

Events East

Accessibility Plan 2026 – 2029

Developed in alignment with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act for the three-year period of April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2029.

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Acknowledgements

Mi'kmaq Acknowledgement

Our business operates in Kjiptuk ("che-book-took"), now known as Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. As we write this plan to guide our work in the years ahead, we recognize the importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed in this Territory and acknowledge that we are all Treaty People. Mi'kmaq teachings often emphasize that each person has inherent strengths and unique gifts to offer. Those who have different physical or mental abilities are respected for their distinct perspectives and valued for their special contributions to the community.

Events East is committed to fostering ongoing opportunities for Mi'kmaq people, tradition and culture to be welcome in our venues, shape the events we host, and enrich the experiences of all those who work and visit with us.

African Nova Scotian Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the more than 50 African Nova Scotian communities who have been contributing to the cultural, artistic and economic landscape of this province for over 400 years. Despite facing significant challenges, anti-black racism, and systemic barriers, African Nova Scotians have enriched the fabric of our city as we know it, and continue to do so through their resilience, creativity, and leadership.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The continued participation and guidance of our community members on the Events East Accessibility Advisory Committee has been critical to the development and implementation of our accessibility plan and program. Their first-voice perspective and mentorship to our staff has been vital to our journey of learning and awareness. Any progress we have achieved in recent years has been possible with their contributions and insight. We'd also like to acknowledge Colin Kiley, who retired from Events East in December 2025 and was accessibility lead for the organization's first Accessibility Plan. He is Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified and demonstrated leadership in making our facilities accessible, safe, and welcoming for every member of the community. His contributions to our organization's culture of accessibility and respect will be lasting.

Please see Appendix A to meet our public members, who informed our progress and planning, and Appendix B for definitions of key terms used throughout our work together.

Introduction

Background

In 2017, Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act, becoming the third Canadian province to adopt accessibility legislation. The Act recognizes accessibility as a human right and outlines how we will improve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers. It sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. The province's Accessibility Directorate is responsible for putting the Act into practice, and for addressing issues related to accessibility and disability.

As a public sector body identified in the Accessibility Act, Events East must establish an accessibility advisory committee and develop an accessibility plan that is updated every three years. This plan for 2026-2029 represents the first update; our inaugural plan was completed in 2023.

About Us

Events East is a special purpose government agency that manages and operates the Halifax Convention Centre and Scotiabank Centre. We were created as part of a partnership between the Province of Nova Scotia and Halifax Regional Municipality, and we work in collaboration with them to manage our business in a transparent and responsible manner. We are known for attracting and hosting premier events in the region, and operating signature event venues that drive community vibrancy, economic impact and international recognition.

Halifax Convention Centre is the largest, most flexible event space in Atlantic Canada and is jointly owned by the Province of Nova Scotia and Halifax Regional Municipality and managed by Events East. It opened in 2018 for the purpose of attracting and hosting meetings, conferences and conventions that create economic and community benefit. In addition to hosting national and international events, Halifax Convention Centre also provides a backdrop for important community gatherings, conversations and celebrations.

Scotiabank Centre is the largest multipurpose facility in Atlantic Canada and is widely recognized as the region's premier venue for major sporting and entertainment events. It is owned by Halifax Regional Municipality and managed by Events East. For nearly five decades, Scotiabank Centre has been a platform for community vibrancy, local pride, the celebration of sport, and the magic of live events. It is home to the Halifax Mooseheads (Quebec Major Junior Hockey League) and the Halifax Thunderbirds (National Lacrosse League), as well as concerts and entertainment events that attract fans from around the region.

Context

Our Approach

We are accountable to our Shareholders (the Province of Nova Scotia and Halifax Regional Municipality) first and foremost. In our role as a steward, manager and operator of signature event venues on their behalf, we commit to:

- Fulfilling our mandate for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.
- Aligning with the objectives of our Shareholders, including the goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.
- Meeting legislated requirements, including those set out by the Accessibility Directorate.

The intent of this three-year plan is to outline goals and commitments against which we can continue to make progress, across the four provincial accessibility standards that apply to our business: built environment, employment, goods and services, and information and communication.

We will work in collaboration with our partners in government to seek supplemental funding that supports delivery against our commitments and vision of accessibility for all Nova Scotians.

Our Vision

Our venues are inclusive and welcoming to all, and we provide dignified and equitable access to our events, services and communications.

Our Progress: Removing and Preventing Barriers

We understand that inclusion and accessibility is a continuous journey that requires ongoing learning, effort and adaptation. We work with partners, community members and across our organization to continuously improve our accessibility knowledge and practices, and make progress toward's our vision.

