

Municipality of Argyle:

Access by Design

A Multi Year Accessibility Plan for 2020-2022



Contents:

- Welcome Message
- Definitions
- Our Commitment
- Summary of Survey Results
- Area of Focus
- Built Environment
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Goods and Services
- Transportation
- Implementing the Plan
- Appendices

Welcome

The Municipality of Argyle Accessibility Advisory Committee's first meeting was May 28, 2020. This committee is composed of a member of municipal council, municipal staff and members of the public, half of which have a disability. Terms of Reference of the Accessibility Advisory Committee are as follows: "The Accessibility Advisory Committee provides advice to Council on identifying, preventing, and eliminating of barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives and facilities." The Committee plays a pivotal role in helping the Municipality of Argyle become an accessible community and meet its obligations under the NS Accessibility Act.

From its first meeting the Committee concentrated its efforts on the impact of barriers to participation, that buildings and outdoor spaces have an equitable access for those who live in the Municipality of Argyle. The Committee conducted a review of the spaces and buildings owned by the Municipality in order to determine issues dealing with accessibility. An inventory of these properties was taken as staff went to each location to take photos and bring back to the committee. Each location was evaluated by members of the committee, municipal staff, the Argyle Recreation Commission, and the fire departments so they could be ranked according to their accessibility. The Committee felt that community input was a very important part of this plan so, with the health restrictions in place because of COVID-19, the Committee had a questionnaire designed and promoted on the municipal website. This survey attracted 105 responders and the results are a part of this plan. As Committee Chair, I wish to thank all committee members and staff for their efforts and contribution. It is with pride and pleasure that I present you the Municipality of Argyle Accessibility Plan.

P.Earl Muise

Chair, Municipality of Argyle Accessibility Advisory Committee

Definitions:

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017):

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017) is the provincial law enacted to achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers for people with disability. The Act defines the role and responsibilities of the Accessibility Directorate and the Accessibility Advisory Board and addresses standards, compliance, and enforcement.

Barrier:

As defined by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017) a barrier is defined as “anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities”.

Disability:

As defined by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017) disability is defined as “any impairment, including a 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”.

Inclusion:

The process whereby every person regardless of age, ability, gender, income, education, religion, sexuality, and culture who wishes to, can access, and participate fully in all aspects of the activity just as any other person.

Argyle Accessibility Advisory Committee:

A committee established by the Argyle Municipality to advise the Council in the identification, prevention, and elimination of barriers to people with disability who access municipal programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in assisting the municipality to become a barrier-free community and in doing so complies with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017). At least one half of the members of the committee must have a disability or represent an organisation that represents people with disability. The committee is made up of both staff and volunteers.

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan

A multi-year plan (2018-2021) with specific priorities and commitments to achieve accessibility within the province of Nova Scotia.

<https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan/>

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.

DRAFT

Our Commitment:

Traditionally governments have worked on the premise of providing equal services to residents. Taking an equitable approach as opposed to an equal approach, means consideration is given as to how each of us has individual needs. Equity is the fair distribution of opportunities to all people regardless of their age, ability, gender, income, education, religion, sexuality, and culture. An accessible and inclusive community values all its members and assists them to meet their basic needs so that they can live with dignity and respect. All people have the right to access and participate in their community.

One in five Canadian adults live with disability. Each of us will experience disability at some point during our lives and will be reliant upon accessible communities so that we can continue to participate and lead full lives. Nova Scotia has the highest percentage (30.4%) of people with disability than any other province in Canada.

The Municipality of Argyle recognizes respects and values people with disability and is committed to providing accessible environments. We aim to eliminate barriers in the municipality by improving accessibility which will provide more opportunities for people with disability. The Municipality recognises that accessible environments are of great benefit and value to all community members and businesses, not just people with disability. Everyone uses curbs, automatic doors, and ramps. What may appear to be accessibility just for people with disability is in fact, a better design for everyone.

