

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philips



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We respectfully acknowledge the land on which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, whose culture has been lost forever and can never be recovered. We also acknowledge the island of Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq. And we acknowledge Labrador as the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut. We recognize all First Peoples who were here before us, those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come. As First Peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards of the land and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call it home. As we open our hearts and minds to the past, we commit ourselves to working in a spirit of truth and reconciliation to make a better future for all.

Beothuk	<i>bee-oth-uck</i>
Ktaqmkuk	<i>uk-dah-hum-gook</i>
Mi'kmaq	<i>mee-gum-maq</i>
Innu	<i>in-new</i>

Nitassinan	<i>ne-tass-eh-nen</i>
Inuit	<i>in-new-eet</i>
Nunatsiavut	<i>nu-nut-si-a-voot</i>
NunatuKavut	<i>nu-nah-tuhk-ah-vut</i>

1.0 Statement of Commitment

The Town Council of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's are committed to making the town accessible by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility and inclusion. The goal of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's is to make the town accessible to everyone and to include as diverse a group of people as possible to bring forward to council issues of accessibility and inclusion. The Town Council of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's are committed to make the Town - its programs, facilities, services, and operations as accessible and inclusive as possible, and to be mindful of (and remove) barriers that prevent accessibility in the future.

2.0 Accessibility Goals

Existing Initiatives

The Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's have undertaken many initiatives to make the Town more accessible and more inclusive over the past few years, which addresses their priority to improving accessibility and making Portugal Cove-St. Philip's more inclusive. They have:

- Successfully received funding to put sound tiles in the Recreation Centre – not only does it improve the clarity of sound in the *Recreation Center* for everyone to enjoy – but it directly enables the hard of hearing who use the facility regularly by reducing the echo and ringing sounds that are prevalent in the facility; the tiles help baffle the sound considerably.
- Installed accessible doors in the *Recreation Centre* to enable access and egress to everyone in the facility – especially those with physical disabilities and aging populations.
- Invested in an adaptive sled for use in winter months and snow cover. This equipment is used to accommodate persons with disabilities and to allow them to have full participation in winter activities like sledding, using trails, attending events and more.
- The town's Hippocampe is available for families to use year-round. This equipment allows for persons to visit beaches in the summer season, has ski attachments for use in the winter months, and all – terrain tires for trail and grass access.
- Most staff and members of council, as well as members of an Inclusion Committee have already completed diversity training with First Light; the Town is completely open to a diverse population, and this speaks further to council's commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- As well, some staff and members of council, as well as the Inclusion Committee have undergone training in Mental Health First Aid with the Canadian Mental Health Association to improve their knowledge and skills.
- The Town is also proud to say that it funds respite workers for our summer programs; this is a considerable expense to the town and speaks volumes about council's commitment to its summer programs and for the enjoyment of all participants and removing barriers for families.

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- Completed a review of its intake process for summer programs, including both a review and creation of forms used for summer program with Inclusion NL. This will be an ongoing item when needed.
 - Various events have included sensory areas, or sensory times to allow persons to attend when it best suits their sensory needs.
 - To address the needs of the aging adults the town subsidizes two programs – Adult Fitness and Sit & Fit, to better accommodate physical and social needs, while keeping costs at a minimum.
 - An accessible piece of playground equipment was installed in Voisey’s Brook Park (Rock’n’Ship) to add to the existing area and accessible surface.
 - The Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s flies the PRIDE flag during Pride Week to highlight the LGBTQ+ community to ensure they are included and welcomed and to tangibly demonstrate its support for this group.
 - Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s also supports both the NEA Food Bank and The Pantry in various ways (helping with delivering for NEA who lost funding, collecting food at the office and various events)
 - East Coast Trail held the first ever, inclusion trail hike as part of the Trail – Raiser in 2022. This was an initiative of the PCSP Hiking Walk Club and the Inclusion Committee.
 - The Town also works closely with CFS and guidance counselors to ensure those in the community that can use programs, services or events are able to do so.
 - Most services offered by the Recreation and Community Services department are offered at subsidized costing to remove or lower financial barriers.
 - In 2024 Grand Concourse Authority has been retained by the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s to build a new trailway in the town (Broad Cove River); this will benefit everyone and offers a tremendous space to enjoy the outdoors.

