



Built Environment Accessibility Standard

Overview

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard is now law in Nova Scotia.

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard is the first accessibility standard to become law in Nova Scotia.

Organizations in Nova Scotia have new requirements for designing, constructing, and managing their built environments in accessible ways.

The built environment means human-made spaces in which people live, work, learn, and play. This includes inside and outside of buildings as well as outdoor spaces such as trails, parks, and beaches.

Making our province accessible means making sure everyone is included in all aspects of everyday life.

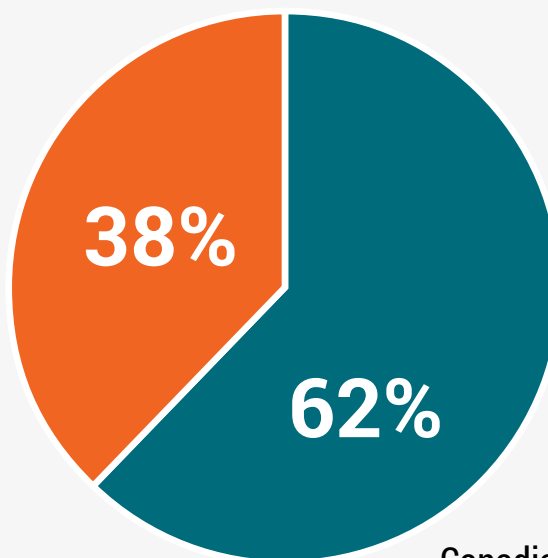
**This document is for information purposes only.
This is not legal advice and should be read
together with the regulations under the
Nova Scotia Accessibility Act.**



In Nova Scotia, the built environment is on the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We are all treaty people.

To learn more about the Mi'kmaq and our treaty relationship visit NovaScotia.ca/Treaty-Education

Quick fact: Nova Scotia has the highest rate of disability in Canada with 38% of Nova Scotians ages 15 and older identifying as having one or more disability.



Canadian Survey
on Disability (2022)



Learn more about disabilities and barriers. Visit Accessible.NovaScotia.ca/disabilities-and-barriers

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act

Nova Scotia's [Accessibility Act](#) sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

The Act outlines that accessibility will be achieved by preventing and removing barriers that disable people with respect to the following areas:



- built environment



- education



- employment



- goods and services



- information and communications



- public transportation



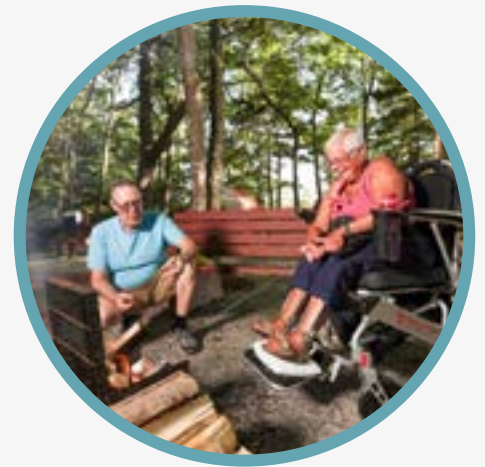
Accessibility standards are an important tool to help create an accessible province.

About the Standard

An accessibility standard is a set of regulations under the Accessibility Act with the purpose of preventing and removing barriers that people with disabilities face. The regulations outline rights and create duties, obligations, and responsibilities for organizations.

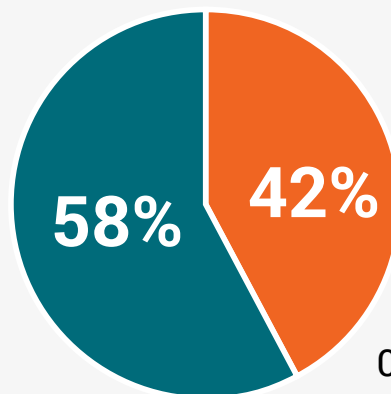
The Built Environment Accessibility Standard introduces two new types of requirements for organizations:

1. **technical design requirements**
where and how infrastructure is built
2. **accessibility planning**
plans that must be created about accessibility in the built environment



The full Built Environment Accessibility Standard regulations are available at NovaScotia.ca/accessibility/built-environment

