

Accessibility Standards Advisory Board

Annual Report 2024-25

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Chairperson's Message

Honourable Bernard Davis
Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Davis:

On behalf of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Board (the Board), I am pleased to submit this annual report, which covers the period of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. The Board has prepared this annual report in accordance with its requirements as a category three Provincial Government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. This report reflects the activities for the second year of the 2023-26 Activity Plan.

The Board is primarily governed by the **Accessibility Act** and is committed to improving accessibility and inclusion in Newfoundland and Labrador by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating fully in society.

My signature below is on behalf of the Board and is indicative of the Board's accountability for the actual results reported.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Normore
Chair

Overview

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board (the Board) was established in June 2022, following the enactment of the **Accessibility Act** in December 2021. The Board is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities (the Minister) regarding the establishment and content of accessibility standards and the time-periods for their implementation. The Board is also responsible for making recommendations regarding measures, policies and practices implemented by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to improve accessibility.

Section 9 of the **Accessibility Act** outlines the board composition which may range from a minimum of seven members to a maximum of nine members, including a chairperson and vice-chairperson. Members are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister and comply with the following requirements: at least one half of members are either persons with disabilities, or representatives from organizations of or for persons with disabilities; and at least one member shall be an Indigenous person. Board appointments are for a three-year term and members are eligible for reappointment but cannot serve more than two consecutive terms. Members are appointed from the public through a merit-based process through the Public Service Commission.

In 2024-25, four reappointments and the appointment of the Chair and two new members were completed. The Vice Chair position was not filled in 2024-25. As of March 31, 2025, the following eight individuals comprised the Board:

- Jeffrey Normore, Chair (St. John's)
- Leslie Gilholme, Member (Newman's Cove)
- Juanita Ford, Member (Mount Pearl)
- Joshua Menchions, Member (St. John's)
- Allison Noseworthy, Member (Paradise)
- Kathleen Parewick, Member (St. John's)
- Camille Rose, Member (Come By Chance)
- Trisha Rose, Member (Mount Pearl)

The Board holds at least four regular meetings each year and meets with the Minister at least once per year. Board member remuneration and travel expenses are covered within the budget of the Disability Policy Office (DPO), a division of the Department of Families and Affordability. DPO also provides secretariat support to the Board. Costs associated with the Board for 2024-25 were \$17,679 (see Table 1 for more details).

Table 1: Accessibility Standards Advisory Board Expenditures 2024-25

The travel expenses and costs associated with the work of the Board are included in the Disability Policy Office's budget.

Category	Expenditures
Remuneration	\$3,470
Travel	\$535
Purchased Services	\$13,674
Fiscal Year Total	\$17,679

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board is not required to submit audited financial statements.

Vision

Newfoundland and Labrador will be a province that is committed to improving accessibility and inclusion for all persons, and to ensure equity, respect, and the prevention and removal of barriers impacting persons living with disabilities.

Mandate

The Board advises and makes recommendations to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities on:

- Priorities for the establishment of accessibility standards, the content of accessibility standards, and the time periods for their implementation;
- Measures, policies, practices, and other requirements that may be implemented by the Government to improve accessibility;
- Long-term accessibility objectives for furthering the purpose of the **Accessibility Act**; and
- Any other matter relating to accessibility on which the Minister seeks the Board's advice.

Highlights and Partnerships

In 2024-25, the Board provided information and advice to the Provincial Government regarding standard development and opportunities to improve accessibility in policies, programs and initiatives. The Board also continued to collaborate with key stakeholders both internal and external to government.

The Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee was established by the Board in 2024-25. The Board provided guidance to the Committee in its mandate, anticipated expectations and its work plan to draft recommendations for the accessible customer service standards.

Key activities of the Board included:

- Sought Ministerial approval to increase Board meeting frequency per year and revised the Terms of Reference accordingly.
- Established the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee in December 2024.
- Provided orientation to the members of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee.
- Provided guidance and insight into the development of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee's workplan.
- Provided advice to the Minister with recommendations for accessibility standards to be considered for future development and implementation.
- Drafted a Terms of Reference and an Expression of Interest for the Information and Communication Standard Development Committee.
- Invited Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) to provide a status update on the federal accessibility standards at the December 9, 2024, Board meeting.
- Participated in Equitable and Accessible AI presentation, facilitated by ASC during the February 3, 2025 Board meeting.