DISABILITY
isn’t contagious – IGNORANCE is

What we heard

Besides the undertakings Portugal Cove-St. Philip's have already completed, there were many new ideas brought forward during the consultations for considerations:

Transportation:

- o Having sidewalks available in the town.
- o Having crosswalks available (especially at busy intersections).
- o The Town should consider applying for funding for a 'rural' transit system over the next few years (or it could even be a more regional approach in include all communities along the Killick coast). Rural transit is different – especially when it is accessible – and it could achieve tremendous strides in making Portugal Cove-St. Philip's a more accessible community.

Communications:

- o The Town's website could be enhanced with larger print, ensuring contrasting colors, easier navigation on the site.
- o Perhaps the Town could begin to implement clear print guidelines provided by the CNIB in its publications and website design.
- o Maybe adaptive technology could be applied to meet WCAG 2.0 IOS standard (which is the industry standard).
- o Perhaps a section of the TICKLE publication (even half a page) could be set aside for the Inclusion Committee to put forth recommendations and to generally raise awareness about accessibility and inclusion.

*Raising public awareness about issues of accessibility in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's is extremely important and the public has an important role to play.

Facilities:

- o When installing change tables – make them sturdy enough for more than just babies.
 - o The entranceway at the playground in Rainbow Gully could be improved over the next few years to make it more accessible; perhaps more accessible apparatus could also be added (at the same time); there is currently an accessible swing in place, but more accessible apparatus could be added.
 - o Ensure future recreational facilities built by Portugal Cove-St. Philip's are accessible – make this the first question that gets asked about new facilities owned by the Town "Are the facilities accessible?"
 - o Review existing recreational facilities and playgrounds, apparatus, & equipment with a view of accessibility (where practical) – i.e. by removing and preventing barriers to full participation
- Review everything with an Inclusion Lens.

[1] Visitable: a house that provides level entry, wider doorways, and washroom on the main. This enables homeowners to have visits from neighbors, family, friends who require some level of accessibility.

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- Work with the Inclusion Committee through the Recreation & Community Services Committee (Council) on projects throughout the year.
 - Inclusion Committee aim to be as diverse and representative of the community relating to accessibility and inclusion as possible – that includes changing the name of the committee, amending its terms of reference, and expanding the committee structure:
 - People with physical disabilities
 - Those with visual impairments
 - Those with hearing impairments
 - Members of the LGBTQ+ community
 - Representation from indigenous groups
 - Representatives from the Association for New Canadians
 - A youth representative
 - People with emotional or mental health issues
 - Those with intellectual impairments
 - Representatives of special interest groups, professionals, and advocates that have an established focus and agenda (HUB, CODNL, First Light, Choices for Youth, Stellas' Circle, CNIB, Hard of Hearing Association, Pride Community, Elaine Dobbin Center for Autism etc...) – professionals who work in the field and have specific knowledge to offer
 - Local representatives of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's (from the above, where possible)
 - Commit to ongoing learning activities for members of council and staff within the Town of Portugal Cove-St; these ongoing learning opportunities could include:
 - Guest speakers
 - Webinars, courses, and other on-line learning tools
 - An introduction and overview of the province's Accessibility Act
 - Review of existing (and new) programs, initiatives, services, and facilities that are examples of accessibility and inclusion within the town (and elsewhere)
 - Hands On learning – consultations with professional representatives of those with various disabilities; first-hand experience of barriers to disabilities & accessibility within the town; learning from professionals working in the field
 - Proudly share the Town's Accessibility Plan with public, and council should proudly take every opportunity to boast of council's commitment to accessibility when talking to the public or speaking to various community groups and/or at functions.
 - Consider making a survey available to residents (using survey monkey or some other cost-effective tool) to get ideas on how to make Portugal Cove-St. Philip's more accessible and inclusive in the future

3.0 Barriers to Accessibility

In Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, unfortunately, there are still several barriers to accessibility that have been identified.

Physical Barriers

The physical barriers are more easily identified. Many were noted (before). There is still work to be done within the community to raise awareness, the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's will continue to help ensure the community can become more accessible.

Financial Barriers

Finding discretionary spending for things like accessibility can be challenging – especially with so many other needs at the forefront vying for the same funding. As important as accessibility and inclusion are, it can sometimes be difficult to divest funds towards these projects. There are so many needs in a community like Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, and only a limited amount of money to go around. Town staff have done extremely well at finding funding opportunities to purchase equipment and offset some costing of program services, however that is all dependent on levels of government and changes year to year.

Human Resources

Larger communities, than Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, have special interest groups and municipal departments to undertake these initiatives and to give it the attention it deserves. The irony is that quite often smaller municipalities have to do the same things as larger municipalities (in order to be compliant) – but they have to do so with much smaller staffing capacity and budgets. This can be seen as a barrier to accessibility.

