



Premier's Council on Disabilities

Conseil de la première ministre
pour les personnes handicapées

New Brunswick's Disability Action Plan:

A Strategy for Full Inclusion of Persons with a Disability



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A Strategy for Full Inclusion of Persons with a Disability

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Dear Premier Holt,

As Chairperson of the Premier's Council on Disabilities, I am pleased to present the 2025 NB Disability Action Plan. Since the last Disability Action Plan was released in 2020, we have made meaningful progress toward building a more accessible and inclusive province.

The introduction and enactment of accessibility legislation, a key recommendation in the previous Action Plan, signify a historic step forward in recognizing and protecting the rights of persons with a disability. This achievement results from years of commitment, collaboration, and advocacy, providing a strong foundation for the work ahead.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that much more must be done. Accessibility legislation and the regulations that will follow represent a critical milestone, but legislation alone cannot achieve full and equal participation for persons with a disability. We must foster an inclusive, respectful, and accepting culture to create a society where everyone can belong and contribute.

The contributions of individuals with lived experience have profoundly shaped the development of this new Action Plan. Their insights, feedback, and personal stories have been essential in grounding the plan in the real challenges and aspirations of persons with a disability and their families. The plan reflects both our accomplishments and our ongoing responsibility. It reminds us that accessibility is not an end but a pathway to equity, opportunity, and dignity.

Together, we will continue to work toward a province where persons with a disability can live, learn, work, and participate in every aspect of society on equal terms.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Taggart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Taggart, Chairperson
Premier's Council on Disabilities

Background

The Premier's Council on Disabilities (PCD) was created in 1982 following calls from individuals with a disability, their families, service organizations, and government representatives for a permanent body that would maintain the momentum generated by the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981.

The PCD is the consultation body for the Government of New Brunswick responsible for stakeholder consultation and engagement, research and study, and information sharing on issues relating to barriers experienced by New Brunswickers living with a disability. The Council envisions a New Brunswick where all persons are accepted, included, and valued. We strive to provide dynamic leadership to improve the quality of life for all persons affected by disability in New Brunswick.

The Premier's Council on Disabilities helps to coordinate the Government of New Brunswick (GNB) approach to disability issues. This is done by working with other government departments and key stakeholders. The Council's partnerships within government and with the not-for-profit sector are key assets in working collaboratively to improve the supports and outcomes for persons with a disability, and their families, in New Brunswick.

Having a dedicated, legislated advisory body that provides guidance to government on issues impacting persons with a disability is an asset for the province. The Council ensures that disability perspectives are consistently represented in provincial decision-making. PCD serves as a critical bridge between government and the disability community, supporting more informed, inclusive, unbiased and accountable policy development.

Structure

The Premier's Council consists of a chairperson and twelve members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. The PCD also has four full-time staff.