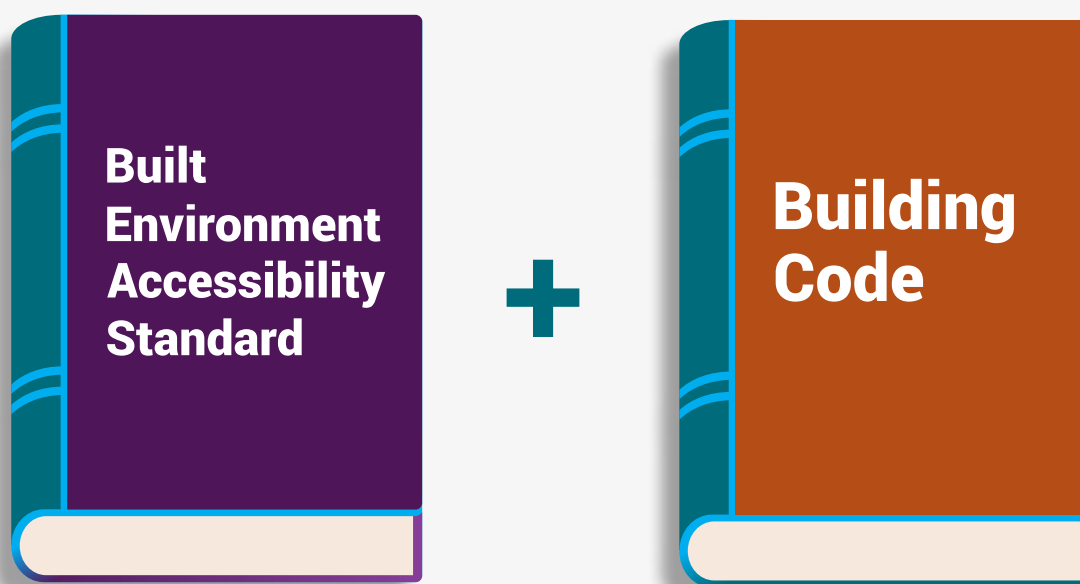
Quick fact: more than 58% of Nova Scotians with disabilities report experiencing barriers to the built environment.



Canadian Survey
on Disability (2022)

Is the standard different from the Building Code?

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard is a new set of regulations that are different than the Nova Scotia Building Code regulations. This standard addresses parts of the built environment that the Building Code does not—such as outdoor spaces, recreational spaces, and maintenance.



Together, the Nova Scotia Building Code and the Built Environment Accessibility Standard will make a more accessible built environment in Nova Scotia.

The accessibility of most parts of buildings is covered by the [Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations](#).

How was the standard made?

The standard was developed by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate (Department of Justice) in collaboration with other government departments using the recommendations of the Accessibility Advisory Board. The recommendations were prepared by a group of people including persons with disabilities, representatives from impacted sectors (e.g., municipalities), and subject matter experts using best practices in accessible design for the built environment. The proposed standard was shared with the public for comment before being finalized and enacted.

***Nothing About Us Without Us** means people with disabilities are involved throughout the standard development process.*

Nova Scotia has committed to developing accessibility standards in six areas.

Learn more about other accessibility standards. Visit [Accessible.NovaScotia.ca/creating-accessibility-standards](https://accessible.novascotia.ca/creating-accessibility-standards)

Compliance

Organizations in Nova Scotia have new requirements for designing, constructing, and managing their built environments in accessible ways.



Who must follow the standard?

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations apply to:

- Government of Nova Scotia
- Prescribed Public Sector Bodies
- Organizations that own, operate, or maintain the built environment (including businesses and community organizations)

Prescribed public sector bodies are public sector entities that are prescribed by regulation under the Accessibility Act. This includes organizations such as municipalities and villages, post secondary institutions, regional centres for education, regional libraries, health authority, and more.

When do organizations need to comply with the standard?

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations are now law.

Government recognizes that organizations need time to learn about their responsibilities under the standard in order to comply. For this reason, compliance with the Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations will not be enforced until April 1, 2026.

Note: The Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations follow a separate enforcement process. All work requiring building permits under the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations must meet the requirements of the Building Code.

How will compliance be enforced?

The standard is law. Not following the rules set out in the standard is called non-compliance. After April 1, 2026, people in Nova Scotia may make complaints about non-compliance.

The Accessibility Directorate will work with organizations to support them in understanding and complying with the standard. The Accessibility Act Compliance Framework outlines the steps to achieve compliance. To learn more, visit NovaScotia.ca/accessibility/compliance

Organizations may also request a proactive inspection to make sure they are meeting the requirements of the standard.

Updating Existing Infrastructure

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard mostly applies to new construction. There are some requirements for redeveloped infrastructure as specified in the regulations. The standard will prevent new barriers from being created.

The standard does not require all existing buildings and spaces to be retrofitted. Many organizations will choose to go beyond the minimum requirements of the accessibility standard.

**Updating infrastructure
is crucial to becoming
an accessible province.**





Addressing existing barriers in the built environment:

1. Accessibility Plans

Government and Prescribed Public Sector Bodies are required to develop accessibility plans to address accessibility for their organizations. Accessibility plans may identify barriers in the built environment and commit to removing them.

2. Guidelines

The Accessibility Directorate is releasing accessibility guidelines for the built environment in addition to what is required in the standard. Guidelines will include best practices that organizations are encouraged to follow. Guidelines are not mandatory.

Resources

Resources are being developed to support organizations to understand the standard. To learn more about the Built Environment Accessibility Standard, visit NovaScotia.ca/accessibility/built-environment



Your organization may be eligible to apply for a grant to help with the costs of becoming accessible.

[Accessibility grant opportunities for businesses](#)

[Accessibility grant opportunities for community organizations](#)

For general resources on accessibility, visit [**Accessible.NovaScotia.ca**](https://Accessible.NovaScotia.ca)

Contact Us

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Access includes everyone.