Public Engagement

Getting the public to engage in issues of accessibility & inclusion, especially persons who do not want to identify as having a disability, can be challenging. This is a problem for all municipalities, we realize that. But it is even more challenging in smaller towns where most people know one another. An example would be the stigma associated with a person living with a mental health issue or having an intellectual or cognitive challenge. While these conditions are more difficult to recognize, this creates its own challenge. Some disabilities are harder to detect, and these are challenging for everyone to address, as a result. Even coming forward to serve on the Advisory Committee for Accessibility can be an example of this. While some people's participation may be obvious – others' may be less obvious.

Communication

There are segments of our municipal population with hearing issues or visual impairments. People with visual impairments may not be able to read information on the town website, for example, or even be able to read their tax invoices. There are communication barriers, and they even exist with most social media devices and tools and on most social media platforms, as well. People often can't communicate well for various reasons, and this can present a problem for public bodies (like municipal councils).

4.0 Focus Areas

- 4.1 The primary area of focus for the town's Accessibility Plan will be to make council and the general public of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's more aware of issues, concerns, and barriers to accessibility (and inclusion) within the town. Simply put – to raise awareness. This will require a commitment of time, energy, and resources. This education of council and the general public will be a process rather than an event, but with a full commitment from council this can and will be completed, over time.
- 4.2 Another 'area of focus' will be to remove the barriers that currently exist (over time) and to prevent barriers to accessibility from being established in the future.
- 4.3 Council will, going forward, consider aspects of accessibility and inclusion relating to outside (non-elected) committees of council, volunteering with the town, working in the town, as well as hiring of new employees (where practical).
- 4.4 Involve staff and professional agencies in inclusion efforts. Employees can help identify specific budget items required in implementing the sections of plan (in various areas of programs, operations, and services).

5.0 Advisory Committee on Accessibility

- 5.1 The Inclusion Committee is made up of local volunteers with lived or professional experience in all areas of inclusion and accessibility. This committee set their own meeting schedules, agendas, who is on the committee, topics, etc.

This committee is valuable to have in the community and to have engaged with staff and council throughout the year. They are able to provide council with feedback on events, programs, services, funding, research, communications, and more.

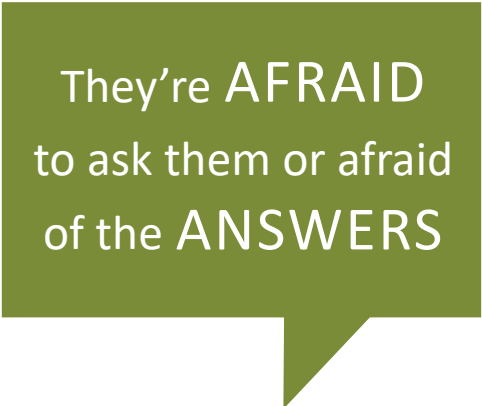
- 5.2 How should the Committee on Accessibility be reflective of inclusion? Even if the existing "Inclusion Committee" is revised – members need to be added. Consider members of the committee from groups/individuals that are normally marginalized from the following:

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- People with ‘lived’ experience with physical disabilities or mobility issues.
 - At least one (1) from some of the others listed below (depending on the size of the committee):
 - Those with visual impairments
 - Those with hearing impairments
 - Members of the LGBTQ+ community
 - Representation of indigenous groups
 - People with mental or emotional health issues
 - Those with intellectual disabilities
 - Representatives of broader special interest groups, professionals, and advocates that have an established focus and agenda
 - Local representatives (having residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s is a priority of council when it comes to participation)

Consider how each individual or group has had to overcome barriers to accessibility when choosing membership to your committee. You may also need to consider representatives who live in your community. Except for any professional staff (HUB, CNIB etc.,) who may serve on the committee,

5.3 The committee should (early in the process) become familiar with the provincial Accessibility Act and what is happening on the provincial level to address issues of accessibility and to remove barriers. These learning opportunities are normally free of charge and are an important means of informing Committee Members and getting them in touch with other professionals in the field of accessibility.

NOTE: Some disabilities may not be so easy to detect – like ‘intellectual’ disabilities. Other individuals may not want to be categorized or be seen to have a disability at all. This can make choosing who may or may not be asked to participate in the work of the committee even more challenging.



