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Item No. 14.1

Halifax Regional Council
May 9, 2023
May 23, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

John Traves, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Accessibility Strategy Update - 2023

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

May 18, 2021 Regional Council motion (item 11.1.6):

MOVED by Councillor Deagle Gammon, seconded by Councillor Mancini
THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Adopt the Accessibility Strategy as set out in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated April 19, 2021;
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out the actions contained in the Accessibility Strategy as part of the multi-year budgeting and business planning process; and
3. Request that the Chief Administrative Officer provide annual progress reports on the implementation of the Accessibility Strategy to Regional Council.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Accessibility Act, S.N.S. 2017, c. 2, subsection 39(2) provides:

39(2) A municipality, university or organization shall prepare and make publicly available an accessibility plan within one year of being prescribed as a public sector body

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, subsections 34(1) and 34 (3) provides:

34 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

BACKGROUND

Following the approval of the Accessibility Strategy by Council in May 2021, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO formed the Accessibility Strategy Task Force. This Task Force is comprised of municipal staff representing all business units, and the goal of the Task Force is to oversee the implementation of the Accessibility Strategy action items. Task Force members were assigned to various subcommittees based on their areas of expertise as well as the needs of the highest-priority action items at the time of implementation. Three subcommittees were formed: Interior Built Environment Subcommittee, Exterior Built Environment Subcommittee, and Employment Subcommittee.

DISCUSSION

The Accessibility Strategy Task Force meets on a bimonthly basis, and each subcommittee meets monthly. The Interior Built Environment and the Exterior Built Environment subcommittees are assigned many of the same action items. This is because some of the Accessibility Strategy's action items refer to both interior and exterior built environment to some degree, so both subcommittees examine those action items from their respective lenses.

In total, the Interior Built Environment Subcommittee was assigned four action items:

- Use Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for future infrastructure in the Halifax region (e.g., Rick Hansen curb cuts, public washrooms, CSA standards for accessible parking spaces).
- Adopt Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for current infrastructure, including street infrastructure, owned by HRM.
- Develop review system to audit buildings, public facilities, recreational parks/playgrounds, and trails to assess when repairs or upgrades are needed to maintain accessibility.
- Ensure that all signage (including new signage templates), walkways, and equipment for beaches, parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities (e.g., proper gymnasium flooring for para sports) are accessible for individuals with disabilities.

The Interior Built Environment Subcommittee reported a number of construction and renovation projects with a focus on accessibility, as noted in Attachment 1. These projects include recreational facilities, the Woodside Ferry Terminal, and municipal office spaces. Additionally, an Accessibility Auditor was hired to begin reviewing HRM buildings.

The Exterior Built Environment Subcommittee was assigned six action items:

- Ensure all bus stops follow accessible standards (e.g., well-maintained shelters).
- Increase public awareness, to the disability community, around snow removal.
- Use Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for future infrastructure in the Halifax region (e.g., Rick Hansen curb cuts, public washrooms, CSA standards for accessible parking spaces).
- Adopt Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for current infrastructure, including street infrastructure, owned by HRM.
- Develop review system to audit buildings, public facilities, recreational parks/playgrounds, and trails to assess when repairs or upgrades are needed to maintain accessibility.
- Ensure that all signage (including new signage templates), walkways, and equipment for beaches, parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities (e.g., proper gymnasium flooring for para sports) are accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Some notable accomplishments reported by the Exterior Built Environment Subcommittee include the completion of a new Jump Start inclusive playground at the George Dixon Centre. Attachment 1 lists the wide variety of accomplishments made since May 2022.

Three action items assigned to Employment Subcommittee had a 2022 deadline:

- Collect and maintain information from employment equity reports, which indicates the number of individuals employed by the municipality who self-identify as having a disability.
- Establish hiring procedures, which requires defining accommodations for individuals with disabilities on job postings within the municipality, including accommodations available through the interview process (e.g., if a scribe is needed, etc.).
- Develop a Workplace Accommodation Policy, which outlines a formal process for providing accommodations to job candidates and employees with disabilities.

Three additional action items assigned to the Employment subcommittee began in 2022:

- Compile internal list of accommodations provided to employees with disabilities (e.g., visual, physical, neurodevelopmental, etc.).
- Establish partnerships with external partners (e.g., universities and colleges) to provide municipal work placements and internships that are available for students with disabilities.
- Develop a procedure to share municipal job postings with agencies who support individuals with disabilities seeking employment.

