NARRATIVE
R E S E A R C H

Tourism Accessibility Requirements and Resources (Phase One)

Report Prepared for:

Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia

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Introduction and Background

The Province of Nova Scotia has committed to the removal of barriers for persons with disabilities, through the *Accessibility Act*, by working to create an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. The *Accessibility Act* is being supported by the province's development of accessibility standards for public and private sector entities, which pertain to six key areas: Goods and Services, Information and Communication, Transportation, Employment, Built Environment, and Education. These standards, once refined and implemented, will have unique implications for the various sectors of the tourism industry, as businesses will need to understand and adapt to new requirements, where applicable.

The Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS), in collaboration with Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS), is committed to supporting the tourism industry to identify, prevent, and eliminate accessibility barriers, so that travellers of all abilities can experience everything Nova Scotia's tourism industry has to offer. It will be important that TIANS' stakeholders fully appreciate what implications, if any, an accessible Nova Scotia will have on their business.

TIANS, with support from government and industry partners, is undertaking the "Improving Accessibility in Nova Scotia's Tourism Industry" initiative to provide resources and tools to enhance industry capacity and ensure travelers can find the information they need to inform their trip planning decisions. A foundational component of this initiative is understanding what will be required of tourism businesses to comply with upcoming accessibility standards, as well as taking stock of what resources currently exist, or need to be developed, to support building industry capacity.

With that in mind, TIANS commissioned Narrative Research to conduct secondary research to create an inventory of requirements and resources to guide future phases of the initiative. More specifically, this phase of the initiative seeks to:

- Understand accessibility standards that might be applicable to key tourism sectors;

- Identify what resources are available to help tourism businesses in Nova Scotia to meet these standards; and

- Conduct a jurisdictional review of industry partners with experience in the development and promotion of accessibility in tourism.

Results of this secondary research initiative will serve as a strong foundation for subsequent phases of TIANS' initiatives to help its stakeholders adapt to Nova Scotia's accessibility requirements.

The following report provides results of the secondary research phase, with a focus on the accessibility standards being developed, resources available, and how the tourism sector has responded in the development and promotion of accessibility in jurisdictions outside Nova Scotia.

Appended to this report is a timeline of the province's plan for standard development in their Access by Design initiative to be barrier-free by 2030 (Appendix A).

Executive Summary

As the Province of Nova Scotia moves toward its goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030, there is much work that can be done to support the tourism industry in identifying, preventing, and eliminating accessibility barriers, so that travellers of all abilities can experience all that Nova Scotia's tourism industry has to offer. This begins by understanding which accessibility standards are applicable to the tourism sector, identifying the available resources to help Nova Scotian tourism businesses to meet these standards, and reviewing how industry partners are promoting accessible tourism in their respective jurisdictions.

Increasing accessibility in Nova Scotia is a work in progress. The first standard recommendations that have been submitted to the Province by the Accessibility Directorate include the Built Environment Standard requirements. Currently, the Directorate is wrapping up its final Phase 2 recommendations for the Built Environment which articulate what will become regulations through the *Accessibility Act*. The Built Environment Standard recommendations pertain to areas such as accessible parking, washrooms, and entrances, which are applicable to virtually all businesses operating across the various tourism sectors. Several resources pertaining to the Built Environment are available from the Accessibility Directorate, as well as from organizations in other jurisdictions, although most are geared towards municipalities and public sector bodies.
The Nova Scotia Government currently offers a limited number of informational resources, grants, and funding opportunities to help organizations meet accessibility standard requirements.

Currently, applying to Nova Scotia's **Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program** appears to be the only feasible option for tourism businesses to receive funding for built environment projects, as this program is specifically geared towards businesses in culture, tourism and heritage. The Federal Government's **Enabling Accessibility Fund** provides another opportunity for small to medium-sized businesses to receive funding for their built environment projects, although applications are closed for this calendar year. A periodic check of the Government of Canada's website will be necessary to determine new funding opportunities.

The Rick Hansen Foundation also represents a key resource for some tourism businesses when planning Built Environment projects. The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ program can help businesses assess their level of accessibility and discover any gaps in the accessibility of their built environment. The Foundation also provides several services to help businesses with accessibility project plans. There is a fee associated with the certification program and accessibility planning services, which may limit its application to larger tourism businesses.

Once Built Environment Standard requirements are in place, tourism businesses can anticipate that future requirements for **Employment Standards** and **Goods and Services Standards** will become regulation under the *Accessibility Act*. A variety of accessibility-related resources are available from other jurisdictions which can be used to inform a framework or guide to support Nova Scotia tourism

businesses on increasing accessibility in relation to employment, customer service, accommodations, and areas relevant to the tourism industry.

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) play a key role in packaging information for travellers who are planning a trip. Destination Ontario's 'Things to do with Accessible Options' page and Hello British Columbia's 'Accessibility page are examples of this to name a few. **Given that it is unrealistic for *all* tourist activities and experiences to be fully accessible**, providing information for visitors with disabilities to create their itinerary around travel needs is a beneficial step in promoting Nova Scotia as an accessible tourism destination. Accessible itineraries are currently being presented by DMOs, while organizations like the Rick Hansen Foundation and Access Now are promoting these businesses on their respective channels of communication.

Aside from the importance of ensuring increased accessibility following Nova Scotia's Access by Design 2030 initiative, findings show there is an intrinsic value in promoting accessibility. In international jurisdictions like Australia and the European Union, accessible tourism is well-established as an industry of its own. There is an opportunity for tourism businesses in Nova Scotia to gain an added advantage by promoting their accessible attributes.

Standard Review

This section of the report provides an overview of the Province of Nova Scotia's 'Access by Design' initiative which intends to remove barriers for persons with disabilities by 2030 through the *Accessibility Act.* To determine the implications of accessibility standards for tourism businesses and organizations in Nova Scotia, this report will outline progress made by the Provincial Government thus far in the identified areas of standard development. More specifically, this analysis will provide information on how standards will be applicable to the following key tourism sectors:
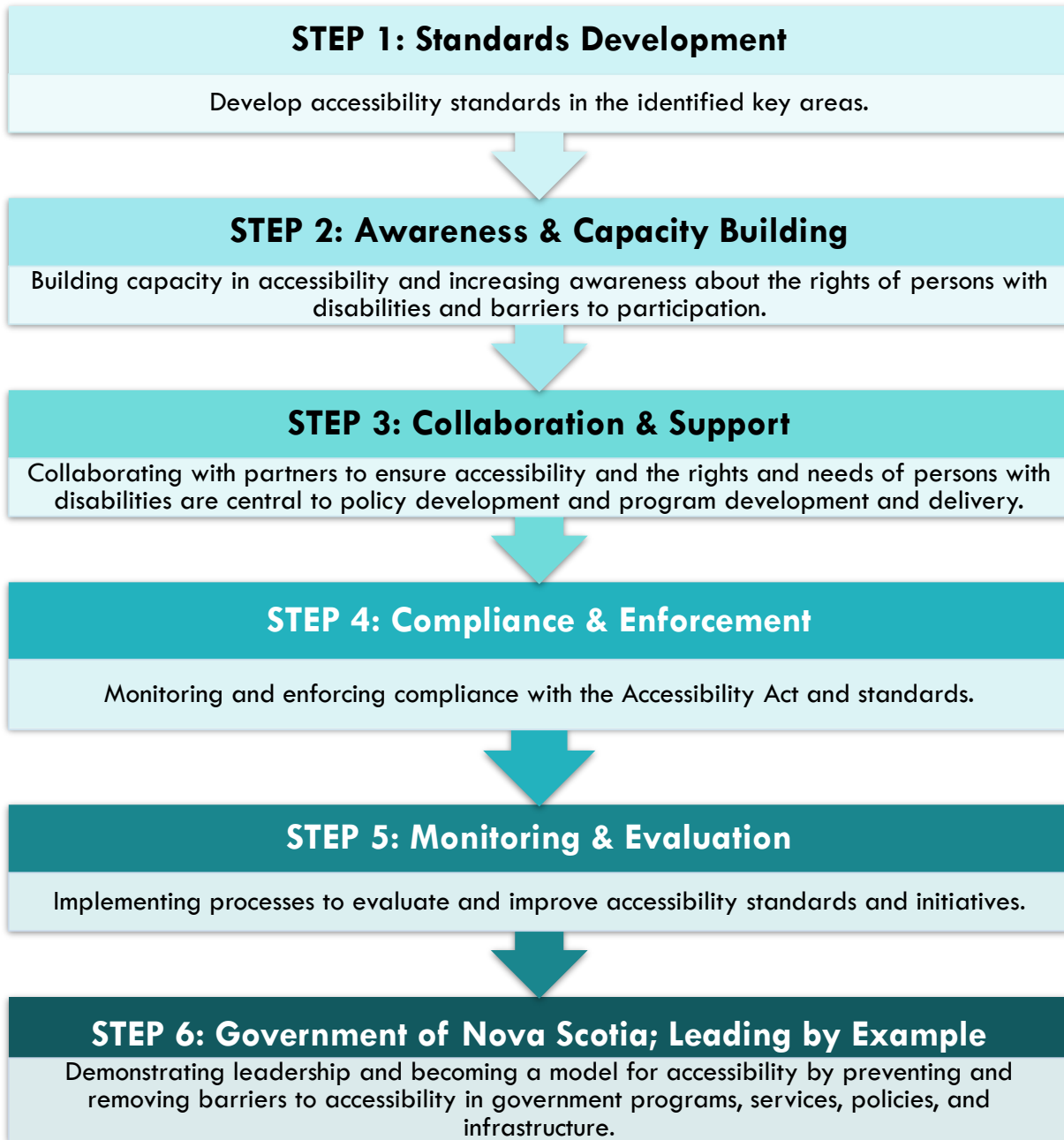
- Fixed Roof Accommodations
- Campgrounds
- Adventure, Recreation, and Attractions
- Travel/Transportation
- Tours
- Food & Beverage
- Events

Gauging the state of current and future accessibility standard development and applications will inform tourism stakeholders' timelines for implementing such standards in their own organization. Additionally, this summary outlines regulations and guidelines relevant to the tourism industry that have been recommended by the Accessibility Directorate.