They're AFRAID
to ask them or afraid
of the ANSWERS

6.0 Council Commitment

- 6.1 Council is committed to having the chair of the Inclusion Committee and it's members to bring forward a meeting request and agenda throughout the year. These meetings will be used to present ideas, concerns, feedback, etc. to council for considerations. Council as a Whole will decide on actions and assign to the appropriate department and staff to undertake the tasks.
- 6.2 Council should be provided with an opportunity to become familiar with the provincial **Accessibility Act** and what is happening on the provincial level to address issues of accessibility and to remove barriers. These learning opportunities are normally free of charge and are an important means of informing Committee Members and getting them in touch with other professionals in the field of accessibility.
- 6.3 Ensure that council and staff avail of funding opportunities in the field of accessibility and inclusion.
- 6.4 The Accessibility Plan must become a 'living and breathing' document in order for it to become truly effective. Revisions and updates should become a normal part of the renewal process. The plan will evolve based on the changing needs of the community, or through Provincial Accessibility Legislation. The plan must be updated every 3 years according to current requirements.
- 6.5 Learning and collaboration should become a part of the routine work of the Inclusion Committee and council. Learning about issues of accessibility should be a major focus of the committee.
- 6.6 Council should create a message about its commitment to improving accessibility and share its plan with the public in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. If the plan and all of the good work of the committees is not widely shared with the public, the town will not likely improve substantially in the broad areas of accessibility. Sharing this information widely allows others to be more active in community events and thereby improves accessibility for everyone in the town.
- 6.8 Making opportunities for members of the public in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's (and elsewhere) to learn more about accessibility is critically important. So, these opportunities should be well publicized and shared with the general public. Portugal Cove-St. Philip's may eventually become synonymous with accessibility.

7.0 Accessibility Standards

Eventually, either through a recommendation, public engagement, legislation or through other means, council will establish new standards for accessibility within the town. Affordability and practicality will be important in establishing these standards, and while they may apply more to future commercial builds or programs, the standards will help identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility that currently exist. This will raise awareness, at least, to these barriers.

Officially, a standard may apply to individuals, organizations, or public bodies that:

- i. Design and deliver programs and services
- ii. Provide information or communication
- iii. Procure goods, services, and facilities
- iv. Offer accommodations
- v. Provide education or offer opportunities for learning
- vi. Provide healthcare
- vii. Provide opportunities for employment
- viii. Own, operate, maintain or control an aspect of the 'built' environment other than a private residence with 3 or less residential units
- ix. Conduct an activity or undertaking prescribed in the regulation

These standards cannot violate or supersede the standards set by the Province of Newfoundland Labrador through the *Accessibility Standards Advisory Board* in 2022. These are the standards that are to be applied in every situation that may exist in Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to accessibility.

BUILDING minds
building **FUTURES**

Glossary

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador defines “disability” as follows:

“A *disability* includes a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation that is permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature that, in interaction with a barrier, prevents a person from fully participating in society.”

Accessible – at the local level, it simply means putting forth efforts to remove barriers to participation; whether they be physical barriers or other barriers (such as enlarging the font size of the print on correspondence for aging adults or for the visually impaired) or removing barriers to participation for various individuals or groups who may not otherwise be comfortable participating. At one time the term “accessible” referred only to physical accessibility, but it has been expanded to include much more.

Accessible Canada Act is a federal law adopted by the Government of Canada in 2019. The law applies primarily to those under federal jurisdiction (such as indigenous groups), but many excellent ideas can be borrowed from this legislation and applied locally in Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s.

Accessible community refers to a specific community of people which believes in and supports the principles of accessibility (in this case, residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s).

Advisory Committee on Accessibility – For the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s, the Inclusion Committee (in whatever form it takes) – whether a new committee or a revised committee – this committee looks at the facilities, programs, services, and operations that currently are in place in Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s and puts forth recommendations on how the town can prevent or remove barriers so that the town can be more accessible (where feasible) going forward. The Committee become somewhat of local ‘experts’ in the area(s) of accessibility, as a committee the committee they can meet with Council and can put forth recommendations and provide advice, but council does not have an obligation to implement the suggestions made.

Accessibility standards are a set of standards that are provided to public bodies whereby they can (as a public body) develop a set of standards through the provincial *Accessibility Act* which governs all aspects of accessibility, in this case, within the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s.

Courage

doesn’t mean you don’t get afraid,

courage means you **don’t let fear STOP you**

“A *barrier* means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, or a barrier established or perpetrated by an Act, regulations, a policy or practice.”

Building regulations refer to the official regulations which govern builders which have been adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s to control building and development within the town.