Among other accomplishments, the Employment Subcommittee reported ongoing work related to the HRM Workplace Accommodations Policy and HRM Job Candidate Accommodations Policy. These policies have an anticipated completion date of April 2023.

Although both the Interior and Exterior Built Environment Subcommittees face challenges and risks associated with the current lack of adopted provincial standards, the Employment subcommittee is even further disadvantaged as less guidance or direction is available at this time from the province. The Accessibility Directorate is set to release a draft Built Environment Standard in Spring 2023 for public review, and the final Built Environment Standard in 2024. The Employment Standard is currently in the development phase.

There were five miscellaneous action items that could not be assigned to a specific subcommittee that are being overseen by individual Task Force members. These action items were as follows:

- Implement Mobile Data Computer Software, online booking, and automatic fare systems to improve Access-a-bus booking service.
- Increase number of accessible taxis and/or have an alternative provider for accessible cabs in the Halifax region.
- Align Diversity & Inclusion business unit initiatives with the actions outlined in the Accessibility Strategy.
- Establish partnerships between the accessibility advisor and business units to conduct annual business unit accessibility reviews.
- Establish dialogue between Accessibility Directorate and the municipality regarding accessibility in the Halifax region and compliance with the provincial Accessibility Act.

The most significant accomplishments in this category came from Halifax Transit. Mobile Data Terminals were installed on all Access a Buses in Fall 2022. Additionally, Halifax Transit partnered with an accessible taxi service, Extra Care Taxi, to officially offer services around HRM, which began in summer 2022.

Three additional action items began in 2022. These items are as follows:

- Develop a passenger survey regarding accessible services to measure success.
- Increase training for municipal staff (e.g., recreation, fire, police, librarians) on how to serve/accommodate persons with disabilities.
- Improve services & operations (e.g., number of recreational support staff) to reflect the demand for accessible recreation.

In alignment with the provincial Accessibility Act, the Accessibility Strategy is subject to a review and update every three years. Since the Accessibility Strategy was approved in May 2021, it will be due for an update

in 2024. Public consultations are proposed to be held in 2023 to inform the review and update of the Accessibility Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Accessibility Strategy has and will result in an increase in multiple municipal service level standards and therefore require an increase in funding for future operating and base capital program budgets.

Some of the Strategy's Action items proposing new HRM programs and processes may be absorbed within current staffing and budgets. Additional service program delivery outside of current capacity, as well as any new or increased capital work added will require an increase to the average tax bill or reductions within other services. The provincial legislation will establish accessibility standards, which may influence the prioritization of recommended accessibility capital work, causing a greater funding and resource pressure on the existing high-risk asset renewal and desired growth projects.

2023-24 poses a unique year for the Accessibility Strategy since public consultations are needed to inform the review and update of the Strategy. Public consultations are proposed to take place in Fall 2023 and will be facilitated to be as accessible as possible. The estimated cost for the public consultations is approximately \$70,000 and can be funded from the Fiscal Services budget in M310 – Other Fiscal Services if approved. A supplementary report will come forward with a detailed proposal and financial request.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While there was a community engagement component to developing the Accessibility Strategy, no further community engagement has been conducted to date to implement action items. As the Accessibility Strategy needs to be updated every three years according to the Accessibility Act, community consultations will occur in Fall 2023.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Accessibility Strategy Update

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Accessibility Strategy Update

Prepared by:

Melissa Myers
Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO
April 2023



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Introduction

This report outlines the progress that has been made on implementing the *Accessibility Strategy* (the Strategy) since Regional Council approval in May 2021. The report will focus on a specific set of action items that were scheduled to begin in 2021 and 2022 according to the Strategy, and the progress that has been made on those specific action items from May 2021 to March 2023. Four of those action items had a completion deadline of 2022 according to the Strategy.

Background

On May 18, 2021, Regional Council approved the Strategy. As part of this motion approval, Council requested an annual update on the progress made towards the Strategy.

The Strategy contains 30 action items, the implementation of which is based on best practices and proposed provincial accessibility standards. At the time of writing this report, the Province of Nova Scotia has not released their accessibility standards that municipalities are expected to follow under the [Accessibility Act](#). The Built Environment standard will be first standard to be released, which is targeted for early 2024.

Following Council approval, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO formed the Accessibility Strategy Task Force (the Task Force). This Task Force is comprised of municipal staff representing all business units, and the goal of the Task Force is to oversee the implementation of the Strategy's action items.