Our commitment to accessibility also meets the requirements of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017) which deems that all municipalities play a key role in helping the province of Nova Scotia becoming barrier free by 2030.

<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf>

To evidence our commitment to valuing people with disability and to ensure adherence to the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017) we are producing an Argyle Accessibility Plan as a guide to how we can better improve accessibility in our communities. As a starting point the Municipality of Argyle established the Argyle Accessibility Advisory Committee.

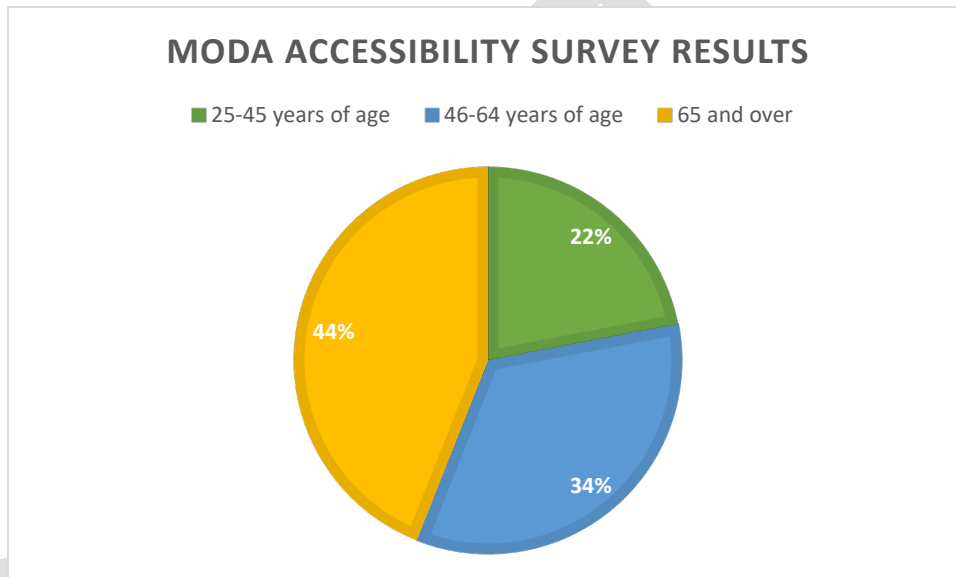
The aim of this committee is to identify issues pertaining to access in the Municipality and to advise the council of those issues. The committee consists of community members who are people with disability and/or carers, Councillors, and council staff members.

To date the committee has achieved the following:

- Regular meetings since April 2020 and meetings will continue annually or as needed to continue the work of the committee.
- Physically undertook an audit in March 2021 to identify barriers.
- Designed and distributed an online survey to gain feedback from the community regarding prioritisation of accessibility.
- Analysed the survey data.
- Compiled this report which will be presented to Council and the Province.

Summary of Survey Results

To better understand how the community views the importance of accessibility, the Argyle Accessibility Advisory Committee designed an online survey which was released for two weeks to the public on January 7th, 2021 until January 18th, 2021 via the Argyle Municipality Facebook page. The survey was comprised of 7 questions and had 105 respondents (88% of those respondents reside in the Municipality of Argyle). The age groups of the 105 respondents are as follows:



25-45 years of age	22%
46-64 years of age	34%
65 years and over	44%

The survey questions asked respondents the following:

1. Please check all that apply to you.
 - A. Person with a disability
 - B. Family member, friend, or caregiver of a person with a disability
 - C. Employed or volunteer at an organization that provides services to people with disabilities.