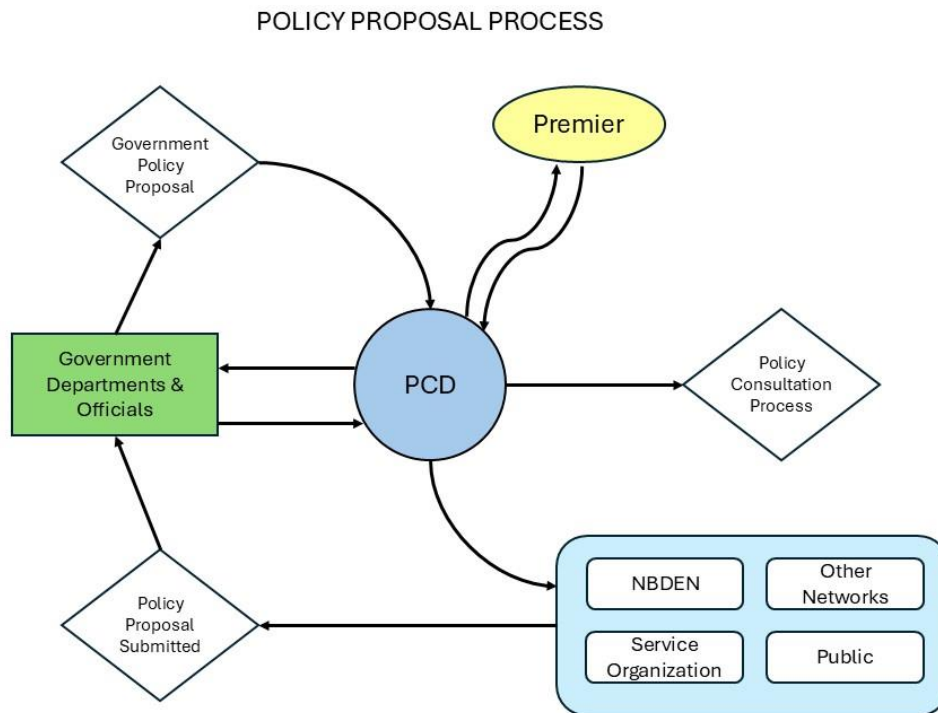
Information & Resources

The Premier's Council maintains an online information directory with resources for persons with a disability pertaining to:

- Transportation services and vehicle retrofit
- Career counselling, job placement services, and career training opportunities
- Financial assistance
- Housing and barrier-free access
- Medical funding and assistance

- Sports and leisure programs
- Assistive technology

Policy Proposal Process



Policies can be proposed at many levels, government, disability networks and other stakeholders. For formal consultation processes, the Premier's Council on Disabilities is responsible for facilitation and ensuring that the necessary skills and experience are available to participate in the process to develop strong public policy. The PCD will work with the disability network to conduct necessary consultation processes (i.e. public sessions) to gather the qualitative research needed for a specific policy. The PCD's connection to the full network means that they can assemble the necessary representatives to efficiently support government in achieving success in policy development and approval; much like their work on the Disability Action Plan (DAP).

Roles of Legislated Disability Groups in New Brunswick

Premier's Council on Disabilities

The PCD is an unbiased, volunteer-based consultation body that is legislatively mandated to advise the Premier/Government of New Brunswick on matters related to the status of persons living with a disability.

This organization is the central resource for disability information and a repository that supports a broad range of citizens, service delivery organizations, businesses, and government. They currently support approximately 500 not-for-profit and private organizations in their Directory of Services.

The Premier's Council is the only organization in New Brunswick that advocates for persons with any type of disability, regardless of age, language spoken, or geographic location within the province.

The PCD created the recommendation to enact the provincial *Accessibility Act*, provided ongoing research to the Executive Council Office, and partnered with Accessibility Standards Canada to represent New Brunswick. They will act as a neutral body to advise the Premier on matters relating to persons with a disability and will collaborate on accessibility issues and standards development, as well as broader disability issues.

Accessibility Advisory Board and Accessibility Office at the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour

The department is responsible for implementing and overseeing the *Accessibility Act*, by recommending accessibility standards, timelines, and enforcement mechanisms to government.

The *Accessibility Act* mandates that the Accessibility Advisory Board shall consist of not more than 12 members appointed by the Minister. Currently, the board is composed of ten people, many of which have lived experience of disability.

The Act focuses on eight priorities:

- Government services
- Transportation
- Education
- Employment
- Built Environment (e.g. indoor and outdoor public spaces)
- Housing

- Information and Communications
- Sports and Recreation

The office is working to create a five-year strategic plan to improve accessibility with an aim to release this accessibility plan by December 2025.

Advisory committees will help to develop accessibility standards and the Accessibility Advisory Board will recommend the order in which standards are developed.

Goals and Purpose

The first Disability Action Plan – Action for the Decade of Disabled Persons was released by the PCD in 1985 following a major provincial conference. Since then, ten editions of the DAP for New Brunswick containing over 500 recommendations have been submitted and delivered upon with the leadership of eight Premiers and their Governments.

The Disability Action Plan (or DAP) is a multi-year strategy that includes recommendations involving key disability stakeholders with a focus on employment, education, poverty, housing, disability supports, healthcare, accessibility, transportation, and recreation and wellness.

This report provides a roadmap for addressing barriers and advancing disability inclusion in New Brunswick. By acting on these recommendations, the province can foster a more inclusive society where persons with a disability are empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.

The DAP includes recommendations for action to respond to issues identified during the Council's consultation and engagement process.