Accessibility Strategy Task Force

The Task Force was formed in September 2021. There are 19 members, in addition to the Accessibility Advisor who sits on every subcommittee to provide support. There are 10 members on the Interior Built Environment Subcommittee; six of these members sit on the Task Force. There are 10 members on the Exterior Built Environment Subcommittee; nine of these members sit on the Task Force. There are seven members on the Employment Subcommittee; four of these members sit on the Task Force.

The Task Force meets on a quarterly basis, and each subcommittee meets monthly. Discussions on specific action items are done during the subcommittee meetings; the Task Force meetings are primarily to provide updates to the Task Force as a whole.

About CSA B651-18 and Rick Hansen Certification

There are several action items in the Strategy which refer to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18 standards as well as the Rick Hansen Gold Certification. This section provides additional explanations of these two measures of built environment accessibility.

The CSA develops standards through a consensus process approved by the Standards Council of Canada. This process brings together volunteers representing varied viewpoints and interests to achieve consensus and develop standards. The B651 Accessible Design for the Built Environment has been developed by the CSA Group. The fifth edition entitled *B651-18 Accessible design for the built environment – Implementation Handbook*, was used to develop the Accessibility Strategy. The B651-23 was released

in February 2023 and is under review by staff to determine what impact it has on the Accessibility Strategy.

The [Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™](#) (RHFAC) program is a rating survey based on Universal Design Principles and the CSA B651 Standard. The program measures the level of meaningful access beyond building code and is based upon the holistic user experience of people of all abilities, including those with mobility, vision, hearing, cognitive and/or intellectual disabilities.

Progress by subcommittees

The Interior Built Environment subcommittee is responsible for action items relating to the interior of buildings and other infrastructure. There are four action items assigned to this subcommittee, all of which began in 2021.

The Exterior Built Environment Subcommittee is responsible for action items relating to the exterior of buildings and exterior built environment infrastructure, such as sidewalks and parks. There six action items assigned to the subcommittee beginning in 2021.

The Employment Subcommittee is responsible for action items relating to municipal employment, including recruiting, hiring and workplace accommodations. There are six action items assigned to this subcommittee. Three action items began in 2021, and three began in 2022.

There are six additional action items that were not assigned to subcommittees, but that are being overseen by individual Task Force members, including the Accessibility Advisor.

Interior Built Environment subcommittee progress

1. Use Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for future infrastructure in the Halifax region (e.g. curb cuts, public washrooms, and accessible parking spaces) – 2030 deadline

Progress:

The following buildings have been completed:

- Mackintosh Depot
- Fort Needham Park Washroom



Image description: The newly constructed Fort Needham Memorial Park accessible washrooms. The building sits on a concrete barrier-free pad and has windows spanning the front side. Solar panels sit on the roof.



The following buildings are designed and/or under construction:

- Halifax Commons Aquatic Project
- Kiwanis Graham Grove Park Washroom
- Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Community Centre
- Metropolitan Track and Sport Field Washroom

2. Adopt Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for current infrastructure, including street infrastructure, owned by HRM - 2030 deadline

Progress:

- All Corporate Accommodation projects completed since March 2020 have been designed and constructed to meet the CSA B651-18 standard.
- The most recent Corporate Accommodations project, Alderney Gate 5th floor office renovation, is designed to meet both CSA B651-18 standard and Rick Hansen Gold Certification. Construction on this project began in February 2023, and occupancy is estimated for October 2023.
- Corporate Accommodations is reviewing Purdy's Wharf Tower II – 8th floor and Alderney Ferry Terminal for accessibility improvements that are attainable within a short time frame. Examples of these improvements include tactile signage, colour contrasts in spaces, etc.
- Business units on Duke Tower 7th floor initiated a consultation with the Accessibility Auditor to assess the floor's kitchen doors. A need



for automatic door buttons was identified. The buttons will be installed in 2023.

- The Woodside Ferry Terminal reopened in fall 2023. The terminal now has accessible universal washrooms.
- Dartmouth North Community Centre accessible and universal washroom renovation.
- Small addition and minor renovations taking place at Keshen Goodman Library, with anticipated completion in Fall 2023.

3. Develop review system to audit buildings, public facilities, recreational parks/playgrounds, and trails to assess when repairs or upgrades are needed to maintain accessibility – 2024 deadline

Progress:

- An Accessibility Auditor was hired to conduct audits on current municipal facilities and assist with Park audits. Regular audits are now being conducted.
- The auditing tool that was developed during the 2021/22 fiscal year is now in use.