- D. Resident of Municipality of Argyle
 - E. Work in the Municipality of Argyle
 - F. Business owner in the municipality of Argyle
 - G. Visitor
2. What age group do you belong to? If filling this out on behalf of someone with a disability, please state their age?
 3. What community do you live in?
 4. Have you been unable to participate in a municipal program or activity due to the venue or surroundings being inaccessible? If yes, please describe in as much detail as possible, the situation you were faced with.
 5. In your opinion, which of the following two destinations should be our first focus for improving accessibility?
 - a. Ballfields
 - b. Multi-purpose/Tennis Courts
 - c. Fire Departments
 - d. Sidewalks
 - e. Track & Field
 - f. Playgrounds
 - g. Other
 6. Have you experienced barriers accessing municipal services, buildings, or facilities? If yes, please tell us about those barriers?
 7. Do you have further thoughts as to what the Municipality could do to provide accessibility in the community?

Data from question five in the survey shows that respondents identified sidewalks as the main concern and priority (65% of respondents) with playgrounds identified as the second concern and priority (36% of respondents). Fire departments were listed as the third priority by 27% of respondents, however our fire departments are not for public use.

We do have community halls which are accessible in some areas. Question five in the survey asked the community to tell us about other areas that need consideration. Two concerns that respondents listed were the need for accessible walking trails and floating docks.

Question seven in the survey asked for any further thoughts as to what the Municipality could do to provide accessibility in the community. 38% respondents commented and further reiterated that their primary concern is sidewalks. Residents clearly have trouble getting around and the lack of sidewalks in our area has proven to be a major barrier.

As mentioned above, the lack of accessible floating docks is also seen as a key barrier. The town of Yarmouth has ramps that allow people to access their floating docks while the Municipality of Argyle does not have ramps to floating docks. This is a barrier and limits participation in our area of fishing communities that are surrounded by beautiful lakes and oceans. This barrier prevents people from enjoying our waters and natural surroundings.

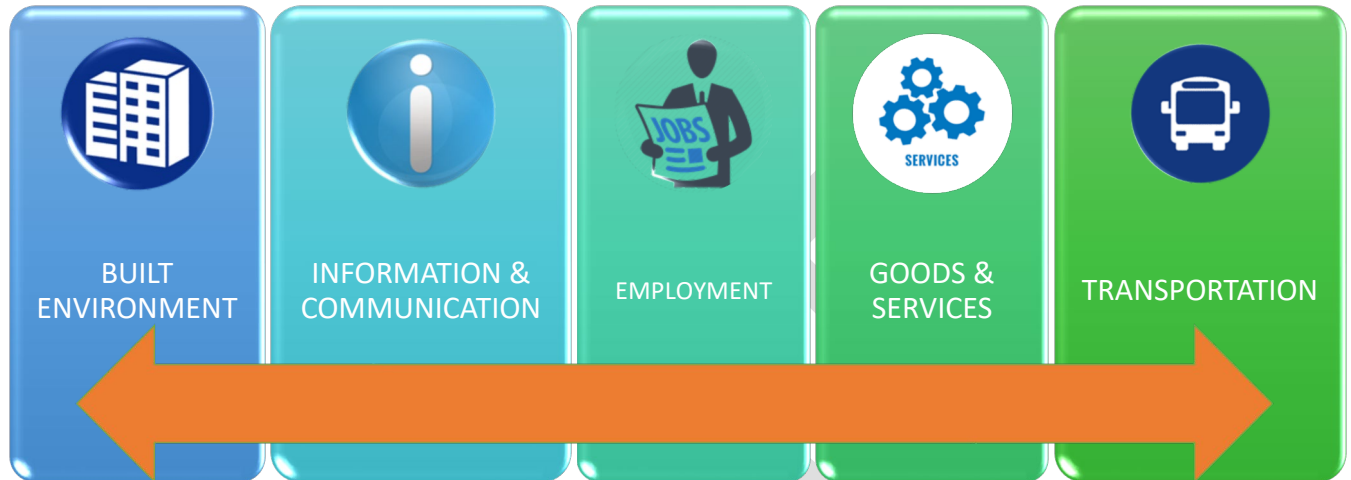
Respondents also stated concerns with regards to barriers when wanting to access multi-purpose courts.