During the implementation of the 2023-26 accessibility plan, Events East made meaningful progress towards creating a more accessible Halifax Convention Centre and Scotiabank Centre. Our progress is summarized in the sections below, organized by the provincial standards of built environment, employment, goods and services, and information and communication.

Built Environment

We conducted accessibility audits of both facilities to assist in capital and maintenance planning, and this resulted in a series of accessibility improvements to increase meaningful access. At Scotiabank Centre, improvements included accessibility enhancements to the Premium Seating entrance, the installation of handrails in the lower bowl, and the addition of floor-level concert seating for wheelchair users. At Halifax Convention Centre, improvements have included accessible entrances with powered door openers, enhancements to interior

pathways, tactile attention indicators to all stairways, and improved accessibility signage. We improved shelter-in-place (emergency refuge) accommodations, including signage, emergency intercoms, cameras, and evacuation chairs. In October 2024, the Halifax Convention Centre achieved Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™.

Employment

We have introduced a Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Fair Hiring Policy. The Reasonable Accommodation Policy reinforces Events East's commitment to an inclusive and accessible workplace. Accommodation under this policy is granted for individuals whose needs relate to the protected characteristics as defined by the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. Our Fair Hiring Policy outlines the process hiring managers follow to support fair and objective decision-making at all levels of the organization. It also provides a mechanism for applicants to request accommodations during the hiring process. We also provide training and learning opportunities to employees based on the nature of their work to foster a culture of accessibility and inclusion. These sessions encompass the diverse needs of individuals living with physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, and sensory disabilities. Delivered with professional facilitators, individuals with lived experience, and internal resources, training focuses on increasing understanding, equipping employees to support guests, and providing leaders with resources to effectively support their teams.

Goods and Services

We have updated Codes of Conduct for the Halifax Convention Centre and Scotiabank Centre to highlight expectations around inclusion, accessibility, and respectful behaviour, ensuring all employees, contractors, suppliers, and event organizers understand their shared responsibility in creating welcoming spaces for everyone. We reviewed operational practices through an accessibility lens to identify and remove barriers within service delivery, and added distinct policies to support access (e.g. service animal policy). This included re-evaluating long-standing procedures to ensure they were not unnecessarily restrictive for guests with disabilities, while maintaining compliance with safety and regulatory requirements. We introduced operational training and shift briefings on accessibility-related topics, organizational practices and procedures. We also collaborated with our Accessibility Advisory Committee to review service touchpoints and identify opportunities to enhance dignity, autonomy, and comfort for guests and employees with disabilities.

Information and Communications

We have improved inclusive and accessible signage and wayfinding in both facilities, as well as the accessibility of digital information and communication shared across the organization. Progress included an accessibility audit of our corporate website, which resulted in the adoption of several best practices, such as screen-reader-friendly content, photo captions and descriptive image text, and the incorporation of other accessible communications best practices. We stay up to date on emerging technology and tools to improve the accessibility of our communications. We also developed a Toolkit for Hosting Accessible Events for employees, including guidance on communications.

Guiding Principles

Accessibility is a Human Right

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act establishes accessibility as a fundamental human right, not just a benefit, for people with disabilities.

Dignified Access

We respect that individuals know their own needs best and often require personalized adaptations and approaches to achieve equal access to opportunities, spaces and services.

Diversity

We believe that diversity is a strength and that benefits arise from embracing a wide range of human differences, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability and perspective.

Awareness

We will foster awareness among our employees and leadership to better understand the needs of persons with disabilities. We will continuously learn and share learnings to improve our understanding.

Listening

We value the contributions of Nova Scotians living with disabilities and invite those with lived experience to provide input into the development and implementation of accessibility policies and programs. We listen to deepen our understanding and awareness of their needs, perspectives and expertise.

Initiative

We believe that being proactive and embracing a flexible approach ensures we continue to make progress and effectively advance our commitments.

Human-centred

We understand that a person's identity, life circumstances and experiences can intersect with their disability. We commit to considering how individual experiences, and accessibility resolutions, may impact, intersect and connect with one another.

Goals & Commitments

Built Environment

Goal: Our facilities are barrier-free and we provide meaningful access to persons of all ages and abilities.

As we work towards this long-term goal, and as opportunities and projects arise, we will aim to:

1. Actively engage community, industry, and government partners on capital improvement projects, to ensure an integrated and thoughtful approach to removing and preventing barriers.
2. Ensure access is maintained for buildings and public spaces during temporary disruptions such as construction or seasonal challenges such as snow and ice.
3. Ensure emergency evacuation and shelter-in-place (emergency refuge) plans are up to date to address the specific needs of persons with disabilities and ensure emergency response information is available in an accessible format.
4. Document built environment accessibility improvements and monitor progress against accessibility audits.
5. If/when planning any new builds or renovations, we will refer to the principles of universal design and seek the advice of certified consultants and advisors where possible.