4. Ensure that all signage (including new signage templates), walkways, and equipment for beaches, parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities (e.g. proper gymnasium flooring for para sports) are accessible for individuals with disabilities – 2030 deadline

Progress:

- There is a Standing Offer agreement in place for signage. HRM is developing a signage standard for parks.
- Flooring for para sports is standard design for all new gymnasiums.

Exterior Built Environment subcommittee progress

1. Ensure all bus stops follow accessible standards (e.g. well-maintained shelters) – 2030 deadline

Progress:

- In 2022/23 modifications were made to 31 bus stops to improve accessibility. Approximately 60% of the planned 2022 accessibility upgrades at 50 bus stops have been completed to date. Due to construction delays and labour shortages, the remainder of construction had to be postponed to 2023. A multi-year work plan will guide upgrades to the remaining non-accessible stops.
- Halifax Transit is currently working on identifying changes to be made to their internal accessible standards for bus stops.
- Public Works makes regular updates to existing bus stops when working on streets as part of paving or other infrastructure upgrades.

2. Increase public awareness, to the disability community, around snow removal – 2028 deadline

Progress:

- Winter operations web content is being reviewed and adjusted for increased accessibility and ease of navigation.



- A one-page information sheet was created to educate the public on expectations for snow removal based on geographical area, weather conditions and timeframe (see Appendix A). Infrastructure, Maintenance & Operations are also finalizing modifications to the 'Winter Operations' webpage over the coming months which will improve overall interpretation, including new graphics that help more succinctly communicate snow clearing standards.

3. Use Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for future infrastructure in the Halifax region (e.g. curb cuts, public washrooms, and accessible parking spaces) – 2030 deadline

Progress:

- Three approved 2022/23 playing field rehabilitation projects incorporated accessible elements (e.g. new pathways and/or accessible bleachers).
- A new pool at the Halifax Common is projected to open for summer 2023.
- Sixty per cent of approved 2022/23 capital playground projects will have inclusive play elements. To date, some playgrounds are already constructed, and some projects will be carried into 2024 based on resource availability.
- Parking Services is investing in an accessible parking marketing plan in the winter/spring of 2023.
- Traffic Services installed thirteen accessible traffic signals with another two planned before April 2023.



- Added specifications for accessible parking spaces to municipal guidelines that follow CSA B651-18.

4. Adopt Rick Hansen gold certification and CSA B651-18 standards for current infrastructure, including street infrastructure, owned by HRM - 2030 deadline

Progress:

- In summer 2022 an audit was conducted on Grand Parade and City Hall to identify necessary accessibility upgrades.
- The playground at the George Dixon Community Centre was replaced with a new all-inclusive JumpStart playground. Features include:
 - Pour-in-place rubber surfacing allowing for a barrier-free transition from pathways to play area;
 - A We-Saw, an updated version of a seesaw designed for ease of use for kids of all abilities;
 - A We-Go-Round, a merry-go-round designed so that children using mobility devices can wheel right in;
 - A collection of musical instruments providing auditory stimulation; and
 - Braille lettering, sign-language and communication charts.
- Several park capital projects incorporated accessible elements (Silvers Hill Park, Birch Cove Park, new accessible shade structure at Albro Lake Park, Hemlock Ravine Park parking lot paving, Shirley's Splash Pad, Viscount Run Park paved parking lot and pathways, and



Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park - West Bedford trailhead new paved parking lot.

- Infrastructure, Maintenance & Operations issued a specific tender for accessible pedestrian ramps, replacing 162 ramps. An additional walkway tender replaced 29 more ramps and in-house crews replaced 21 ramps.
- The Design & Construction Services team tendered more than 1,260 tactile warning indicator plates, enough for approximately 360 pedestrian ramps.
- The Project Planning & Asset Management team completed a survey of all existing pedestrian ramps in the Halifax Regional Municipality, including information on if the ramps meet the accessibility standard.



Image description: The JumpStart inclusive playground at the George Dixon Community Centre. The playground is fully accessible and is coloured grey and red. Accessible elements displayed include a ramp, swings, a We-Saw, We-Go-Around and rubber surfacing.

5. Develop review system to audit buildings, public facilities, recreational parks/playgrounds, and trails to assess when repairs or upgrades are needed to maintain accessibility – 2024 deadline

Progress

- An Accessibility Auditor was hired to conduct audits on municipal built environment infrastructure. Regular audits are now being conducted.
- The auditing tool that was developed during the 2021/22 fiscal year is now in use.