[To view survey results, please click here.](#)

The survey findings clearly state that respondents have concerns about accessibility to sidewalks, playgrounds, the lack of accessible floating docks, access to walking trails and multi-purpose courts.

Areas of Focus:

Our plan includes five areas of focus.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

Our Commitment:

Our public buildings and public spaces will be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, whether we own, lease, or operate the space. We will also encourage citizens, the business community, and schools to make their public and private spaces more accessible.

Our Starting Point:

The Municipality of Argyle owns, leases and operates public facilities such as our Municipal Office, Argyle Township Courthouse & Archives, parks, playgrounds, tennis/multi purpose courts, fire departments, Pubnico Library, sidewalks, and other infrastructure and systems that helps the municipality run smoothly.

Achievements to date:

- Our new municipal building opening in June 2021 meets all the accessibility standards in the Nova Scotia Building Code.
- The Argyle Archives meets accessibility standards.
- Currently the Wedgeport & West Pubnico Fire Departments are accessible.
- We made changes to the Land Use Bylaw to make it easier for homeowners and landowners to:
 - Add a secondary suite, Air B&B, pocket communities and affordable housing effective August 2020.

Barriers:

- Our current municipal building is not accessible.
- Our playground Parc des Jeunes is currently not accessible. We have a project underway for the current year 2021 to make it wheelchair accessible.
- Most of our tennis courts/multi purpose courts do not have a direct sidewalk to enter in. They are not accessible.
- We own 3 sidewalks, located in Pubnico, Tusket & Wedgeport. They have a lip at the end and not fully accessible from certain locations. We also need to have more sidewalks in other areas to make walking more accessible for all residents.
- Currently we have one crosswalk located by the Wedgeport School. Some of our communities would benefit from having a crosswalk installed. (ie: PEB, kids walking from school to stores at lunch with no sidewalk or crosswalks)
- Our crosswalk that is in Wedgeport does not have the proper buttons or light controls.
- Our accessible parking is limited.
- Accessibility budget competes with other budget demands.
- The Tusket courthouse is not accessible. This is a heritage building and oldest standing courthouse in Canada. We may not be able to make any changes to meet accessibility standards.

- The Tusket Archives is accessible with the exception of the library collection which is accessible.

Recommendations:

- To provide an accessibility audit of municipal owned and operated assets.
- Ensure that all or most municipal facilities meet the accessibility requirements (Schedule “C”) in the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulation.
- Provide basic access for people of all ages and abilities to public buildings, public washrooms, and public parks with a natural slope of less than 5 percent.
- Ensure sidewalks are improved and maintained, as soon as possible, to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Provide accessible parking locations, and associated curb cuts where needed.
- Provide crosswalks and curb-cuts in areas with high pedestrians use - such as near schools and parks.

For Community Partnerships

The Municipality of Argyle will:

- Encourage private developers to have their existing and new buildings meet the Nova Scotia Building Code – Accessibility Standards. (Section 3.8).
- Work with the Argyle Businesses, Community Groups and Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce to promote Argyle as an accessible community.
- Encourage seniors to “age in place” through alternative housing options, such as affordable housing and pocket communities.

Actions:

Top Priorities:

- If we add new sidewalks, make sure to include curb cut outs and crosswalks where needed.

- Commit a portion of the annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in public buildings and spaces.
- When crosswalks are installed ensure all buttons and light controls, auditory, visual, and tactile markers, or similar options, such as those at intersections are installed.
- If furniture such as benches and picnic tables are in public areas, ensure they are accessible and clear of travel path.
- Widen doorways and install power door buttons or automated sliding doors at the entrance of municipal buildings and public washrooms.