Chair as in “chairing a committee” refers to individuals who are elected or appointed to lead a committee. The additional responsibilities of the chair are to ensure meetings are scheduled; to help prepare the meeting agenda; to note who attends (and who is absent); to lead the discussion and maintain “order” in the meetings following the rules of order that have been adopted; to understand the basic principles of democracy and meeting decorum; and to ensure the “minutes” of the meeting are circulated to others (as decided by the committee).

Goals are defined as a ‘desired result’ or outcomes – something you are aiming to achieve. In terms of improving accessibility, the goals that are identified by the town are things the town would like to achieve to make Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s more accessible.

Inclusion is a term broadly used to proactively remove any barriers that may exist that may prevent residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s from participating – these barriers could be physical, emotional, intellectual, or through discrimination as a result of prejudice, or removal of any type(s) of barriers of any nature.

Intellectual impairments refer to barriers of an intellectual nature (such as autism) which are not so easy to see, but may be a barrier to an individual’s full participation in programs or events in the community for various reasons.

Lead on issues of accessibility is normally the staff person appointed by council to serve on the committee and is an individual who can be trusted to be “in the know” and somewhat of a local expert on issues relating to accessibility that council can refer to for advice and to answer questions as they arise etc...

Not taking action is the
**ULTIMATE
DISABILITY**

Local representatives are people chosen to represent the town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's who actually live in the town.

Physical handicaps – are barriers of a physical nature that may prevent some individuals from participating (such as not having wheelchair accessible washrooms or entranceways).

Public refers to anyone who would like to attend a meeting, in this case – whether they be residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's or others living in neighbouring communities who may have an interest in issues of accessibility. When public is used there are usually no 'restrictions' on who can attend.

Public Document is any document ordered by council to be prepared for viewing by residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's or elsewhere. A public document may be shared through social media and posted on the town's website and thus can be viewed by anyone, and is generally made available for viewing by members of the public (not just residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's).

Open Call is a term used in official "Rules of Order" that means that (in this case) council will prepare a document which will be made public "calling" for nominations to serve on the Advisory Committee on Accessibility. Depending on the response, not everyone nominated will serve on the committee. Ultimately, that will be council's decision. Whether the call will only be open to residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's (or not) or will include other professionals or individuals willing to serve who may live and/or work in other communities will be specified in the call, as well as things like "the terms of office" etc...



I may be DIFFERENT
from you, but NOT LESS than you



Conclusion

Developing this plan is an important first step and a huge commitment on behalf of the Town Council of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. But it is just the beginning.

Council must be committed (including financially) to build more accessible facilities and refurbish existing ones (that are currently not accessible). Being an accessible community benefits everyone. Council must also commit to applying an accessible lens to everything it does – whether it's developing a budget, hiring, accepting or including community volunteers, recreation programming, special events, assigning people to committees, public works operations, building new facilities or refurbishing old ones – a commitment must be made to being more accessible and inclusive. Involving people or segments of the population who may be disenfranchised is an excellent place to start. These people often have so much to offer, they just need to be asked or included, too often they are left out.

Whether it's serving on committees of council, volunteering in the community, coaching teams, hiring people inside or outside, providing places to meet etc., considering issues of accessibility and inclusion send clear messages that the Town Council of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's are committed to issues of accessibility and inclusion. Doing is more important than saying. Council must be willing to set the example – to stand tall and be a leader on issues of accessibility and inclusion.

If council is committed to doing more and to working side by side with the committee on accessibility, things will slowly change. Even then patience will be required. The most important thing is to try. Committing to making the effort is a great starting point.

Normally, if there is no financial commitment made on the part of council, accessibility is not a priority – and it must be. There must be room in the budget for initiatives pertaining to improving accessibility. This is where council needs to start. If accessibility is truly a priority – council must commit funds to it.

Perhaps with a new *Accessibility Plan* and a renewed commitment from council on issues of accessibility, council may be able to access more funding to complete the task of refurbishing facilities or to do other projects relating to accessibility. This will be viewed favourably by most members of the community. In any case, council must make issues of accessibility a priority during budget deliberations. A fully accessible Portugal Cove-St. Philip's benefits everyone.

This Accessibility Plan is a great starting point. We feel obligated to issue a reminder to council that this plan is meant to be a fluid document. It needs to be updated every three (3) years to reflect changes and improvements that have been made. Perhaps this can be the work of the *Inclusion Committee* to bring forth a series of recommendations or changes to be made to the Accessibility Plan that reflect the current state of affairs in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