Employment

Goal: We support employees at every stage of their career, from recruitment to retirement, through inclusive practices that reflect our commitment to accessibility and equity.

As we work towards this long-term goal, we will aim to:

1. Remove barriers that may prevent individuals from applying for job opportunities and ensure job advertisements are available in accessible formats.
2. Nurture a culture of respect and support so employees can meaningfully contribute to our shared success.
3. Provide an inclusive work environment that considers and provides reasonable accommodation for individual needs.
4. Promote understanding and support meaningful participation for everyone in our organization through education, awareness, employment policies, and inclusive practices.
5. Do what we can to attract and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

Information and Communications

Goal: There is meaningful and reasonable ability for all persons to receive, consume and share information we communicate corporately, within our workplace and through the venues we operate and events we host.

As we work towards this long-term goal, we will aim to:

1. Ensure our digital communication, documents and information are accessible to all through use of dictation, screen readers, and other tools.
2. Incorporate the use of braille, raised characters or other best practices when replacing or installing signage and wayfinding communication, so that our offices and public facilities are accessible to all.
3. Use terms and language in our communications that align with best practices and reflect the community and people we serve.
4. Consider how to maximize participation and access for all when planning broadly attended corporate events, such as press conferences and industry engagement sessions. This may include closed captioning, on-site interpreters, online access, and recording of content for later use.
5. Ensure a variety of feedback channels and opportunities are available and accessible, and include mechanisms for timely acknowledgement and feedback.

Goods and Services

Goal: There is meaningful and reasonable ability for all persons to access the goods and services offered by our organization or delivered through our venues, in a way that supports inclusive participation.

As we work towards this long-term goal, we will aim to:

1. Provide goods and services in a fair, respectful, and inclusive manner, free from bias or assumptions about a person's abilities.
2. Make reasonable accommodations so that persons with disabilities can access goods and services, balancing individual needs with operational and safety requirements.
3. Strive to create accessible service environments and work with clients to recommend best practices and adjustments that support accessibility, while always upholding building codes and safety regulations.
4. Provide meaningful accessibility awareness training that is relevant to staff roles and responsibilities and equip employees to pivot and communicate effectively when unexpected accessibility needs arise.
5. Communicate clearly about what guests can expect at our venues to reduce barriers to asking for support.

Accountability & Governance

Oversight & Implementation

Events East commits to monitoring the organization's progress towards the long-term goals and commitments outlined in this plan. Oversight of the plan will be the responsibility of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) Steering Committee at Events East, and this includes identifying priority actions annually.

A commitment to accessibility will be encouraged across all teams within the organization on an ongoing basis, and staff across various departments will be involved in leading and supporting the implementation of the commitments within this plan.

Specific opportunities, challenges or ideas will be brought forward to the Events East Accessibility Advisory Committee (EEAAC) for meaningful discussion and feedback at quarterly meetings.

Monitoring & Reporting

Many of the commitments outlined in this document refer to ongoing efforts, rather than distinct projects with defined end points. Therefore, commitments reaching "full completion" may not be possible or desired. We will embrace a developmental evaluation approach that encourages qualitative reflection over quantitative measurement.

An annual progress summary will be included as part of the organization's year-end accountability reporting.

Appendix – A

Meet the Events East Accessibility Advisory Committee

MJ Crawford

MJ Crawford is a deaf client specialist, career practitioner, advocate, and leader in the deaf and hard of hearing community. MJ brings education to Events East on deaf/hard of hearing awareness and inclusivity, with the goal of increasing employment and retention among deaf and hard of hearing persons. Profoundly deaf since birth, MJ has been a dedicated educator, volunteer, and board member for organizations across Nova Scotia. Her perspective has contributed greatly to improving guest and client services.

Milena Khazanavicius

Milena Khazanavicius has been blind for 30 years. One of her concerns in recent years is that quite often the blind and partially sighted are left behind when it comes to meaningful accessibility initiatives and improvements. She believes that if there isn't a chair for you at the table, bring your own, and get engaged in the conversation. On the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Milena has shown how to make spaces and events more accessible for those with low or no vision. Milena has delivered training for Events East teams on how to better support blind guests, and she knows progress has been made not just in the built environment but in how we can better serve our community. Milena sits on HRM's Active Transportation Advisory Committee and the ReachAbility Association Board. She is proud that her ideas and suggestions have impact.