Accessibility Standard Development

Background

In 2017, the Province of Nova Scotia began its 'Access by Design' initiative, passing the *Accessibility Act* with the goal of effectively removing and preventing barriers for peoples with disabilities by 2030. The Accessibility Directorate (of the Department of Justice) is the primary lead of this undertaking. With the help of various partners such as The Accessibility Advisory Board and Standards Development Committees, the Accessibility Directorate aims to achieve the goals of the *Accessibility Act* by raising awareness regarding **the rights of persons with disabilities, the impact of barriers to participation**, and **the prevention and removal of such barriers** (Department of Justice, 2018)*.* Figure 1 highlights the process that the Province of Nova Scotia will follow before businesses and organizations are expected to meet the *Accessibility Act* requirements, while Figure 2 lists the key areas in which standards will be developed.

STEP 1: Standards Development

Develop accessibility standards in the identified key areas.

STEP 2: Awareness & Capacity Building

Building capacity in accessibility and increasing awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and barriers to participation.

STEP 3: Collaboration & Support

Collaborating with partners to ensure accessibility and the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are central to policy development and program development and delivery.

STEP 4: Compliance & Enforcement

Monitoring and enforcing compliance with the Accessibility Act and standards.

STEP 5: Monitoring & Evaluation

Implementing processes to evaluate and improve accessibility standards and initiatives.

STEP 6: Government of Nova Scotia; Leading by Example

Demonstrating leadership and becoming a model for accessibility by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility in government programs, services, policies, and infrastructure.

Figure 1: Six Step Process (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021).

Of note, the six components of this process are occurring for each key area in standard development, and also in an overlapping fashion. For the most recent detailed implementation timeline provided by the Province, see Appendix A (Department of Justice, 2018).

In reference to the first step of the process highlighted in Figure 1, accessibility standards will be developed in six key areas as depicted in Figure 2.
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Built Environment	•Address gaps in current regulations on accessibility in buildings, streets, sidewalks, & shared spaces.
Education	•Create barrier-free learning environments for public school, college & university students
Employment	•Ensure equal access to meaningful employment for persons with disabilities
Goods and Services	•Address use of assistive devices & training on how to serve persons with disabilities
Information and Communications	•Ensure all can share & receive the same information via accessible website formats and technologies
Transportation	•Facilitate easier travel for all in rural & urban areas of the province

Figure 2: Areas of Accessibility Standards Development (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021; Accessibility Directorate, 2019; Department of Justice, 2018).

After the Nova Scotia Government formally implements each accessibility standard in its own practice, public sector bodies and other businesses will then be expected to follow suit (Department of Justice, 2018).

Status of Standard Development

To date, **Built Environment** and **Education Standard** recommendations have been made public and have been forwarded to the Accessibility Directorate by the Accessibility Advisory Board, who are responsible for putting this 'new law into practice' via steps 2 to 6 in Figure 1 (Department of Justice, 2018). A report on **Employment Standard** recommendations is not yet available but will likely be made available this year (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021). The recommendations from these developed key standard areas that are relevant to the tourism industry will be discussed further in this report.

It is anticipated that the Province's timeline in developing standards in the six identified areas (Figure 2) (Appendix A), *will be pushed ahead* due to the following factors:

- An independent review of the Access by Design initiative is currently underway to determine if any necessary changes are needed to the *Accessibility Act* and the standard development processes (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021). This review is expected to be completed later this year (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021).

- COVID-19 has decelerated Access by Design's goal of an accessible province by 2030, where the Accessibility Advisory Board prioritized managing the barriers created by the pandemic for people with disabilities, as well as the housing crisis. (Ministry of Justice, 2022; Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021).

- The Province had a goal of taking *one year* per key area to create standards (Figure 2), while planning to undergo *Figure 1 steps 2-6* in subsequent years leading up to 2030 (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021; Department of Justice, 2018). Based on the original timeline (Appendix A), the standard development process is behind schedule by about one year.[1]

It is realistic to think that tourism businesses may be expected to begin their Standard implementation by early 2025 for the *first* key area developed, the built environment (Department of Justice, 2018). This, however, is dependent on the NS Government and Public Sector bodies each completing their phase of implementation (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021).

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[1] Build Environment and Education standards were scheduled to be enacted by the beginning of 2021 and implemented by the NS Government by the beginning of 2022, but according to the most recent Phase 1 recommendation reports, Phase 2 recommendations for both standards are still in the process of being refined by the Accessibility Advisory Board and submitted for approval to the Accessibility Directorate

Accessibility Standard Recommendations

Nova Scotia's Standard Development Committees (SDCs) forward their recommendations to the Accessibility Advisory Board (who then approves submission to the Accessibility Directorate) in *two phases* (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021):

Phase 1: General recommendations

- These recommendations offer a foundation for each topic area and focus on addressing gaps in existing regulations (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020). As previously mentioned, general recommendations for **Built Environment Standards** and **Education Standards** have been made public, while **Employment Standards** have yet to be made available.

Phase 2: Technical and detailed recommendations.

- These are meant to *update, improve*, or *introduce* new codes and guidelines for the standards in question. Recommendations for regulations in this phase will also provide more detailed expectations for the implementation of Phase 1 recommendations (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020).

- Phase 2 recommendations may also be based on feedback received as the Standards work their way through the process outlined in Figure 1, specifically in the 'Monitoring and Evaluation' and the 'Government of Nova Scotia: Leading by Example' steps.

- According to the Accessibility Advisory Board, Phase 2 recommendations for the **Built Environment Standards** and the **Education Standards** are still in progress (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021).

Instruments for Standard Implementation

As far as businesses are concerned, *legal compulsion will not be the sole method of implementing and monitoring compliance with accessibility standards.* Instead, a range of regulatory and non-regulatory instruments will be utilized by the province. As stated by the Accessibility Directorate:

> Regulation is a powerful and sometimes necessary instrument of public policy, but it has limits and is not always the best choice. It is envisioned that accessibility standards will be implemented through a constellation of complementary instruments (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020).

The Accessibility Directorate's identification and definition of these instruments is outlined in Figure 3.

IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUMENTS
Policy: A statement of intent by an institution/organization.
Regulations: A legal requirement for a specific undertaking; it could be new regulation or amendment(s) to existing regulations such as the NS Building Code.
Administrative Order: An order for undertaking, which could be a prescribed process within a specific administrative unit such as the provincial government.
Guidelines: A recommended approach or course of action.
Financial Incentives: This may include grants, tax rebates, or other measures to encourage compliance.
Support Programs: An initiative to support the implementation of the standards; an example would be a training program for those implementing the standard.

Figure 3: Instruments for implementing accessibility standards (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020).

The following provides further detail on the province's developed accessibility standard recommendations, as well as those that are yet to be developed, including what holds relevance to the tourism industry.

Built Environment

Built Environment Standards hold relevance to all key sectors of the tourism industry, as they refer to *accessibility to buildings, parking lots, and pathways* (Figure 2). Phase 1 recommendations were made public in October 2020 (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020).

Built Environment Standard recommendations are organized under the following themes: **accessible parking, pedestrian facilities, exterior approaches, emergency systems, site selection, wayfinding and signage, washrooms,** and **interiors** (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020)

Specific recommendations that are *applicable to tourism operators and businesses in all key sectors* were pulled directly from the Accessibility Advisory Board's *Built Environment Recommendations Phase 1 Report* and are listed in this report (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020). *Note that recommendations pertaining to the Municipality's responsibilities, such as curb and sidewalk maintenance, have been omitted.* The implementation instruments associated with each recommendation are also identified. Furthermore, work of the national Canadian Standards Association (CSA), the Rick Hansen Foundation, and the American with Disabilities Act were used in the development of these standards (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020).

Accessible Parking
Pertains to street parking as well as public and private parking lots

- **REGULATION:** Accessible parking spaces must adhere to the specifications outlined in CSA B-651 (i.e., minimum required number of accessible parking spaces), especially if a parking lot is being changed or constructed. For height allowances, lots will follow the NS Building Code. *Exemptions may be made for lots that can prove undue hardship except for the minimum required number of accessible parking spaces as stipulated in CSA B-651.*

- **REGULATION:** Regular maintenance of painting accessibility symbols, parking space lines, and vertical 'accessible parking' signage for both paved and gravel lots.