Priorities of the Disability Action Plan include:

- Support the *Accessibility Act's* goal of achieving a more accessible New Brunswick by 2040 by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to accessibility.
- Ensuring that persons affected by different types of disabilities will have equitable access to necessary services. This includes ensuring that service providers are held accountable for quality assurance and fair delivery of all programs and services.
- Promoting the awareness and enforcement of basic human rights for persons with a disability in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- Closing the feedback loop to build trust and accountability. There is a need for ongoing, meaningful engagement with the disability community, ensuring their

voices are reflected in decision-making and that their input directly informs policies, programs, and funding decisions.

- Recognizing the interconnected nature of many issues affecting persons living with a disability, such as the relationship between poverty, housing, and access to healthcare.
- Advocating for a coordinated and holistic approach to addressing disability-related challenges in New Brunswick.
- Promoting inclusive education, meaningful employment, and community-based housing.
- Promoting greater public awareness, stronger government leadership, and more sustainable funding models.

Key Themes

Full Citizenship

The goal of full citizenship is to ensure that every community in New Brunswick becomes an inclusive place where persons with a disability can fully participate in all aspects of life. This includes fostering public understanding of the vision and principles of full citizenship and promoting awareness of the abilities and contributions of citizens with a disability. This initiative also emphasizes the active involvement of persons with a disability in the planning, design, and delivery of public services and facilities, ensuring that their lived experiences help shape a more accessible and equitable province for all.

Poverty

The rate of poverty among people with a disability has historically been much higher compared to the general population. Additionally, people living with a disability require more supports, equipment, and programs to reach their full potential as citizens. These essential supports can be a costly resource that many living with a disability cannot afford.

The rate of disability increases as a population ages. The aging of the provincial population means that every person will either be disabled or have a high potential of becoming disabled, and most will likely live in poverty at some point in their lives.

From a policy and program perspective, it is best to consider disability and poverty as a population issue rather than a condition that affects only a designated group of individuals.

The high and increasing level of disability in New Brunswick means that a successful poverty reduction strategy must have a significant focus on persons with a disability.

Disability Supports

Disability supports provide assistance in daily living to enable the personal development of individuals with a disability and promote participation and inclusion in their communities. These supports must be flexible and tailored to the needs of the individual to be most effective in achieving the desired outcomes. An individual with a disability and/or their caregivers must be actively engaged in the development, negotiation, and direction of their own supports.

Each individual will require a different level of support that is unique to their needs. Some families are able to fund their own disability supports or have access to insurance to offset costs, but many will require assistance from public or community resources. Disability supports are crucial to living with autonomy and dignity and being able to fully participate in the community.

Each individual must have the opportunity to identify their personal objectives and communicate which supports are needed to achieve their goals.

Education

Education opens the door to success and persons with a disability deserve to be able to thrive and receive the quality education to which they are entitled.

People with a disability must have the same full and equal access to educational opportunities that is afforded to their peers, including access to post-secondary education.

It is essential for educators to receive adequate training to respond to a variety of support requirements necessary for students with a disability to succeed in an educational environment.

All facilities and programs should be designed and administered to be barrier-free for students, staff, and visitors of all abilities.

Housing

Access to a safe, suitable, and affordable place to live is a basic necessity that should be guaranteed to all citizens.

For persons with a disability, barrier-free access is often a determining factor that limits where they are able to live. Barrier-free housing is most often found in newly developed buildings, the cost of which can be prohibitive for the large majority of persons with a disability that are living on a limited fixed income.

The current availability and selection of non-profit public housing is insufficient to meet the elevated demand from low-income consumers and their families across the province.

Affordable and accessible housing must be situated in areas with good access to schools, shopping, medical services, banking, recreational opportunities, and other community related programs. This is a critical factor in ensuring that access to affordable and accessible transportation does not become an additional barrier to community participation.

Transportation

Transportation provides a vital lifeline for people with a disability to access employment, education, healthcare, and community life. Transportation services also enable individuals with a disability to live independently within their communities.

Transportation services in New Brunswick are often not accessible to persons with a disability. Without adequate transportation, full inclusion in community life is impossible. This is highlighted in rural areas especially, where new transportation supports and policies are rarely developed or implemented, and where adequate funding is seldom available.

Purposeful action is needed to increase and improve access to reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation options for persons with a disability throughout New Brunswick.