6. Ensure that all signage (including new signage templates), walkways, and equipment for beaches, parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities are accessible for individuals with disabilities – 2030 deadline

Progress:

- There is a Standing Offer agreement in place for signage. HRM is developing a signage standard for parks.
- There are several considerations involved with ensuring exterior signs are accessible. There is a need for staff to be more educated on the components of accessible signage before approaching a vendor with these needs.

- A grit chair (all-terrain wheelchair) was purchased for the Equipment Loan program.
- Campbell Point Beach received new beach matting and an accessible beach chair in summer 2022.



Image description: A bright blue accessible beach mat following a path that leads down the sand and into the water of the lake.

Employment subcommittee progress

- 1. Collect and maintain information from employment equity reports which indicates the number of individuals employed by the municipality who self-identify as having a disability - 2022 deadline**

Progress:

Data is collected through the hiring process via the applicant tracking system (Brass Ring) that includes candidate self-identification information



from the following equity groups: African Nova Scotians and Other Racially Visible Persons, Women in occupations or positions where they are underrepresented in the workforce, Indigenous/Aboriginal People, Persons with Disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ Persons. The number of candidates as well as the number of hires from equity groups is reported through the *Annual Workforce Report*. In 2021/22 there were 561 hires from equity groups, representing 34.11 per cent of total hires.

2. Establish hiring procedures that require defining accommodations for individuals with disabilities on job postings within the municipality, including accommodations available through the interview process (e.g. if a scribe is needed, etc.) – 2022 deadline

Progress

- The anticipated completion date for this recommendation is December 31, 2023.
- The Halifax Regional Municipality has a *Fair Hiring Policy* that is available [online](#) for candidates to review in its entirety. This policy states the following as it relates to accommodations for candidates: *“The Halifax Regional Municipality will provide accommodations during the recruitment process based on any human rights protected ground, short of undue hardship. Applicants have the right to request such an accommodation. Applicants invited to participate in an assessment process (such as an interview or testing) will be the offered the opportunity to discuss their accommodation needs with the Hiring Manager or HR Generalist. Human Resources staff will*

assist with any accommodation requests.” Candidates can find additional information on [halifax.ca](https://www.halifax.ca).

- Once the *Job Candidate Accommodation Policy* has been completed, it will also be available online for all candidates to view. This is a substantial document that will outline the types of accommodations that are available throughout the recruitment process as well as the process to obtain an accommodation if required.

3. Develop a *Workplace Accommodation Policy* which outlines a formal process for providing accommodations to job candidates and employees with disabilities – 2022 deadline

Progress:

- This work is currently underway within Human Resources. There is a project team and charter that defines the following outcomes:
 - A workplace accommodations policy and a job candidate accommodations policy;
 - Supplementary documents that will aid in fair and consistent application of the policy;
 - A tracking mechanism for employment-related accommodations.
- The policies have been reviewed by several internal partners but are not yet finalized. The anticipated completion date of this work is April 2023.



4. Compile internal list of accommodations provided to employees with disabilities (e.g. visual, physical, neurodevelopmental, etc.) – 2026 deadline

Progress:

- Information regarding the accommodation process is presently available on [halifax.ca](https://www.halifax.ca).
- The *Job Candidate Accommodations Policy* (separate from the Workplace Accommodation Policy) will provide more detailed information on the available accommodations as well as the method to request and obtain the accommodation. Once the policy is finalized, it will be available on [halifax.ca](https://www.halifax.ca), accessible to all that require it. Anticipated completion date is April 2023.

5. Establish partnerships with external partners (e.g. universities and colleges) to provide municipal work placements and internships that are available for students with disabilities – 2024 deadline

Progress:

- In early 2023, the Human Resources Business Unit has established a Talent Acquisition Team which is lead by the Manager of Talent Acquisition. They have also established two positions called Talent Acquisition Specialists that will support community engagement including establishing, developing and maintaining partnerships.

6. Develop a procedure to share municipal job postings with agencies who support individuals with disabilities seeking employment – 2024 deadline

Progress:

- Human Resources (Talent Acquisition division) has a list of approximately 24 community partners specific to the Accessibility Community as well as multiple other community partnerships.
- During every staffing plan discussion with the Hiring Manager, diversity is discussed along with advertising opportunities.
- The Talent Acquisition team has access to the full list of contacts and sends the postings to these groups as needed.

Other action items

1. Implement Mobile Data Computer Software, online booking, and automatic fare systems to improve Access-A-bus booking service – 2022 deadline

Progress:

- The Mobile Data Terminal project is now complete. The system is functional, allowing Halifax Transit to provide real time schedule updates to Operators and collect accurate data. A mobile app for fare payment is expected to be implemented in spring 2023. The online booking system is a longer-term project.