- **REGULATION / BUILDING CODE AMENDMENT:** All accessible parking lots must have a surface level that is firm, flat, and well-maintained. A safe path to exit and enter parking lots to and from a destination must be ensured so individuals can avoid passing through path of traffic.

- **REGULATION:** Accessible pedestrian paths of travel need to be clearly marked and must include: pavement markings and vertical signage that are 70% colour contrast at all areas of traffic crossing, light levels of 20-50 lux illuminating path from parking spaces to main entrance, and marked vehicular speed limits.

- **GUIDELINE:** Lots with a gated entrance will provide different modes of communication should an individual need assistance (i.e., text message, phone call, email).

Exterior Approaches
Entrances and exits to buildings, and the path of travel from the sidewalk or road to the building.

- **REGULATION / ZONING BY-LAW:** Planning process for new construction or renovated buildings must be adjusted to account for accessible routes of travel from public spaces to main entrance of buildings, and should follow the CSA B-651 standards for signage, widths, grade, curb-cuts, and cane detectable fixed items. Exterior lighting levels must be 20-50 lux.

- **POLICY:** Location of accessible building entrances will be highly visible from sidewalks and open spaces. If not possible, signage providing clear direction to main entrance must be installed.

- **GUIDELINE:** Main building must be visible from a distance, using 20-50 lux lighting.

- **GUIDELINE:** Pathways from sidewalk or parking lot to accessible entrances and exits of public buildings will be free from obstructions and clearly marked with tactile indicator strips and 70% colour contrasted marking and clear signage as applicable, in accordance with the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time.

- **REGULATION:** Tactile indicators (as outlined in the CSA B-651 standard) will be used at top of stairs to signal a descending path of travel.

- **REGULATION:** "There will be an alternative compliance mechanism for those buildings that are unable to meet the standard because of structural or space constraints."

- **REGULATION / BUILDING CODE AMENDMENT:** Glass on exterior doors will be utilized to allow visual access to the other side.

Emergency Systems

Include areas of refuge, evacuation plans, fire doors, and building procedures – which can be different depending on the type of building and the requirements in the Fire Code.

- **REGULATION:** All buildings currently required by the Fire Code to have an emergency plan will post evacuation instructions near the elevators for the building that include a floor plan diagram with clearly marked exit points and areas of refuge. They will be constructed of non-glare material that is not combustible, in braille and tactile, large print, and in high contrast. All signage will be mounted 1200mm from the centre of the sign to the finished floor, near the emergency exit. There will be a clear area of 1200mm x 750mm in front of the sign. technology to broadcast evacuation instructions both visually and to assistive hearing devices in an emergency in newly constructed buildings.

- **GUIDELINE:** All public and private organizations will update emergency building evacuation procedures to include information about how to assist persons with different disabilities during an emergency evacuation. Procedures must include training for building operators and staff on how to safely and efficiently assist persons with disabilities, Deaf and neurodivergent persons during an emergency. A copy of the updated emergency evacuation plan will be forwarded to responding authorities.

- **POLICY:** Requirement for visual fire alarms in public and commercial buildings. LCD emergency systems that provide captioning are required.

- **BUILDING CODE AMENDMENT:** There will be an area of refuge at each level of one fire exit designated stairway in all buildings that the public can access. The area of refuge will include blade signage and wall mounted signs and will be large enough to accommodate at least two mobility devices (clear width for a person in a wheelchair and a service animal is 850 x 1200mm). An area of refuge shall have a communication system that once initiated is hands free and is not higher than 1200mm from the floor and connected to an emergency response system and that can be used by an individual with hearing loss or visual impairment.

- **BUILDING CODE AMENDMENT:** Fire doors will include a window. Emergency exit and refuge doors will be 70% colour contrast with adjacent surfaces.

Site Selection

The ways in which government and other public bodies choose the location of their buildings and spaces.

- **ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER:** Any site selection process for new Government of Nova Scotia, <u>Public Sector Bodies,</u> and municipal buildings/spaces should be determined with community consultation, including representation from the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee, and must include accessibility criteria as follows:

a. Active Transportation / Sidewalk access directly to the site where possible.
b. In areas that offer public transportation, transit stops will be as close as possible to the site entrance (main building entrance) while still obeying all relevant bylaws and site usage regulations.
c. Accessible parking available on-site (per provisions of Nova Scotia Building Code. Where on-site parking is not possible, accessible street parking spaces will be located in front or, or as close as possible to, the main entrance.
d. Easy and safe drop off locations, close to the main building entrance (per provisions of Nova Scotia Building Code 3.8.3.4 Parking Stalls and Exterior Passenger-Loading Zones.
e. Barrier free paths of travel (per specifications of Nova Scotia Building Code 3.8.3.2 Barrier Free Path of Travel) are provided from sidewalks/transit stops to site main entrance.
f. Facility/site is located close to the community and clientele that it is intended to serve.

Washrooms

Washrooms made available to the public.

- **POLICY:** The requirement for accessible washrooms in all public and commercial buildings will be stated in Municipal Accessibility Plans and implemented through the building code and public infrastructure investment by provincial and municipal governments. *These requirements are for new and renovated buildings.*

- **GUIDELINE:** All buildings will have clear signage in the lobby and reception areas outlining where the washroom is located. Washrooms will be in close proximity to the lobby and reception areas of the building.

- **REGULATION:** All accessible washrooms will be situated on a barrier free path of travel and will be accessible via an automatic door opener, or a screen wall entry. Entry door to allow 850mm clearance. Power door to remain open for at least 5 seconds and any turns to ensure allowance for 1700mm turning radius.

- **REGULATION:** Accessible washrooms will meet the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time.

- **GUIDELINE:** All washroom accessories will be in contrasting colours by at least 70% against adjacent surfaces.

- **GUIDELINE:** All buildings offering essential services to the public, including areas such as: Community Services, Justice, Public Service Access Centres, Education, Recreation, Libraries, and Healthcare will have at least one adult change table that will meet the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time and accompanying lift in accessible washrooms for people of all genders can access. All washrooms without adult change tables will have signage at the entrance pointing visitors to the accessible washroom with an adult change table. The requirement for adult change tables and lifts also applies to large retail shopping centres and public facilities such as airports.

- **GUIDELINE:** All accessible washrooms will have emergency lighting. Buildings that are staffed will have an emergency alert system that connects to a staff member who can coordinate assistance. When there is no staff member available, the alert will be directly linked to 911.

Interiors
Includes hallways, elevators, doorways, stairs, and how the building is navigated.

- **GUIDELINE:** All buildings will have a logical and direct path of travel with accompanying signage, ensuring all users are able to easily locate and access key facilities. This includes ensuring that there are areas designated as clear pathways that are unobstructed and that major destination points should be visible from multiple places within a building.

- **GUIDELINE:** Emergency navigation and areas of refuge will be included in the design of interior spaces.

- **GUIDELINE:** All new and renovated public and commercial buildings, including shopping areas, will include adjustable lighting options for areas of public gatherings, such as meeting rooms. These options will include dimmers on the main light and the availability of task lighting lamps.

- **REGULATION:** New construction or renovation of hotels/motels must comply with the Nova Scotia Building Code. New construction or renovated hotels will ensure colour contrast in all areas of the hotel, with a specific focus on stairwells. The ADA standards for hotel rooms will be reviewed to determine if there are enhancements that can be made to hotel/motel rooms in the Nova Scotia Building Code.

- **REGULATION:** Hotels will provide accessible rooms on the lower floors, located close to the elevator. Floors where accessible rooms are located will use low friction materials, suitable for mobility devices.

- **GUIDELINE:** Elevators must meet the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time. They must also have technology that is visible in the elevator, such as a large tactile emergency button that will initiate emergency services. Elevators will also have an auditory announcement at each floor.

- **REGULATION:** All doorways in Provincially and Municipally owned buildings, and buildings offering Education and Health care must meet CSA B-651 as amended from time to time.

- **REGULATION:** Stairways, ramps, and moving walkways will meet the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time. Additionally, all stairwells will include tactile indicators at the top and bottom of the stairs and a colour contrast nosing on each stair tread.

- **POLICY:** Doors, except where privacy or safety dictates, will utilize some amount of glass to allow visual access to the other side

- **GUIDELINE:** Interiors will use contrasting colours that enhance depth perception but will not create an excess of visual noise.

- **GUIDELINE:** Consideration will be given to sound reverberation on hard surfaces. Low pile carpet or sound tile will be utilized in public spaces to help absorb noise.

- **REGULATION:** *There will be an alternative compliance mechanism for those buildings that are unable to meet the standard because of structural or space constraints*

Parks and Recreation

- **REGULATION:** All newly constructed trails will have accessible sections at the designated trailhead when slope and surface allow. Nova Scotia will adopt the Rick Hansen Foundation Certification Guidelines for accessible trails. Accessibility will be reviewed as part of annual maintenance plans.