Recreation and Wellness

People with a disability need to have regular access to recreational and active-living opportunities to maintain their physical and mental well-being, as such access has proven to be a benefit for all citizens. Some persons with a disability may require adaptive programming or special equipment to participate in such activities, however, many individuals can participate in the same programs and recreational activities as their counterparts. Despite this, there are barriers that prevent the active participation of persons with a disability.

There continue to be recreational facilities that are built with insufficient consideration of participants and spectators with a disability. The other reality for many persons with a disability is that they often have a limited income which may not allow them to cover the costs associated with recreation including transportation, participation or admission fees, and the required equipment.

We would like to compliment the facilities and programs across the province who have made significant efforts in increasing participation rates of persons with a disability by prioritizing accessibility and providing supports as needed.

Employment

Persons with a disability have historically struggled to gain and retain employment, despite the value that they bring to the workforce.

Being employed is generally necessary for a person, with or without a disability, to have the resources to fully participate in their society. Even so, labor participation rates and employment rates for people with a disability are far too low in New Brunswick.

When government examines the policies relating to employment, the following should be explored:

- The future employment needs of the province
- Working with employers to identify the types of accommodations that can be made (ex. flexible hours, job sharing, job coaching, mentorships, peer support)
- Increasing opportunities for youth (e.g. summer programming and co-op placements)
- Establishing workplace physical accessibility

A continued effort should be made to increase the level of awareness of employers about the valuable contribution individuals with a disability can make to the workforce (i.e. hiring an individual with a disability is not a burden).

Accessibility and Barrier-Free/ Universal Design

Accessibility often describes the degree to which a device or a service is accessible by as many people as possible. Accessibility is most often strongly associated to universal design, which is the process of creating products and places that are usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities, operating within the widest possible range of situations, whether a person has a disability or not.

Accessibility also includes a focus on people with a disability and their human right to achieve their full potential as citizens and members of their community. Several definitions of accessibility refer to access-based individual human rights, laws, and regulations that enable people with a disability to access information and services that minimize all the barriers they face. These include, but are not limited to, physical, political, social, and economic barriers. In many countries this has led to initiatives, laws, and regulations intended to achieve these objectives.

Summary Since Last DAP

Key Accomplishments

- Implementation of the Accessibility Act
- Creation of a separate Disability Benefits Program
- Work to implement Service Animal Legislation

Persisting Barriers

- Systemic challenges remain in areas such as mental health services, inclusive education, accessible housing, transportation, the justice system, and employment opportunities.
- There exist stark disparities between urban and rural communities, with rural areas facing significant gaps in services and infrastructure.
- There continues to be a gap in access to essential assistive equipment such as sight, hearing, and communication equipment.
- Interpreting services, while limited, are being requested more often, suggesting growing awareness and demand.

Statistics

- The prevalence of disabilities in Canada is rising. According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, 27% of Canadians aged 15 and over (approximately 8.0 million people) reported having at least one disability, up from 22% in 2017. This trend is expected to continue due to factors such as population aging, greater awareness, and improved diagnostic practices (Pianosi, et al., 2023).
- New Brunswick reports one of the highest disability rates in the country, with 35.3% of residents aged 15 and over (about 274,000 individuals) identifying as having a disability, compared to 27% nationally. The province also has an aging population, with 23% of residents aged 65 or older, compared to the national average of 18.9%. As the population continues to age, existing barriers to disability inclusion are expected to become increasingly unsustainable, reinforcing the need for urgent, coordinated efforts to promote inclusion, independence, and equitable access across the province (Pianosi, et al., 2023).
- Disability is the world's largest emerging market, with 1.3 billion people globally identifying as having a disability (Return on Disability Group, 2024).

Importance of Disability Inclusion

1. Projected Increase in Persons with a Disability.
2. Significant Market with High Spending Power.
 - a. Persons with a disability represent a substantial market with considerable economic influence. This demographic controls significant spending power, presenting a lucrative opportunity for provinces that prioritize disability inclusion (Return on Disability Group, 2024).
3. Gaps in equitable hiring practices may violate the *Employment Equity Act*.
4. Breaches to the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA), particularly related to failure to accommodate, may lead to human rights complaints or legal proceedings.
5. Retrofitting inaccessible systems, infrastructure, or digital platforms is often significantly more costly than integrating accessibility from the start.
6. Increasing number of persons with a disability who, in the face of persistent poverty, social isolation, lack of housing, and inadequate support, are considering Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) not out of choice, but due to a lack of meaningful alternatives.
7. For persons with a disability to reach their full potential, we need to ensure that they receive the same access as all other citizens.