Report on Performance

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board identified the two objectives below to assist in monitoring and evaluating the success of the 2023-26 Activity Plan. Both objectives are the focus for all three fiscal years of the Activity Plan. Throughout the past year, the Board has met to discuss and determine recommendations regarding accessibility and accessibility standards.

Issue One: Accessibility Recommendations

Accessibility standards are building blocks for making effective improvements to accessibility. They require individuals, private organizations and public entities to identify, prevent and remove barriers to improve accessibility. The Board is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the Minister regarding proposed accessibility standards.

When making these recommendations, consideration is given to the following:

- content related to the accessibility standard in question;
- how, and who, should implement measures, policies, and practices;
- time periods for implementation; and
- alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2024-25 Objective:

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board will have provided accessibility recommendations to the Minister, as required.

Indicator	Report on Activities
Met to discuss accessibility issues at least four times per year.	During 2024-25, the Board met four times to discuss accessibility issues - twice virtually and twice in-person.
Provided accessibility recommendations to the Minister, as required.	In March 2025, the Board met with the Minister to provide recommendations. During this meeting, the Board raised the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing educational support for students who have learning disabilities and the need for continued recognition and education on non-visible disabilities.• Supporting new businesses to improve accessibility and to help support compliance with future accessibility regulations.

Issue Two: Accessibility Standards

When the Minister determines that an accessibility standard will be developed, the Board will be directed to establish a standard development committee of technical experts. This committee will assist in making recommendations regarding the content and implementation of the accessibility standard, in accordance with sections 11 and 12 of the **Accessibility Act**. At least one half of the committee members will be persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities, and members will also represent organizations, public bodies and departments that will be affected or responsible for matters relating to the standard being developed.

2024-25 Objective:

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board will make recommendations regarding the content and implementation of the accessibility standard, as required.

Indicator	Report on Activities
Upon Ministerial direction, the Board will establish a standard development committee.	<p>During 2024-25, the Board established the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee as per Ministerial direction provided during the 2023-24 fiscal year.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Board will provide the Minister with draft recommendations for Accessible Customer Service Standards in the 2025-26 fiscal year. This will align with proposed timelines within the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee work plan.</p> <p>The Board also began preparing for the establishment of the Information and Communication Standard Development Committee, which was identified as the second standard for development by the Minister. The Board drafted an Expression of Interest, a Terms of Reference and designed the selection process. The selection process for this Committee is anticipated to be completed in the 2025-26 fiscal year.</p>

Indicator	Report on Activities
Upon Ministerial direction, the Board will develop the terms of reference for Ministerial approval.	<p>In 2024-25, the Board updated the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee Terms of Reference document that was originally drafted in December 2023. The Terms of Reference was approved by the Minister in November 2024.</p> <p>The Board also developed the Information and Communication Standard Development Committee Terms of Reference and drafted an Expression of Interest for this Committee. These documents will be provided to the Minister for approval in the 2025-26 fiscal year.</p>

Objectives for 2025-26:

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board will report on the same objectives and indicators for all three years covered by its 2023-26 Activity Plan.

Opportunities and Challenges

The 2024-25 fiscal year provided the Board with various opportunities for continuous learning and engagement. The Board obtained insight and knowledge on accessibility and inclusion by building relationships with valued partners, such as Accessibility Standards Canada and the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee.

The Board also noted overlapping mandates with other advisory bodies and that of the provincial Buildings Accessibility Advisory Board in particular, underscoring the need for cross-departmental coordination and ongoing dialogue with the Minister.

Several Board vacancies in 2024-25, including the Chair and Vice Chair positions, created delays in the Board's ability to make decisions and progress work related to the establishment and content of accessibility standards and the time-periods for their implementation. There is now a full complement of members, which will assist the Board in achieving its mandate until the Vice Chair position is filled.