- **POLICY:** Siting of new accessible trails/ beaches/ outdoor spaces will include consideration of access to transit where available.

- **POLICY:** The Government of Nova Scotia will work with Canadian Parks Council and The Nova Scotia Trails Federation to create a website that will include a standard accessibility rating for all trails listed. It will also include a detailed description of the trail, including length, difficulty level, and where to expect to find points of interest along the trail.

- **REGULATION:** Where a paved trail crosses a paved road, warning tactile indicators are required. Where a paved trail is near a municipal sidewalk, the trail will be connected to the sidewalk.

- **REGULATION:** Street furniture location and dimensions in parks and trails will meet provincial standard stated in pedestrian facilities.

- **REGULATION:** Parks and recreational facilities, including trails, play spaces, and access routes, will be marked with braille and tactile high contrast signage at accessible heights. This signage will state what accessible amenities are available, as well as the slope, distance, and difficulty level of trails.

- **REGULATION:** In the case of outdoor eating areas, menu signage will include pictures of food, a braille menu, or a handheld menu made available as required. Signage will meet provincial standards stated in Wayfinding and Signage.

- **POLICY:** New or renovated outdoor play spaces and the path of travel to them will be accessible for both children with disabilities and adult caregivers with disabilities. Ground surfaces will be shock absorbing, while still wheelchair accessible. Play structures will involve a variety of sensory experiences, including low sensory, tactile, and music.

- **REGULATION:** New or renovated outdoor eating areas will allocate at least 20% of seating as accessible, including wheelchair accessible picnic tables and room for a wheelchair or mobility device adjacent to benches. Outdoor eating tables will be round and accessible for visual communication. Path of travel to the seating will be barrier free.

- **REGULATION:** Newly constructed or renovated municipally owned swimming pools will have accessible ramps into the shallow end or a lift, and 70% colour contrast along the pool's edge and access points. Tactile warning indicators will be included on edge of pools.

- **POLICY:** One public beach per recreation/tourism area of the province will be accessible using beach chairs, mobile mats and where possible the accessible beaches should be located near transit routes, and barrier free path of travel from the transit stop and drop off point to the beach.

- **REGULATION:** Services counters must comply with the provisions of the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time.

- **REGULATION:** All recreational facilities will have accessible change rooms, including adult change tables, accessible showers, and accessible lockers that meet the CSA B-651 Standard as amended from time to time. All accessible beaches will have accessible washrooms and changing rooms.

Education and Employment

Education Standard recommendations are less applicable to the tourism industry since they pertain specifically to public school, college, and university instruction (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2020). The Phase 1 recommendations are presented as 'Foundational Commitments' rather than detailed standard recommendations which have yet to be finalized. Similarly, **Employment Standard** Phase 1 recommendations have yet to be circulated publicly (Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021). However, once available, both Education and Employment Standard recommendations will be relevant to tourism businesses looking to adopt more inclusive hiring practices and raise awareness among their employees on proper etiquette when interacting with people living with a disability.

Remaining Standards

Based on the latest information provided by the Accessibility Advisory Board, the order of key areas where accessibility standards will be developed are as follows:

- Goods and Services
- Information and Communication
- Transportation

The Goods and Services SDC is planning to begin its work in late 2022 / early 2023 (Communications Nova Scotia, 2021; Accessibility Advisory Board, 2021).

Timeline for Implementation

As previously mentioned, Tourism Nova Scotia was prescribed as a Public Sector Body by the NS Government. After one year of Standard implementation (for each key area) by the NS government, Public Sector bodies will be expected to begin their Standard implementation process, marked by forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee that is then responsible for creating an accessibility plan, which *should* be met in the duration of *one year*. This plan will also act as a guideline for tourism businesses to follow once they are required to implement accessibility standards.

Resources

The Nova Scotia Government currently offers a limited number of informational resources, grants, and funding opportunities to help organizations meet accessibility standard requirements. Accordingly, to gauge the role that other organizations play in increasing accessibility, information was collected from destination marketing organizations, non-profit organizations, other provinces, international jurisdictions, and more. Though there are limited funding opportunities currently available to tourism businesses, several guidelines are available that would help tourism businesses prepare to meet future regulations of the *Accessibility Act.*

Grants and Funding

There are currently not many opportunities for tourism businesses to receive provincial and/or federal funding for Built Environment projects to meet regulations. (Department of Justice, 2018). Further details are provided below on the provincial and federal funding opportunities currently available (with highlights shown in Figure 4).
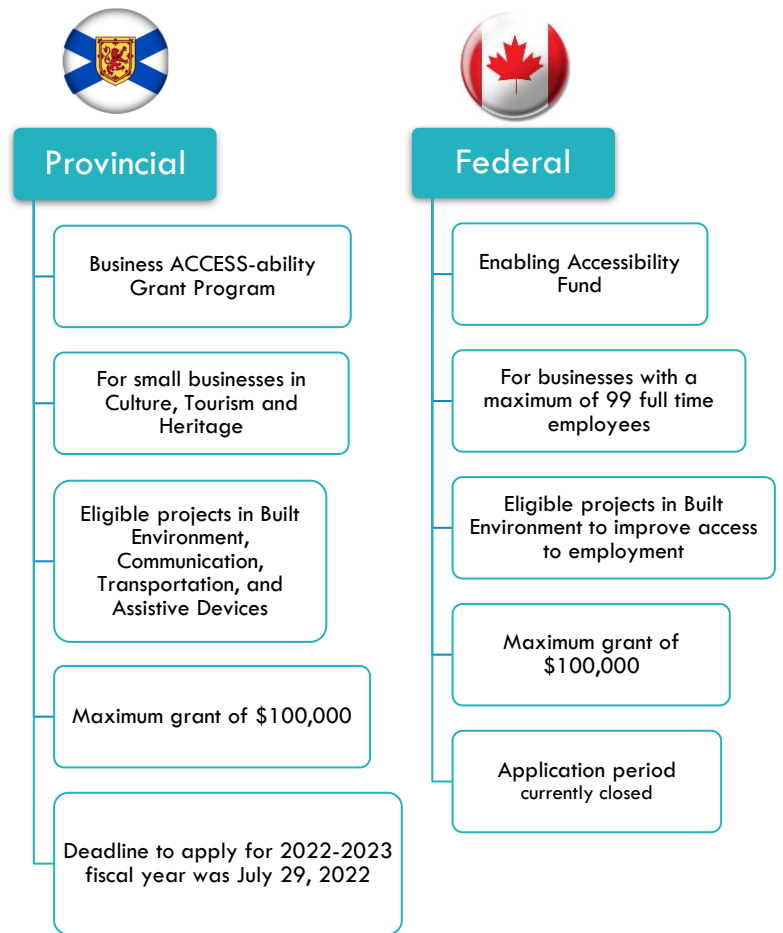
Provincial

- Business ACCESS-ability Grant Program
- For small businesses in Culture, Tourism and Heritage
- Eligible projects in Built Environment, Communication, Transportation, and Assistive Devices
- Maximum grant of $100,000
- Deadline to apply for 2022-2023 fiscal year was July 29, 2022

Federal

- Enabling Accessibility Fund
- For businesses with a maximum of 99 full time employees
- Eligible projects in Built Environment to improve access to employment
- Maximum grant of $100,000
- Application period currently closed

Figure 4: Grant programs offered by the Government of Nova Scotia and the Federal Government

Provincial Funding

The **Business ACCESS-ability Grant Program** is offered by the NS Government for small businesses in Culture, Tourism, and Heritage. *The deadline to apply for the 2022-2023 fiscal year was July 29, 2022.* (Government of Nova Scotia, 2022). There are five project categories that are eligible for grants through this Program:

1. **Built Environment** – installing ramps, accessible washrooms, door openers, and so forth.
2. **Accessible Communications Services** – ensuring all customers, clients and employees can access information related to a business.
3. **Assistive Devices** – ensuring employees and consumers who are persons with disabilities have the devices they need to effectively do their jobs and facilitates access to places of business.
4. **Universal Design Capacity Building** – training in the field of Universal Design for both technical services professionals and for persons with disabilities wishing to better understand its value
   - *Eligibility for this category is only for educational institutions and organizations that provide training and educational services for the business community.*
5. **Accessible Transportation –** providing support for businesses to improve access to transportation services.

Examples of project types that received funding through the Business ACCESS-ability Grant Program include lift installations, accessible washrooms, ramps and doorways, automated doors, paving for parking and accessibility, accessible rental cabins, and accessible renovations (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020). The maximum grant available per applicant is **$100,000** and that can be allocated to more than one project-type (Government of Nova Scotia, 2022).

The Business ACCESS-ability Grant Program is the only program offered by the Province that is applicable to Tourism businesses. All of its other funding opportunities are aimed towards municipalities and not-for-profit organizations, primarily relating to transportation (Accessibility Directorate, 2019). As standards continue to be developed and implemented, the Province has stated that the Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage will continue to help organizations increase their capacity for accessibility by providing funding for such improvements through the ACCESS-ability grant programs (Government of Nova Scotia, 2022; Department of Justice, 2018).