2. Increase number of accessible taxis and/or have an alternative provider for accessible cabs in the Halifax region – 2030 deadline

Progress:

- *Extra Care Taxi*, the new accessible taxi service was introduced in July 2022. Currently there is a fleet of 10 taxis in the Halifax region. There has been a steady growth in bookings and ridership during the first six months of the service.

3. Align D&I business unit initiatives with the actions outlined in the Accessibility Strategy – 2030 deadline

Progress: Since the approval of the Strategy in May 2021, business units consider yearly goals that are specifically associated with accessibility in addition to the aforementioned diversity and inclusion (D&I) goals. This will continue to strengthen each business unit's dedication to D&I initiatives and provide additional reporting opportunities for the D&I Champions Table.

4. Establish partnership between the Accessibility Advisor and business units to conduct annual business unit accessibility reviews – 2028 deadline

Progress: Following the Strategy's approval by Council, the Task Force was formed. Starting in 2022, the Task Force met on a bimonthly basis and subcommittees each month. In fall 2022, the Task Force moved to meeting on a quarterly basis, while subcommittees continue to meet monthly. The Accessibility Advisor also meets with individual Task Force members on a regular basis for updates specific to that member's respective business unit.

5. Establish dialogue between Accessibility Directorate and the municipality regarding accessibility in the Halifax region and compliance with the provincial Accessibility Act – 2028 deadline

Progress:

The Accessibility Advisor liaises with the Accessibility Directorate on a regular basis. In May 2022, the Accessibility Directorate presented to the Task Force to give an overview of the standards development process. The lead representative for the Built Environment and Employment Standards subcommittees presented on their respective development process. Other representatives from the Accessibility Directorate also joined to present on the Provincial Accessibility Plan for 2022-2025. This presentation raised a lot of follow-up questions around built environment expectations on the municipality.

As a follow-up from the initial May 2022 meeting, the Accessibility Advisor arranged a joint Exterior-Interior Built Environment Subcommittee meeting in August 2022 and invited members from the Accessibility Directorate to give a more in-depth presentation on the proposed built environment standard and how it would impact the municipality.

6. Increase training for municipal staff (e.g. recreation, fire, police, librarians) on how to serve/accommodate persons with disabilities – 2026 deadline

Progress:

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO



In 2020, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO began offering *Going from Support to Inclusion: Accessibility Training* to all municipal staff. This full-day training discusses fundamental introductory topics around disability, accessibility and inclusion. It also discusses incorporating accessibility into work practices, including workplace accommodation and creating accessible online content. Until 2023, this training was offered three times annually. Beginning in 2023, this training is now being offered monthly from January to June and September to November. In spring 2023, the Accessibility Advisor will offer a condensed accessibility training to Halifax Regional Police cadets.

From May 2022 to March 2023, a total of five accessibility training sessions were held, with one additional session held specifically for Client Services (Human Resources). A total of 75 municipal employees participated in these sessions. The following list represents the number of participants who attended accessibility training, broken down by business unit:

- **1** - Office of the CAO (CAO)
- **5** - Finance & Asset Management (FAM)
- **1** – Government Relations & External Affairs (GREA)
- **1** - Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE)
- **0** - Halifax Regional Police (HRP)
- **10** - Halifax Transit Services (HTS)
- **26** - Human Resources & Corporate Communications (HRCC)
- **1** - Information Technology (IT)
- **1** - Legal & Legislative Services (LLS)
- **13** - Parks & Recreation (P&R)

- 4 - Planning & Development (P&D)
- 4 - Property, Fleet & Environment (PFE)
- 8 - Public Works (PW)

HRFE

There are two planned training sessions for fall 2023:

- 1) Supporting and responding to persons with physical disabilities.
- 2) Supporting and responding to persons with potentially invisible disabilities, such as those with mental health issues or neurodevelopmental disabilities. Part of this training will have a focus on autism.

HRFE has requested assistance in the development of online learning sessions which can be made available to all front line employees and volunteers.

Parks & Recreation

Summer Inclusion training

Advanced Summer Inclusion training provides summer staff with the tools to support children in municipal summer camps. Topics include positive behaviour support, proper lifting techniques, personal care, non-violent crisis intervention, universal design of programs, disability awareness and creating trauma sensitive programs. Approximately 40 casual staff were trained.

