



Tips for Accessible Public Meetings

Remember that more than 30% of Nova Scotians live with some kind of disability, many of which are invisible. When you consider families and friends, disability touches close to every other Nova Scotian. This is an important demographic to remember.

In order to best represent our communities, it is essential that accessibility be taken into account. While we recognize that it is impossible to ensure representation from every group at a public meeting, some simple steps will ensure that you have not inadvertently excluded persons with disabilities. It is not essential to provide all forms of accommodation at every meeting (for example, asking participants who might require sign language interpreters to contact you beforehand allows you to arrange this service when needed).

Basic accessibility is very simple to address. The following checklist may help you prepare:

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

- Is public transportation readily available and close to the site?
- Are there accessible parking spaces?
- Does the sidewalk have cut outs with no thresholds at entrances?
- Does your chosen facility have a level entrance? If not, is there a ramp? Are all inner public areas accessible?
- Is the ramp at a 1:12 grade? (That is, for every inch of height is there a foot of length?)
- Is there a power door or an automatic door? If not, will there be someone posted near the door to open it for anyone requiring assistance?

- Is the room well lit, with as little glare as possible?
- Is there room to move around furniture or fixed objects (1.1m or 3.6')?
- Are meeting materials available in alternative formats (such as large print, Braille, audiocassette or electronic versions)?
- Are sign language interpreters available? (*Contact Cynthia Boutilier, Interpreter Coordinator, Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotia, at 902.429.5752 or 1.800.516.5551*)
- Has CART (Communication Access Real time Translation) been requested? This is a service used by the deaf and hard of hearing where a certified CART provider translates speech to text which is projected onto a screen. This can be on a large overhead or computer screen (*Contact Sandra German, AB Captioning, 403.932.6112 or cell 780.445.4406. NB – This service is based out of Alberta so note the time difference when scheduling*)
- Make sure all printed materials you distribute are available in alternate formats. It can be very easy to put brochures, catalogues, etc. online or on CD. (*The Canadian National Institute for the Blind 902.453.1480 or 1.800.268.8818*) also converts documents to Braille at very reasonable prices. Having your key information in **14 point bold** is a great first step.