More information on the Business ACCESS-ability Grant Program can be found at Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program | Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (novascotia.ca)

Federal Funding

The Federal Government offers a grant program, the **Enabling Accessibility Fund**, that provides funding for small to mid-sized projects aimed to expand accessibility in the Built Environment (ramps, accessible doors, screen reader devices and hearing loop systems, lifts, elevators, etc.) (Government of Canada, 2022). However, projects can only receive funding from this program if they are specifically intended to make communities and workplaces more accessible for persons with disabilities; the former being relevant to municipalities, while the latter is *relevant to organizations looking to increase access to employment for people with disabilities*. Organizations eligible to receive funding for *small projects* (up to $100,000) must be not-for-profit, a business with fewer than 100 full time employees, a small municipality with a population under 125,000, an Indigenous organization, or a territorial government (Government of Canada, 2022).

That said, tourism businesses can be eligible for *small project* funding through this Fund under the premise that such a project is intended to remove barriers to employment for people living with disabilities. Eligible construction activities can include ramps, accessible doors, accessible washrooms, accessible lifts, and elevators (Government of Canada, 2021). **Detailed diagrams for each of these project types are available for organizations to follow when drafting a project plan with their contractor**.

More information on the Enabling Accessibility Fund for Small Projects can be found at https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/enabling-accessibility-fund-small-projects.html.

Toolkits, Guides, and Resources

As would be expected, informational resources (toolkits, guides, other resources) offered by the Province of Nova Scotia are limited given that the development of accessibility standards is underway. It is expected that resources will become available as standards become regulation and once private businesses are expected to meet such requirements.

Resources available from organizations (e.g., The Rick Hansen Foundation, Accessibility Services Canada), other provinces (Ontario, British Columbia) and international jurisdictions (Australia, England) provide a solid foundation to direct the development of tourism-specific toolkits for Nova Scotian businesses to follow when preparing to meeting the *Accessibility Act* regulations. These resources cover various areas of standard development such as Information and Communications, Goods and Services, Employment, Built Environment and Transportation. Further, several tourism-specific guides for businesses in the industry (including hospitality, recreation, tours, and events) are available to improve businesses' accessibility.

Figures 5a and 5b outline available resources that may hold relevance for the tourism sector.

Built Environment

Accessibility and the Built Environment Webinar *Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

The Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces *Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

Ingenium Accessibility Standards for Exhibitions *Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

Design of Public Spaces Standard *AccessForward*

Universal Design Recommendations for Accessible Ramps *ACP-862 Universal Design Recommendations Accessible Ramps (rickhansen.com)*

Universal Design Recommendations for Accessible Entrance and Automated Doors *ACP-862 Universal Design Recommendations Accessible Entrance and Automated Doors (rickhansen.com)*

Universal Design Recommendations for Accessible Elevators *ACP-862 Universal Design Recommendations Accessible Elevators (rickhansen.com)*

Universal Design Recommendations for Accessible Reception / Service Areas *ACP-862 Universal Design Recommendations Reception-Service Area (rickhansen.com)*

The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada

Provincial Accessibility Standards for the Build Environment *NOT YET AVAILABLE* Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada

Events / Meetings

Guide to Accessible Festivals & Outdoor Events *Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

Planning Accessible Events *Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

Planning Accessible Meetings and Events *Accessibility resources - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada*

Design of Public Spaces Standard *AccessForward*

Information & Communication

Information and Communications Standard Module *AccessForward - Information and Communication Standard*

Accessible Web Design *Accessible Website Design | Destination BC*

Website Accessibility Audits ($) *Website Accessibility Audits – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

Contrast and Colour Checkers *Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)*

Figure 5a: A list of accessibility resources from various sources

Tourism-Specific

Manual on Accessible Tourism for All
https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-04/aamanualturismoaccesibleomt-facseng.pdf

Accessibility Attributes Checklist for Tourism Businesses DBC-Accessible-Attributes-Checklist-FINAL.pdf (destinationbc.ca)

Inclusive Tourism: Making your business more accessible and inclusive
https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/inclusive-tourism/resource/6edc79fe-36ff-4cb1-a8e2-6ca2658d0be7

Customer Access Checklist for Tourism Services, Facilities and Venues
https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/access-checklist-tourism.pdf

Creating Accessible Hospitality TIAO-Accessible-Tourism-Package_Accessible-Hospitality.pdf (tiaontario.ca)

Accessible Tourism – it's your business: Accessibility Resource Kit
Tourism_Accessibility_Digital.pdf (business.vic.gov.au)

Accessible Tourism Training Accessible Tourism Training by ENAT

Travel Manitoba Accessibility Plan Tourism Reports & Publications | Tourism Industry | Travel Manitoba

Transportation

Transportation Standard Module
AccessForward

Employment

Employment Standard Module
AccessForward

Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Promoting People with Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Employers
Microsoft Word - Employing_People_with_Disabilities_TOOLKIT_February_3_2015_v2.docx (accessibilitycanada.ca)

The Road to Inclusion: Integrating people with disabilities into the workplace The-Road-to-Inclusion-Integrating-people-with-disabilities-into-the-workplace-Deloitte.pdf (accessibilitycanada.ca)

Customer Service

Customer Service Standard Module
AccessForward

How to make customer service accessible How to make customer service accessible | ontario.ca

Recreation

Pathways to Recreation Resources – Accessibility Services Canada (accessibilitycanada.ca)

Guidelines for Accessible Recreation
Revised+September+5th+edition+of++April+7+Combined+Audit+&+Accessibility+Report.pdf

Figure 5b: A list of accessibility resources from various sources

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Directorate

In addition to the previously outlined resources, the Accessibility Directorate offers guidance to public sector organizations on how to adhere to the *Accessibility Act*. **'The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Prescribed Public Sector Bodies'** is one such guide (Accessibility Directorate, 2019). Though this guide is geared specifically for public sector bodies, it provides important points for all organizations to consider when developing their own accessibility plans, including:

- Defining the organization's vision or commitment
- Identifying the current situation (i.e., current barriers to accessibility, budget for new projects)
- Reviewing policies that are already in place or under development (how the organization interacts with employees and stakeholders)
- Undertaking specific actions to remove accessibility barriers and increase capacity

More details can be retrieved from: https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/docs/online-Accessible-Events-Guide.pdf

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate also offers guides for planning events: **Planning Accessible Meetings and Events** and **Planning Accessible Online Meetings and Events**.

Both guides provide important considerations for planning an online or in-person event such as: *scheduling, promotions and registration, communications and materials,* and *meeting practices*. Detailed checklists are also provided for in-person events specifically relating to *selecting a venue, setting up a room, chairing, or moderating events,* and *communicating respectfully* (Accessibility Directorate, 2018). The links to these resources are included in Figure 5a.

The Accessibility Directorate recently made its '**Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces'** available. This document offers methods on how to identify barriers in accessibility in built environment areas such as ramps, trails, parks and playgrounds, picnic tables, reception areas, and doorways. The Directorate also states that this document will be replaced by a formal provincial accessibility standard for the built environment, which is currently being developed (Accessibility Directorate, 2022). In the meantime, businesses and organizations can refer to these guidelines when looking to improve the accessibility of their indoor and outdoor spaces.
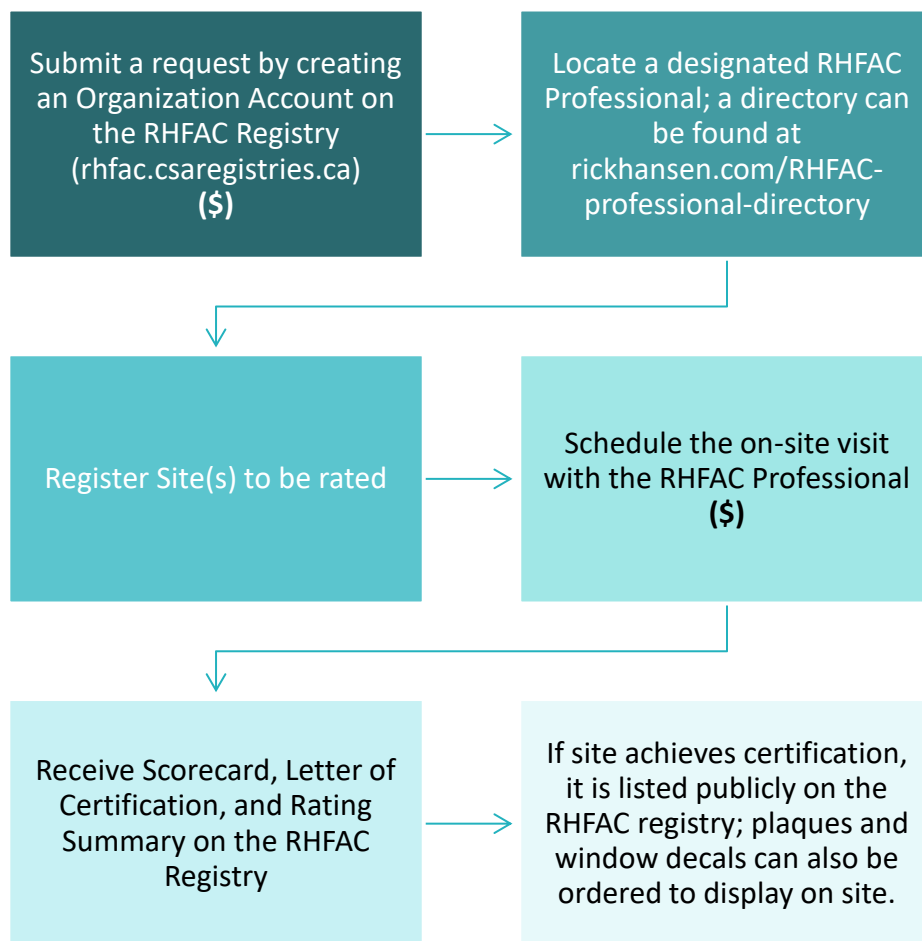
The Rick Hansen Foundation

