility

5.5 Built Environment

5.5.1 The Vision

All public buildings and outdoor spaces that are owned or run by the Town of Pictou should be easy to

access and use for people of all abilities.

5.5.2 Starting Point (2023)

The Town of Pictou owns and operates several public buildings and outdoor spaces, including:

- Administration Building
- Public Works Building
- Pictou Fire Department
- Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Water Treatment Plant
- Broidy Park Building
- CN Station (Council Chambers)
- RCMP Station
- Former Visitor Information Centre
- Several wellhouses and a water reservoir
- Sidewalks, parking areas and trails

The Town also owns the deCoste Entertainment Centre, which is run by another organization. This facility is being expanded with accessibility in mind.

The Fisheries Training Pool is owned by the Province of Nova Scotia and managed by Nova Scotia Community College. The Town uses the facility for aquatics programs and supports upgrades to this facility, including funding for major improvements.

What Was in Place:

- The Administration Building has two accessible public washrooms, an elevator, and automatic doors
- Council Chambers and its washrooms are accessible for people with physical disabilities
- The Wastewater and Water Treatment Plant buildings meet current building code requirements
- The Recreation Department offers adaptable equipment for loan
- The Fisheries Training Pool has many accessibility features, including:
 - A walkway and automatic doors
 - A hydraulic lift and aqua wheelchair
 - A fully accessible changeroom with shower and adult change table
 - Adaptable life vests for youth and adults
 - A vision audit with contrasting colors
 - Staff trained by NS Parasport and Autism Nova Scotia
- Parks and trails:
 - The first 1.5 km of the Jitney Trail is paved
 - Accessible swing equipment installed at Broidy Park and Veterans Drive
- Public seating:
 - Benches installed after 2017 are custom-built to be accessible
 - Accessible picnic tables are available on the Pictou Waterfront
- A new All Wheels Skate Park was built for users of all abilities
- Market Square improvements include better surfacing, a ramp to the gazebo, and accessible seating
- Accessible parking spaces meet all required standards
- The RCMP Station has a physically accessible entrance, counter and washroom
- The deCoste Cultural Hub and Library Project was reviewed using the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Standard

- Water Street meets all CSA B651-18 standards for accessible design

5.5.3 Progress Made – Highlights (2023–2025)

- Accessibility Audits: Some Town-owned buildings were reviewed using Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Standards to help identify future priorities
- Sidewalk Upgrades:
 - 2023: 250 m of sidewalk replaced on Denoon Street, widened to 6 ft, with tactile plates at crossings
 - 2024: 720 m of sidewalk work completed, including new connections to schools and upgrades on Denoon and Faulkland Streets, all widened to 5 ft with tactile plates
 - 2025: 500 m of sidewalk added or upgraded on Oak Street and Beeches Road, widened to 5 ft with tactile plates
- Fisheries Training Pool: Front counter was lowered to allow access for people using wheelchairs
- Trail Improvements:
 - Seating added every 200 m along the 1.5 km paved section of the Jitney
 - Trail snow groomer purchased to improve winter trail access for people using mobility devices
 - Distance markers installed and a signage plan developed to improve navigation and accessibility
- Pictou Academy Palmerston Pathway: Contract awarded for a new accessible multi-use path

5.5.4 What’s Next (2026–2028)

- Building Accessibility:
 - Complete accessibility audits for remaining Town-owned buildings, focusing on places used for meetings, programs, and services
 - Install tactile and high-visibility signage in all Town facilities
- Sidewalk and Street Improvements:
 - Add or upgrade 500 m of sidewalk each year, including tactile plates and drop curbs
 - Improve sidewalks and active transportation routes near schools, parks and community hubs
- Parks and Trails:
 - Build accessible pathways linking amenities in Broidy Park
 - Install an accessible picnic table in Broidy Park
 - Add accessible viewing areas to the new Sutherland Ballfield
 - Build a 2 km crusher dust trail loop with seating every 150–200 m, connecting the new ballfield to the Fitness Trails
- Community Buildings and Recreation:
 - Ensure accessible entrances and washrooms in the new community building
 - Add audible tennis and pickleball balls for visually impaired players
 - Add all-terrain rollator walkers to the equipment loan program for trail use
 - Add a barrier-free base to the flagpole area at Market Square
- Trail Enhancements: Install trail counters and e-bike charging stations to support inclusive trail use and future planning

6.0 Putting the Plan into Action

6.1 Who’s Responsible and Their Role

6.1.1 Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Reviews the Accessibility Plan at least every three years and recommends updates to Council
- Reports to Council once a year on how the plan is progressing
- Receives updates from the CAO or staff about questions, concerns, or complaints from the public
- Promotes and supports the Town's efforts to improve accessibility in a positive way

6.1.2 Council

- Understands that making the Town more accessible is an investment and allocates funding to support the plan
- Provides the resources the Accessibility Advisory Committee needs to do its work
- Advocates for accessibility and supports the Town's progress

6.1.3 Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Staff

- Makes sure the goals in the Accessibility Plan are included in the Town's official action plans and budgets
- Accepts and tracks feedback from the public, including complaints and questions
- Shares a summary of this feedback with the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Promotes accessibility efforts and shares success stories with the public
- Helps keep the community informed and involved in moving the plan forward

7.0 Working Toward 2030

In 2017, the Government of Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act. The goal is to make the whole province accessible by the year 2030.

To help reach this goal, the Province created a plan called Access by Design 2030. This plan focuses on:

- Helping more people understand why accessibility matters
- Encouraging people and organizations to work together
- Making sure accessibility laws are followed

The Town of Pictou is working toward the same goal. The aim is to complete all actions in the Town's Accessibility Plan by 2030, just like the Province.

To stay on track, a working plan is in place. It includes:

- Timelines for each action
- Who is responsible for each task
- What resources are needed

This chart will help us plan, prioritize, and make sure we have what we need to succeed.

8.0 Tracking Progress and Making Updates

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will be responsible for submitting a report to Council by January 31 of each year. Council will set specific benchmarks against which to measure the progress of the plan. This report will track the progress made towards the commitments in this plan and make recommendations on priorities

and changes to improve the Plan.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will review new directives, guidelines, and updates from the Province as they are released, and determine if updates to this Accessibility Plan are required based on those updates.

9.0 Questions, Concerns and Complaints

Anyone can ask a question, share a concern, or make a complaint about accessibility in the Town of Pictou.

Here's how the process works:

1. Start with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
 - Send your question or complaint to the CAO
 - The CAO will talk to the staff member responsible and respond within a reasonable time
 - The response will explain the decision and will also be shared with the Accessibility Advisory Committee
2. Still have concerns?
 - You can contact the Accessibility Coordinator, who will bring your concern to the Accessibility Advisory Committee
 - The Committee will review it and provide a response
3. Appealing a decision
 - If you are not satisfied with the response from the CAO or the Committee, you can appeal to Town Council
 - Council may ask the Committee to take another look and make a recommendation before giving a final answer
4. Keeping track
 - The Accessibility Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns
 - They will regularly update the Committee, and this information will help improve the Accessibility Plan over time