Other Priorities:

- Work with the public library and the Tusket Archives to ensure accessibility.
- Promote the province's Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the Argyle Community Development Officer, including the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Encourage aging-in-place housing options in the municipal planning strategy and zoning by-laws.
- Ensure the schools are made aware of the accessibility plan once it is completed.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Our Commitment

Information and communications delivered by the Municipality of Argyle will be clear and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. We will create awareness around accessibility barriers and what an accessible community means.

Our Starting Point

The Municipality of Argyle delivers information to the public in several ways, which include:

- Meetings such as Argyle Council and Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public.
- The municipal website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- An online newsletter.
- Ad mail outs to all residents.

Achievements to date:

- Our Council meeting minutes and agendas are posted online.
- The council meetings are recorded live on Facebook and are posted on our municipal website to watch later.
- Work has begun to ensure our new municipal website will be accessible.
- We have staff who are fluent in languages other than English.
- Our council and public meetings which are held in the municipal building are accessible.

Barriers:

- There is currently no process for hearing impaired individuals to attend or participate in our public or council meetings. However, there is sound amplification available in the council meeting room.

- The Municipal Government Act sets limitations for certain public notices – for example, advertisements must be published in the newspapers, which may not be accessible to people with visual impairments.
- American Sign Language Interpreters are not readily available in our area.

Recommendations:

- Improve communications about existing municipal programs, services, and events that are accessible to people with disabilities by making available communications in a wide range of accessible formats. These formats can include bold and large print, certain colours, braille, and audible improvements.
- Improve signage for municipal building and public facilities by implementing signage such as accessible washrooms, accessible entrance, and sight impaired.
- We will try our best to make sure that all public open houses and meetings are as accessible as possible to all members of the public and will provide materials in different formats upon request. When we consider the meeting location, we will confirm there are no audible issues (for example an echo).
- Make certain that we use plain – simplified language.

Actions:

Top Priorities:

- Create a public awareness brochure/handout (for municipal staff and public) to encourage and build more awareness around barriers to accessibility and to help understand about what an accessible community means.
- Provide modified copies of municipal resources in large and/or plain language upon request.

- Ensure digital communications are screen readable, such as our municipal website.
- Add audible speaker at the front reception desk in the municipal building (due to plexiglass).
- When holding meetings online, have closed captioning on the screen.

Other Priorities:

- We will attempt to have an American Sign Language Interrupter at public municipal meetings when requested.
- To have signs in braille at our municipal building.
- Have detectible warning pavers at the end of curbs/sidewalks.

EMPLOYMENT

Our Starting Point

We will remove barriers to employment for people of all ages and abilities who seek a career with the Municipality of Argyle. We will make our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees of all ages and abilities.

Overview

The Municipality of Argyle currently has 22 staff members. There are 9 elected officials on council. Elected representatives must be 18 years of age, Canadian Citizen, and live in the community.

Achievements to date:

- The council officials have been issued with IPADS for reading agendas and municipal documents. This makes reading more accessible as the user is able to zoom in on the text and change font size.
- Our new municipal building will be barrier free.
- Our meeting rooms have tables that are wheelchair accessible.

Barriers:

- Our job postings do not currently state that we can accommodate a person with disability.
- Staff may not be able to identify individuals who have nonphysical disabilities.
- Our budget

Recommendations:

- The municipality will put in every effort that is fair and reasonable to offer barrier free workstations. We will also provide the necessary

tools & materials to employees with disabilities to successfully do their job.

Action:

Top Priorities:

- Build capacity among staff and senior leadership to cultivate a culture of inclusion that supports, retains, and provides opportunities for career growth to people with disability.
- Improve opportunities for people with disability to gain employment at the municipality by ensuring job postings clearly state they are open to people with disability, accommodations may be available in the workplace, and/or advertise job postings across different platforms.
- Improve policies, and practices to enable and encourage the recruitment, selection, and advancement of people with disability in their employment at the municipality.
- Improve support and flexibility in the workplace by ensuring municipal staff and Council with disability have access to adaptive technologies, possible accommodations in the workplace, appropriate and supportive leave practices and return to work plans, and a flexible work environment such as the ability to work from home.