The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) is a national rating system that organizations can use to measure the level of access to their buildings and receive a certification that they can then use to attract more diverse visitors, staff, and customers (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2022). **Although there is a cost associated with certification, the RHFAC could be useful for larger tourism businesses looking to assess their current level of accessibility and identify gaps and barriers as they formulate their accessibility plan.**

There are six steps to receiving RHFAC:

Submit a request by creating an Organization Account on the RHFAC Registry (rhfac.csaregistries.ca) **($)**	Locate a designated RHFAC Professional; a directory can be found at rickhansen.com/RHFAC-professional-directory
Register Site(s) to be rated	Schedule the on-site visit with the RHFAC Professional **($)**
Receive Scorecard, Letter of Certification, and Rating Summary on the RHFAC Registry	If site achieves certification, it is listed publicly on the RHFAC registry; plaques and window decals can also be ordered to display on site.

(Rick Hansen Foundation, 2020)

There is an **application fee** of $2,350, while a rating fee is charged directly by the RHFAC Professional (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2020). A detailed step-by-step process in beginning the accessibility certification process can be found at: https://www.rickhansen.com/sites/default/files/2020-05/acp-847final-guide-rhf-accessibility-certification-v30-may-2020.pdf

The RHF also offers a variety of other accessibility advisory services (Figure 6)

A quote for these services will be provided if an enquiry is sent to the RHF team (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2022). More details can be found at: Accessibility Advisory Services | Rick Hansen Foundation

Universal Design recommendations for the **Built Environment** are provided by RHF as well, with guidelines for: *Accessible ramps, accessible entrance and automated doors, accessible elevators,* and *accessible reception/service areas* (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2022). **These tools could be helpful when businesses are designing their accessibility plans and projects.** The link to these resources can be found in Figure 5a.

RepectAbility Disability Awareness Training

- seminars designed to help participants understand disability and use inclusive language

Accessibility Criteria Design Manual

- A customized guide to help guide an organization's project development process

Architectural Drawing Review

- A review of new construction and/or retrofit projects to verify early on that accessibility requirements are met.

Facility Accessibility Assessment

- Assess current level of accessibility to receive recommendations for improvement; a preliminary RHFAC rating is also included.

Getting to RHFAC Gold

- Key design considerations to achieve best practices in accessibility.

RHFAC Rating Project Management

- Identify trends and prioritize accessibility improvements to inform an organization's accessibility strategy

Figure 6: Accessibility advisory services offered by the RHF

Accessibility Services Canada

Accessibility Services Canada combines a diverse array of resources from across Canada, though most are in the context of Ontario legislation (Accessibility Services Canada, n.d.). Available resources related to website accessibility, built environment, and events, meetings, and festivals are outlined below.

Website Accessibility

- **Website Accessibility Audits** are offered for businesses looking to build their organization's web capacity in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Quotes are provided once a website address is emailed (Accessibility Services Canada, n.d.).

- Related to this, Accessibility Services Canada also provides links to external **'Contrast and Colour Checkers'** webpages, which assess if there is at least a 70% difference in colour value between text and background tone.

- The **Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design** is a highly detailed guide on building accessible printed communications through considerations of grid, hierarchy, colour, typographic legibility, and more. The handbook also covers online accessibility of web pages, such as text alternatives, a screen reader, screen magnifiers, customization of individual preferences in colour, size and typeface, etc.

Built Environment

- **Accessibility and the Built Environment** is a webinar that goes over Building Code requirements, how to ensure barrier-free path of travel, required ramp slope allowances, etc. This resource specifically pertains to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), so some regulations may not align with that of Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act.*

- The **Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces,** created by the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) in support of the Government of Ontario, is a comprehensive resource that provides checklists for increasing accessibility in outdoor play spaces, beaches and recreational trails. This Guide also addresses exterior paths of travel, outdoor public eating areas, and accessible parking.

- **Pathways to Recreation** is a guidebook on Ontario's Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces (similar to the resource listed previously), which includes technical requirements for beach access routes (boardwalks, ramps), outdoor play spaces (playgrounds), exterior paths of travel, obtaining services (service counters), and more.

- **Ingenium Accessibility Standards for Exhibitions** provides some considerations to the built environment that are most relevant to museums and heritage sites, such as allowing room for turning space, displaying objects, cases and vitrines, seating, and mechanical interactives and tactile experiences.

Events, Meetings, and Festivals

- **Guide to Accessible Festivals & Outdoor Events** details how festival organizations can comply with the AODA regarding topics like accessible parking spaces, public transportation, paths of travel, stages and seating, rest areas/quiet spaces, weather shelters, signs, communication supports, maps and information, and more.

- **Planning Accessible Events** is a guideline created by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, with the Government of Ontario, which contains an Accessible Events Checklist for items such as venue, food and refreshments, room set-up, speeches and presentations, service animals, invitations and promotion, and volunteers.

Links to these resources can be found in Figures 5a and 5b. Other resources compiled by Accessibility Resources Canada can be found at https://accessibilitycanada.ca/resources/

Access Forward

Access Forward is an organization that provides free training modules that fulfil the requirements of the AODA, in partnership with the Ontario government (Access Forward, n.d.). Training modules center around six key standards as defined by Ontario's accessibility requirements: **Customer Service Standard, General Requirements, Information and Communications Standard, Employment Standard, Design of Public Spaces Standard,** and **Transportation Standard.** The links to these resources can be found in Figures 5a and 5b.

South Shore

Though the following organization is not directly related to tourism, it does promote recreational activities that coincide with the touristic activities that Nova Scotia offers. **South Shore Connect** is: "a partnership of regional stakeholders from Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties whose goal is to help support families, schools, health authorities, local government and community organizations to increase the number of children and youth who are active enough for health benefits," (South Shore Connect, 2018).

- South Shore Connect used an accessibility consulting firm to develop *Guidelines for Accessible Recreation* (South Shore Connect, 2018). Examples of areas relevant to tourism where accessibility solutions were implemented include pools, fields and courts, parks and playgrounds, multipurpose centers, trails, and waterfronts. Case studies are provided for each of these areas and include best practices, challenges, solutions, and value added to the community.

These guidelines could be a beneficial tool for tourism businesses given that they highlight key considerations in various buildings and recreational settings when increasing capacity for accessibility. The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

Other Canadian Resources

Other resources developed in Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia warrant mention:

The **Government of Ontario** provides a step-by-step overview on how businesses can make **customer service accessible** (Government of Ontario, 2022). The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

The **Tourism Industry Association of Ontario** has guidelines and manuals for tourism businesses who are looking to comply with the AODA regulations, providing documents like **Accessible Customer Service, Creating Accessible Hospitality, Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities,** and more (Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, n.d.). Links to these guidelines can be found in Figure 5b.

Manitoba

Travel Manitoba, a co-operative marketing company that promotes tourism in Manitoba, works in collaboration with the government to grow the tourism sector. With respect to increasing capacity for accessibility, Travel Manitoba continuously monitors the AMA and its related standards on a consistent basis, to inform the accessibility policy it is implementing for tourism operators (Travel Manitoba, 2019). Its *Accessibility Plan, 2019 – 2021* provides step-by-step initiatives and expected outcomes for tourism businesses to improve their accessibility and meet the requirements of the AMA.

Destination British Columbia offers accessibility 'Tip Sheets' in topics like attractions, accommodations, performing arts, website design, and general accessibility (Destination British Columbia, 2022). Though not highly detailed, these resources provide tourism businesses with a good foundation to reach accessibility compliance, such as the **Accessibility Attributes Checklist for Tourism Businesses.** The links to these sources can be found in Figures 5a and 5b.

International Resources

There are several international resources available that deal specifically with increasing accessibility in the tourism industry.