Basic Summer Inclusion training provides summer staff with the tools to support children in municipal summer camps. Topics include positive

behaviour support, universal design of programs, disability awareness, and creating an inclusive recreation environment. Approximately 50 casual staff were trained (this included all staff who didn't receive Advanced Summer Inclusion training).

Universal Program Design training

This training is designed to have staff examine their current program offering with a lens of universal program design. Using real examples from the programs currently running, staff look at barriers to participation and how barriers can be minimized to encourage participation for all.

Approximately 20 casual staff were trained.

LEARNINGO Training (partner organization)

This training is aimed to build skills with the people who are working directly with individuals who need additional support to be successful in the environment they work in. Employees leave this training with a better understanding of why additional support is required, and a toolbox of strategies that can reduce stress and open up opportunities to learn about positive behaviour supports. Approximately 10 casual staff have been trained or are registered for this training, which started being offered monthly in January 2023.

7. Develop a Halifax Transit passenger survey regarding accessible services to measure success – 2024 deadline

Progress: This deliverable will be initiated in 2024.

8. Improve services & operations (e.g. number of recreational support staff) to reflect the demand for accessible recreation – 2026 *deadline*

Progress:

- Hired an Outdoor Inclusion Coordinator and offered inclusion swim lessons at beaches for the first time in the summer of 2022. Eleven participants attended the inclusion beach lessons. Inclusion swim lessons were also offered at other indoor pools.
- Hired a third full time permanent Inclusion & Accessibility Specialist in Recreation Programming.
- The municipality hired 66 Inclusion staff members for summer 2022, which was an increase of 11 from summer 2021.

Additional Accessibility initiatives

As part of the Strategy update meeting between the Accessibility Advisor and Task Force members, a variety of accessibility initiatives were mentioned across business units that are not captured in the action items in the Strategy but will serve to improve accessibility within the Halifax Regional Municipality, both internally and externally. This section outlines these additional accessibility initiatives and are categorized by the business unit leading the initiative.

Human Resources & Corporate Communications (HR&CC)

Corporate Communications



- Implemented ALT text in Employee Bulletin newsletter and Employee Hub.
- Developed and shared closed captioned and/or text-based videos and digital screens targeting both internal and external audiences.
- Supported the Accessibility Town Hall event in November 2022.
- Provided ongoing graphic design support for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO initiatives, following accessible design guidelines and recently introduced people illustrations to better reflect diverse audiences.
- Provided imagery and design support for revisions to the Accessibility section of halifax.ca.
- Provided support for the recognition of significant dates to assist in raising awareness and engaging municipal staff and residents on issues around access and inclusion. Dates of recognition include:
 - Access Awareness Week (May 29 – June 4, 2022)
 - Disability Employment Awareness Month (October)
 - Indigenous Disability Awareness Month (November)
 - International Day of People with Disabilities (December 3)
- Implemented and followed the municipality's *Best Practices for Accessible Online Communications*.
- Website content added to halifax.ca and social promotion to create awareness around inclusive Halloween practices and tips to make trick-or-treating more accessible.
- Provided communications support for accessibility training for municipal employees.



- Highlighted accessibility success stories via internal and external communications channels.
- Supported efforts to enhance accessibility by piloting the use of software to generate narration for short format videos produced in-house.

Corporate Communications also provided communications support for several business unit-led accessibility initiatives, including:

Government Relations & External Affairs (GREA)

- In December 2022, four divisions (GREA, Corporate Communications, Access & Privacy and Risk & Insurance) located on Duke Tower 7th floor formed an informal group to review accessibility needs on their floor. This group meets monthly.

Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE)

- Community comfort centres are identified by meeting accessibility standards. A process is underway to improve existing location signage.
- HRFE will work with the Accessibility Advisor to put an accessibility lens on facilities supporting emergencies during emergency events.

This work will be transferred to the Community Safety business unit.

Parks & Recreation

The following accessibility initiatives are related to recreational programming in recreation centres:

- Continued Easter Seals partnership:
 - *Sledge Hockey* program (HRM4Pad)
 - *Learn to Wheel* program (St. Andrews Recreation Centre)
- Adaptive Equipment Try-it Day event.
- Worked with Dalhousie Health and Human Performance department and Nova Scotia Community College to provide meaningful placement and student projects to enhance the capacity of inclusion in recreation programming.
- Worked with Prescott Group to offer easier access to programs for their participants, which included attendance at the Drum Fit program at the Captain William Spry Community Centre.
- Expanded the Ready for Rec camp to include youth under 18 for a youth program.