Hope

Hope is Milena's trusty guide dog and her partner in advocating for the rights of disabled persons. She is a six-year-old black lab. When Hope is not 'working,' she loves carrying sticks and occasionally eating important documents, permitting Milena to honestly say "the dog ate my homework!"

Darrel MacDonald

Darrel MacDonald was a member of Princess Louise Fusiliers, one of the oldest infantry reserve regiments in the Canadian Armed Forces, based in HRM. After a life-changing military training accident at age 27 in August 1998 and several months of rehabilitation left him a T11-complete paraplegic, Darrel has been living independently as a manual wheelchair user. He has a unique view of accessibility. He started driving again 15 years ago, due to the lack of on-demand publicly accessible transportation in HRM. Darrel has been a vocal advocate for accessible transportation, road safety, and adequate access to businesses and public spaces. He knows that having an accessible building opens the building to all.

Michelle Mahoney

Michelle Mahoney is the first-ever Accessibility Officer at the University of King's College with over 20 years of experience at Dalhousie University. She is Rick Hansen Foundation Certified and has delivered employee training sessions at Events East. Sitting on the Accessibility Advisory Committee since inception, she has been energized by the impact the Committee has made on the organization. She attributes her growth as an accessibility expert to her work with us. Michelle believes everyone is temporarily able-bodied and is committed to making public spaces accessible and safe for everyone.

Earl Muise

Earl Muise hails from a small Acadian village in southwestern Nova Scotia. He has dedicated over 30 years to teaching and administration in Acadian schools, serving as the founding member of the Francophone local of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. He is a passionate community volunteer with longstanding ties to cultural and educational organizations including the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association of Nova Scotia, the Retired Teachers Organization of Nova Scotia, and many more. He is presently on the Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board with the Department of Justice.

Frank O’Sullivan

Frank O’Sullivan has been with Accessibility Advisory Committee since 2019. He works in the K-12 education system across Atlantic Canada and was previously the Executive Director of the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians (SDHHNS). He takes great pleasure in being part of the development of Events East’s Accessibility Framework. Frank feels that being a member of the Committee has given him the privilege of meeting amazing community members and Events East staff.

Events East Staff Lead**Laura Whitman**

Laura Whitman is the accessibility lead at Events East, effective December 2025. In addition to being the primary point of contact for the Accessibility Directorate, she oversees our commitments, compliance, progress reporting, and Accessibility Advisory Committee. Laura chairs the Events East EDIA Steering Committee and is the most senior organizational representative responsible for aligning the organization’s annual plans and strategic priorities to our EDIA Framework.

Appendix – B

Definitions of Key Terms

The following are key terms and shared definitions that are commonly used by our Accessibility Committee.

Accessibility:

The design of environments, products, and services to be used by all people, regardless of disability, to ensure full and equal participation in all aspects of society, such as through the removal of physical, communication, attitudinal, and systemic barriers. It allows people with disabilities to live independently and benefit from public facilities and services.

Accessibility Act:

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act is provincial legislation to achieve an accessible province by preventing and removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society. Key aspects include requiring the involvement of persons with disabilities in the standards development process, and the goal of making Nova Scotia accessible by the year 2030.

ASL:

American Sign Language (ASL), which needs translators between users and non-users.

Barrier:

Anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities.

CART:

Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) delivers captions remotely to any screen in real time, also known as Live Captioning.

CSA B651-23:

A set of standards, released by the Canadian Standards Association, which outlines recommended technical requirements and specifications for accessible design within the built environment.

Disability:

A term of self-identification used by those with a broad range of disabilities which may include physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.

Plain Language:

Clear, conversational communication that is easily understood by 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.

Principles of Universal Design:

Refers to seven principles that were developed in 1997 and are widely recognized by architects, engineers, researchers, and others. The purpose of the principles is to guide the design process of

environments, products and communications. They include: equitable use; flexibility in use; simple and intuitive use; perceptible information; tolerance for error; low physical effort; and space.

Systemic Barriers:

Obstacles that exclude groups or communities of people from full participation in, and the benefits of, social, economic, and political life. They may be hidden or unintentional but are built into the way society works.

TAI:

A tactile attention indicator (TAI) is a raised, textured surface pattern that conveys a warning or hazard to individuals with visual impairments, such as potential drop-offs or vehicular traffic.

TDI:

A tactile direction indicator (TDI) is a raised, textured pattern on a surface that guides people with visual impairments along a path of travel, providing directional cues and a non-visual understanding of the environment.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1:

Guidelines that cover a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible to a wide range of individuals with disabilities including blindness, low vision, deafness, and hearing loss, etc. Recommendations include easily read fonts, simpler layout for website content, and making all functionality available from a keyboard.