The **United Nations World Tourism Organization** has created a **Manual on Accessible Tourism for All** (United Nations World Tourism Organization, n.d.). This goes over cases of how historic and architectural areas across Europe have increased their capacity for accessibility, where some of these case studies will be useful for historical sites in Nova Scotia. This resource also details accessibility initiatives in parks, gardens, natural surroundings, transport systems, and sports activities. The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

The **European Network for Accessible Tourism** offers on-line training courses such as: Tourist Guides for People with Learning and Intellectual Difficulties in Europe, European Training Certificate Accessible for All in the Tourism Sector, New Skills for Customized Accessible Tourism, and The Ability Advisor (European Network for Accessible Tourism, 2021). The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

Tourism Victoria offers an **Accessibility Resource Kit** for accessible tourism, which goes over identifying barriers, gaps, and areas of improvement, developing strategies to incorporate access, and improving the marketing and promotion of the business (Tourism Victoria). The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

Tourism Australia is another government-affiliated organization that promotes accessible tourism to operators by providing up-to-date accessibility information on Australian legislation and policies, as well as resources to encourage businesses to become more accessible, such as their report on *Inclusive Tourism: Economic Opportunities* (Tourism Australia, 2022).

The **City of Melbourne** has begun a 'Good Access is Good Business' initiative, providing informational resources and educational programs for businesses to meet the legal requirements of fair access to all (City of Melbourne). The **Customer Access Checklist for Tourism Services, Facilities and Venues** is a guide to measure the level of accessibility of a tourism business. More specifically, it goes over the following topics: access to the building / premises, ease of access when moving around the premises, accessible amenities, accessible provision of information, staff who are able to communicate appropriately with people with disabilities, and responsive evacuation procedures. The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

The **Queensland Government** offers an extensive guide on increasing capacity for accessibility: **Inclusive Tourism: Making your business more accessible and inclusive** (Queensland Government, 2017)**.** Information on accessible accommodation, wayfinding, signs and maps, accessible websites, beaches and water recreation, accessible attractions, and activities (special events, festivals, concerts, theme parks and amusement park rides), and accessible public and private transport is detailed for tourism businesses to create a more accessible experience. The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

Visit England's business support guide – **Easy does it: Simple, low-cost changes to improve your accessibility –** offers tourism businesses easy and actionable solutions in reducing barriers to accessibility for their customers (Visit England). The link to this source can be found in Figure 5b.

Promotion of Accessible Tourism – by Jurisdiction

Jurisdictions in Nova Scotia, across Canada and around the world are developing and promoting accessibility in tourism by drafting accessibility plans, providing information on the growing tourism market, forming guidelines for accessible tourism, implementing compliance manuals, using consulting services, and compiling databases with accessible tourist activities. In some regions, accessible tourism is being promoted indirectly through government initiatives to increase capacity in their area. An important theme emerging from this jurisdictional scan is that some tourism businesses may face greater challenges than others when becoming accessible, and it is not realistic to think that certain tourist activities, such as hiking trails or historical areas, can be 100% accessible. This places an even greater value on the promotion of accessible experiences in the tourism sector.

Nova Scotia

Municipalities and counties across the Province have initiated their own processes to ensure equitable access to the community. While some of these activities do not actively promote tourism in their respective areas, they do represent an opportunity to showcase accessible services and activities in Nova Scotia.

Wolfville

Wolfville was selected by the Province to be the first town to create an accessibility plan. Their first **Access by Design: An Accessibility Plan for 2019 – 2022** was developed in collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Accessibility Directorate, and members of the public, with the intent of fulfilling the *Accessibility Act* requirements. This plan is to be updated every three years; thus, a new version can be expected soon given that the 'Top Priorities' of the plan were to be implemented by March 31, 2022 (Town of Wolfville, 2019).

For each area of focus that was prioritized by the Town of Wolfville (Built Environment, Employment, Goods and Services, Information and Communication, and Transportation), the Plan includes:

- An overview of the key area
- Achievements in improving accessibility in the area
- Remaining barriers to accessibility
- Commitment to enacting specific policy changes
- Top priorities to address within three years
- Implementing the Plan – responsibilities, scheduling, monitoring, and evaluating

Wolfville is currently at the stage of developing accessible tourism through public open spaces like parks and trails. So far, there has been an improvement in the number of

accessible areas at the Reservoir Park and Harvest Moon Trail. For the remaining barriers to access, policies are oriented towards providing basic access to public washrooms and access to public parks and trails that have a natural slope of less than five percent (given the low feasibility of ensuring all parks and trails are accessible). Additionally, top priorities involve the removal of barriers within the infrastructure of the Town – providing accessible parking locations, crosswalks, curb-cuts, and so forth (Town of Wolfville, 2019). *The fulfilment of these priorities will create more opportunities for promotion of accessible tourism experiences in the area.*

Pictou

Similarly, the **Town of Pictou** has formed an Accessibility Advisory Committee to 'identify, prevent, and eliminate barriers for people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives and facilities.' The Pictou Accessibility Advisory Committee is in its community consultation phase to gain insight into what needs to be focused on and has not yet drafted its own accessibility plan (Town of Pictou, 2020).

Halifax

CANdid Access is an online platform, created by PEACH Research Unit of Dalhousie University, which shares photos and information on accessibility in the built environment in Halifax. Users can submit photos depicting the level of accessibility in Halifax, like sidewalk grade, public washroom locations, accessible parking spots, and sidewalk and street closures (PEACH Research Unit, n.d.).

Canada

Some provincial governments have well-established accessibility requirements. Compared to Nova Scotia, organizations within these provinces have cultivated a variety of methods to market their area as an accessible tourism destination. Providing information on accessible accommodations, activities and events appear to be a common practice among tourism organizations such as Destination Ontario and Bonjour Quebec. Organizations like HelloBC also encourage tourism businesses to market their services / experiences as accessible by providing their accessibility attributes.HelloBC then consolidates this information into a database for users to plan their trip.

Ontario

Across Canada, and in addition to its Provincial government, Ontario has well-defined partners and associations working towards developing and promoting accessibility, some of which specifically promote accessibility in tourism.

The **Government of Ontario** provides a host of information about its initiatives in becoming a more accessible province (Government of Ontario, 2022). Information on

the Government's progress to achieving a more accessible province revolves around breaking down barriers in the built environment, having government lead by example, increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the economy, and improving and understanding awareness about accessibility. These signal to residents and visitors alike that removing barriers to accessibility is one of the Province's priorities – though, this information is better delivered to travellers via tourism associations.

Destination Ontario is one such association whose aim is to market Ontario tourism. Destination Ontario has cultivated an inventory of accessible activities, accommodations, and information for those looking to visit the province (Destination Ontario, 2021). The accessibility standards that the Government of Ontario has regulated for sectors (information and communications, employment, transportation, the design of public spaces, and customer service) are also described to help travellers with visible or non-visible disabilities build an itinerary around their needs.

British Columbia

The Government of British Columbia has set out to increase access to participation for people with disabilities through the *Accessible British Columbia Act* (Government of British Columbia, n.d.).

Destination British Columbia (BC) is a Crown corporation funded by the Province to support BC's tourism industry through 'global marketing, destination development, industry learning, cooperative community-based programs, and visitor servicing.' Regarding the development and improvement of accessible tourism products and experiences, Destination BC is embarking on a variety of initiatives including the creation of guidelines for the tourism industry and increasing access to accessibility planning and travel information (Destination British Columbia, 2022).

Toward an Inclusive and Accessible British Columbia Tourism Industry: A Strategic Framework & Action Plan is a guideline created by Destination BC in partnership with the **Government of British Columbia**, the province's **Accessibility Directorate** and the **Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC)**. The aim of this framework is to increase accessibility of tourism in BC within three years by: "promoting BC as an inclusive and welcoming destination for everyone by building capacity to support more inclusive and accessible tourism products, services and experiences, and champion meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities." (Destination British Columbia, 2019).

Showcasing tourism experiences in BC that are inclusive is another aim of the *Strategic Framework & Action Plan*, wherein **Hello BC** is being promoted as a consumer trip-planning website where information on accessible accommodation,

attractions, activities, and experiences can be accessed (Destination British Columbia, 2022). Hello BC also offers featured articles on accessible sports, hiking trails, adventures, and area-specific itineraries (Hello BC, n.d.).

In addition to the promotion of accessible activities for tourists, Destination BC is inviting tourism businesses to report their accessibility features on the HelloBC Listing. The creation of an 'accessible tourism business recognition award' is another activity undertaken by Destination BC, in association with TIABC, to promote accessibility among tourism operators (Destination British Columbia, 2022).

Quebec

Bonjour Quebec is an organization that provides information on tourism activities in the province, by offering itineraries and tourist routes, as well as an overview of the various regions and national parks in Quebec (Bonjour Quebec, n.d.). Most notably, its website promotes accessible tourism using **Quebec for All –** a database of information on the level of accessibility in tourism businesses throughout the Province (Quebec For All, 2022). Businesses in this database were identified as accessible or partially accessible by **Kéroul** – a non-profit organization that are consultants for Bonjour Quebec in promoting and developing accessible tourism and culture through information and lobbying (Kéroul, 2022). This resource provides a practical guide for travellers as they build an itinerary to meet their accessibility needs.

Organizations and Associations

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) showcases accessible tourism destinations across the country, categorized according to what a traveller may be looking to do, such as outdoor experiences, cultural experiences, or adventure/athletics (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2018). It also provides up-to-date articles on accessible experiences, such as those that have been recently introduced, as well as top places to visit. Other resources are also provided, such as tips for wheelchair accessible travel, and a handbook with information on accessible travel in countries all over the world.