Other Priorities:

- Assign a designated employee to assist individuals who may need disability related assistance in their role.
- Share opportunities for accessibility training to residents and local businesses.

GOODS AND SERVICES

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equal access to goods and services delivered by the Municipality of Argyle. This includes ensuring that there are policies, procedures, and tools to promote the accessible delivery of goods and services.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The following are some of the many services the municipality provides to the public:

- Handling meetings of Council and Advisory Committees
- Overseeing communication to the public
- Maintaining sidewalks, such as snow removal
- Maintaining playgrounds, ballparks, multi-purpose courts
- Maintaining sewer services

Achievements to date:

- Our new municipal building will be accessible.
- Our new municipal website will be made accessible.

Barriers:

- Currently our playgrounds, ball parks & multi purpose courts are not fully accessible.
- No staff members are trained in ASL (American Sign Language).
- No resources or funds are designated to offer alternative communications to
- people who need them.
- We are limited on resources due to our remote location away from bigger cities and towns.
- Budget.

Recommendations:

The Municipality of Argyle will deliver all goods and services without bias. Residents shall not be denied due to their disability.

Actions:

Top Priorities:

- Ensure that parks and recreational areas can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.
- Our playground Parc des Jeunes is currently not accessible. We have a project underway for the current year 2021 to make it wheelchair accessible.

TRANSPORTATION

Our Starting Point

The Municipality of Argyle currently has the Hope Dial a Ride. It is located in the Town of Yarmouth. They offer services to the Town of Yarmouth, Municipality of Yarmouth and Municipality of Argyle. Hope Dial a Ride has seven passenger vans, four of which are fully accessible and a mid-size SUV to help residents travel beyond our areas.

Achievements to date:

- The Municipality of Argyle has helped fund the new accessible HOPE vehicles.
- They are fully accessible to help a resident with a wheelchair.

Barriers:

- We currently do not have any buses located around the municipality or accessible taxis.
- The Hope Dial A Ride service needs at least 24-hour notice.
- There is an extra fee of \$7 each way when handling of a wheelchair.
- Our remote location.

Recommendations:

- Residents will not be denied transportation services because of their disability.
- If residents of the municipalities are charged an additional fee because of a disability the municipality would cover this cost.

Actions:

Top Priorities:

- Conduct a transportation study to determine if our own transit service is needed (i.e.: fund the Yarmouth Transit to bring residents back and forth to town).

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IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Responsibilities

Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Review the Accessibility Plan at least every three years as required by the Accessibility Act.
- Committee to meet annually to review progress and commitments outlined in this plan.

Accessibility Coordinator

- Guide the work by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Book meetings, prepare and distribute agendas and minutes, assist Chair in leading the meetings, manage recruitment for Committee when necessary.
- Accept complaints, questions, and concerns submitted by the public.
- Provide a summary of questions, concerns, and complaints to the Accessibility Committee.

Council

- Recognize the significant cost and value of implementing this plan and the municipal operational plans and seek adequate funding to allow municipalities to meet the requirements under *Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act*.

CAO

- Ensure the commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan are reflected and operationalized in municipal Accessibility Action Plans required as public sector bodies under *Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act*.

APPENDICES

Committee Members

P Earl Muise, (Chair) Resident, three-year term

Ted Saulnier, (Vice-chair) Councillor, three-year term

Alternate Councillor, Danny Muise

Julie Mann, Resident, three-year term

Ginette d'Entremont, Staff, three-year term

Yvette Leblanc, Resident, three-year term

Mona Doucette, Resident, three-year term

Ex-Officio Members

Ex-Officio CAO, Alain Muise

Ex-officio Municipal Clerk, Eilidh Canning

Kim Rowley, Deputy Clerk
Ex-Officio (Accessibility Coordinator)
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krowley@munargyle.com