Property, Fleet & Environment (PF&E)

- A video was created highlighting the accessibility features in the newly renovated Zatzman Sportsplex. The video can be found on the [Halifax Regional Municipality YouTube page](#).

Public Works

- The Director of Parking Services attended the Accessibility Town Hall.
- As part of the Terms of Reference for the *Solid Waste Strategy* review approved by Council in February 2022, accessibility was considered when doing public engagement (e.g., large print surveys) and accessibility concerns related to moving to a full cart based



curbside collection program are being considered. People with limited mobility may have difficulty maneuvering the large carts.

Halifax Transit


Halifax Transit launched a pilot travel training program. To date this program has several streams targeting accessible transit customers, newcomers, and students. Halifax Transit has developed partnerships with agencies that support or employ residents with accessibility needs, including Prescott Group, New Leaf Enterprises, Club Inclusion, and the Regional Residential Service Society, to provide both classroom and on-bus training sessions for their clients/members.

Conclusion


In the second year of the Strategy's implementation, the Halifax Regional Municipality was successful in staying on track to complete the highest-priority goals for the 2022/23 fiscal year. Of the four action items that were due in December 2022, two were completed by the deadline and two are to be completed by April 2023. Annual updates will continue to be provided to Regional Council on the Strategy, and if needed, raise any considerations for Council in supporting the Strategy's implementation.



Appendix A: Snow removal fact sheet



Roads and On-street Bikeways



Priority Level	Type of Road	Service Standard for clearing <small>(starts after end of event)</small>	Minimum Accumulation	What surface should look like
1	Main arterial roads, emergency routes, Halifax Transit routes and roads with steep grades	12 hours	2 cm of snowfall	Bare
2	Residential streets, gravel roads and private lanes	24 hours	10 cm of snowfall	Snow covered but passable



Sidewalks and Protected Bike Lanes



Priority Level	Priority Level Location/type of sidewalk or bike lane	Service Standard for clearing <small>(starts after end of event)</small>	Minimum Accumulation	What surface should look like
1	Downtown Halifax and Dartmouth	12 hours	5 cm of snowfall	Bare
1	Main arterials and school drop-off zones	12 hours	15 cm of snowfall	Bare
2	Halifax Transit routes	18 hours	15 cm of snowfall	Mostly bare with salt for traction
3	Residential streets and walkways	36 hours	15 cm of snowfall	Mostly bare with salt for traction

When to contact 311

Once the service timelines have expired, you can report any snow or ice removal issues on municipal streets, sidewalks or bike lanes by emailing ContactUs@311.halifax.ca or by calling 311.

Please note, clearing timelines may be exceeded during exceptional weather conditions.

HALIFAX



Image description: An infographic outlining snow removal practices in the Halifax Regional Municipality. There are two tables in the infographic. The first table is titled, "Roads and On-Street Bikeways." The table has five columns and three rows. The first row is a header row with the following five headers: "Priority Level; Type of road; Service Standard for clearing (starts after the end of the event); Minimum Accumulation; What surface should look like". Following the order of the headers, the second row reads "1; Main arterial roads, emergency routes, Halifax Transit routes and roads with steep grades; 12 hours; 2 cm of snowfall; Bare." Following the order of the headers, the third column reads "2; Residential streets, gravel roads and private lanes; 24 hours; 10cm of snowfall; Snow covered but passable."

The second table is titled, "Sidewalks and Protected Bike Lanes." The table has five columns and five rows. The first row is a header row with the following five headers: "Priority Level; Priority Level Location/type of sidewalk or bike lane; Service Standard for clearing (starts after end of event); Minimum Accumulation; What surface should look like." Following the order of the headers, column two reads, "1; Downtown Halifax and Dartmouth; 12 hours; 5cm of snowfall; Bare." Following the order of the headers, column 3 reads, "1; Main arterials and school drop-off zones; 12 hours; 15cm of snowfall; Bare." Following the order of the headers, column 4 reads, "2; Halifax Transit Routes; 18 hours; 15cm of snowfall; Mostly bare with salt for traction." Following the order of the headers, column 5 reads, "3; Residential streets and walkways; 36 hours; 15cm of snowfall; Mostly bare with salt for traction."

The bottom of the image reads, "When to contact 311: Once the service timelines have expired, you can report any snow or ice removal issues on municipal streets, sidewalks or bike lanes by emailing ContactUs@311.halifax.ca or by calling 311. Please note, clearing timelines may be exceeded during exceptional weather conditions."