Access Now is a platform that maps accessible places around the world, including Canada (Access Now, 2022). It includes over 200,000 places rated in 35 countries. Users can search places according to the specific accessibility features they need, as well as rate the level of accessibility offered in these locations. Tourism activities are also categorized into restaurants, hotels, shops, attractions, trails, and parks for easy searching.

International

A scan of several international jurisdictions revealed that accessible tourism is a well-established concept, which is further consolidated with the existence of accessible travel agencies that specialize in creating itineraries based on the specific needs of an individual with a disability. A common practice that mirrors that of some Canadian jurisdictions is the provision of a database on accessible locations and activities so visitors can plan their trip accordingly. A non-profit organization in Australia, for example, has developed an app with accessibility information that is highly specific to different disabilities. This speaks, again, to the realities of accessibility in tourism; that is, not every activity and experience can be made accessible due to certain restraints in the environment (i.e., hiking trails, or historical locations and buildings).

England

Visit England/Visit Britain is a tourism agency funded by the British Government, whose mission is to promote tourism in Britain and develop the country's visitor economy (Visit England, 2022). In 2014, Visit England developed accessible itineraries based on destination type (coastal, countryside, and city) in collaboration with various destination organizations across the country like **Accessible Countryside for Everyone –** an organization that promotes countryside accessibility in England (Accessible Countryside for Everyone, 2022).

Resources to locate accessible accommodations and travel are also provided, such as **Tourism for All** and **AccessAble,** both of which are extensive databases containing information on accommodations, activities, and restaurants offering accessibility across the United Kingdom (Tourism For All, 2022; AccessAble, 2022). An interactive map of accessible washrooms is also provided through an external organization, **Changing Places,** where users can search for toilets according to their specific needs (Changing Places, 2022).

Australia

Tourism Australia is an Australian Government agency that participates in attracting visitors to Australia through marketing, public relations, media programs, consumer research and promotions, online communications, and trades shows and industry programs (Tourism Australia, 2022). This organization offers resources for visitors planning a trip around accessibility, such as **Sydney for All, Accessible Victoria, Queensland Inclusive Tourism Guide, Travellers Aid Australia**, and many more. All of these organizations support travellers finding accessible accommodation, restaurants, activities, and events around Australia.

Access Ability Australia is another non-profit organization seeking to improve inclusion in the community by providing information about accessing venues and events that

include all people living with disability (Access Ability Australia, 2020). Their main product offering is **'Access Keys,'** which can be found on the AAA app or website.

Access Keys are 'customized accessibility guides that provide information about accessing venues, events and programs' (Access Ability Australia, 2020). This resource provides details about the location of interest like parking, how to identify staff, toilets, food and beverage services, layout of the venue or event, and more. They also include sensory guides that detail the sensory elements of the location or experience. The guides found in the Access Key library regarding the many recreational centres, theatres, and festivals are highly comprehensive and detailed. Despite not being explicitly associated with the tourism industry, this provides a great resource for people living with visible and non-visible disabilities who plan on visiting Australia.

Sweden

Following the Government of Sweden's policy, **Visit Sweden** promotes accessible tourism by providing information on hotels with specially adapted rooms, information on accessible transportation, getting to and from main airports, restaurant guides, arts and cultural experiences, and so forth (Visit Sweden, 2021; Government of Sweden, 2021). There is also a database that allows users to find information on the physical accessibility of over 9,000 locations in Sweden when planning a trip around their accessibility needs (TD, 2021).

Europe

There are a few organizations specializing in accessible travel throughout Europe.

- **AccessAble: Disabled Accessible Travel** offers private tours and shore excursions across the continent for people with physical disabilities, as well as organizing accessible holidays to any type of traveller in need of adapted solutions (AccessAble, n.d.).
- **AccesiblEurope** is an organization based in Italy that is part of a network of websites addressing accessible tourism. It offers information on accessible tours and activities in countries like Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, and more (AccesiblEurope, n.d.).
- The **European Commission** promotes accessible tourism by awarding tourism destinations for having the best practice in accessibility for the built environment (city routes, infrastructure, beaches) and/or information and communication (tours, city guides) (European Commission, 2021).

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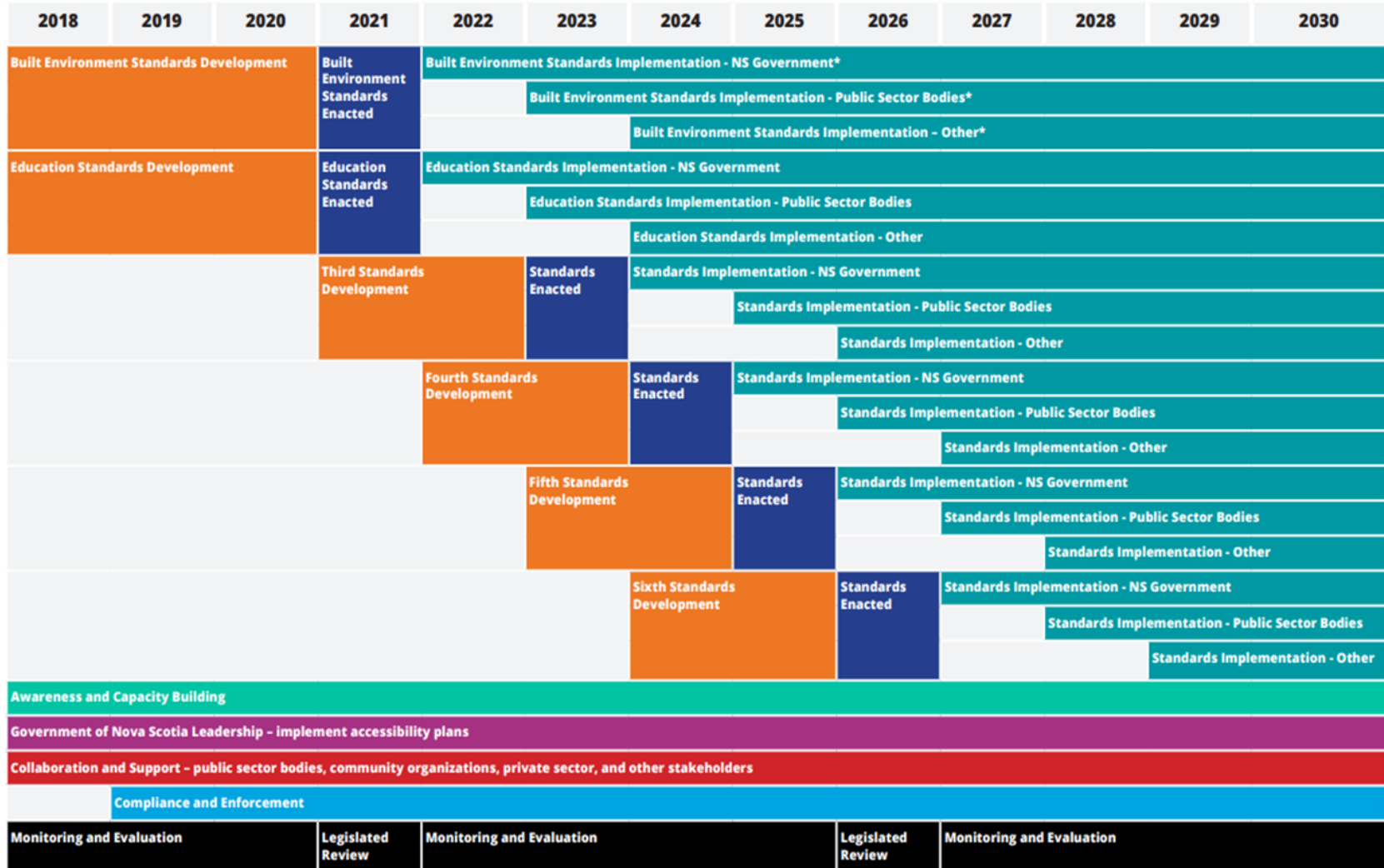
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Appendix A – Nova Scotia's Timeline for Standard Development

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Built Environment Standards Development			Built Environment Standards Enacted	Built Environment Standards Implementation - NS Government*								
					Built Environment Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies*							
						Built Environment Standards Implementation – Other*						
Education Standards Development			Education Standards Enacted	Education Standards Implementation - NS Government								
					Education Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies							
						Education Standards Implementation - Other						
			Third Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government						
						Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies						
							Standards Implementation - Other					
				Fourth Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government					
							Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies					
								Standards Implementation - Other				
					Fifth Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government				
								Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies				
									Standards Implementation - Other			
						Sixth Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - NS Government			
									Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies			
										Standards Implementation - Other		
Awareness and Capacity Building												
Government of Nova Scotia Leadership – implement accessibility plans												
Collaboration and Support – public sector bodies, community organizations, private sector, and other stakeholders												
		Compliance and Enforcement										
Monitoring and Evaluation			Legislated Review	Monitoring and Evaluation				Legislated Review	Monitoring and Evaluation			

*Implementation timelines will vary by standards area