Methodology

The Premier's Council on Disabilities used all instructive information gathered from consultations and province-wide surveys to inspire the preparation of a new Disability Action Plan for consideration by the Government of New Brunswick.

Various drafts of this report were shared with our partners for additional input and revision before being submitted to government.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many disability stakeholders who provided crucial feedback leading up to the release of this document.

Legislative Lunch

On May 27, 2025, the Premier's Council on Disabilities hosted a Legislative Lunch event in Fredericton in conjunction with Disability Awareness Week.

BDO facilitated alongside volunteer note takers from Neil Squire Society, and Finance and Treasury Board.

Questions were provided at each table to guide discussions.

This event brought together approximately 150-200 attendees, including ministers, government officials, disability advocates, members of the Accessibility Advisory Board, individuals with lived experience with disability, and other stakeholders.

Participants highlighted both strengths and ongoing barriers in areas such as housing, healthcare, education, employment, transportation, and systemic government policies.

Regional Town Halls

As part of the Council's ongoing efforts to consult with the disability community and the many stakeholders around the province, it hosted eight regional public meetings during Disability Awareness Week and continuing into the following weeks.

- The public meetings were held in Edmundston, Campbellton, Bathurst, Tracadie, Fredericton, Miramichi, Moncton, and Saint John.
- Two virtual sessions, one in English and one in French, were also offered to enhance accessibility for individuals facing barriers to attending in-person.

One-On-One Interviews

The Council partnered with BDO Consulting to hold one-on-one meetings with numerous stakeholders throughout the process of developing this action plan.

Interviews included in-depth discussions on specific barriers faced by persons with a disability.

Interviews with leaders of key disability organizations reflected a shared vision for a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable province.

Province-Wide Survey

BDO designed and administered a survey in collaboration with the Premier's Council on Disabilities.

The survey was distributed on the PCD's social media, website, and via email to thousands of disability stakeholders. It was offered in an accessible digital format in both English and French and was open to the public from June 4 to June 24, 2025.

The survey received 324 responses, with most participants identifying as persons with a disability. It captured a broad range of experiences from people with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental health disabilities, as well as those living with chronic illness or multiple disabilities.

Respondents represented a range of geographic areas across the province, with the highest participation from Moncton and Fredericton.

Document Review

As part of their Disability Inclusion Findings Report, BDO conducted a detailed review of key documents to provide context and inform the analysis.

Documents reviewed included New Brunswick's 2020 Disability Action Plan (DAP), and their accompanying 2022 and 2023 progress reports. This review focused on evaluating the progress made on the 43 recommendations outlined in the DAP, identifying completed actions, ongoing initiatives, and areas requiring further attention.

This comparative perspective provided valuable insights into best practices and opportunities for improvement, ensuring that findings and recommendations are both actionable and aligned with broader disability inclusion goals.

Additional document review included four student-led research projects conducted by the School of Leadership Studies (formerly Renaissance College) at the University of New Brunswick. These reports provided valuable context and evidence on emerging priorities, including:

- Service animal legislation gaps, highlighting New Brunswick's reliance on non-binding guidelines compared to other provinces with enforceable laws.
- Barriers to RDSP uptake, including low awareness and systemic challenges in accessing the Disability Tax Credit.
- Mental health service disparities, particularly in rural and Francophone communities, and the need for disability-informed care.
- Indigenous disability inclusion, emphasizing the lack of culturally appropriate services and the importance of permanent Indigenous representation in accessibility governance.

SLS student contributions enriched the consultation process by offering targeted analysis and actionable recommendations aligned with the broader goals of the Disability Action Plan. More information on these reports can be found in Appendix C.

Indigenous Perspectives

There is a desire for Indigenous representation on the Premier's Council and other disability advocacy groups at all levels of government, as an advocate and a liaison with Indigenous communities. It is essential for First Nations to be directly consulted in accessibility planning.

Accessibility for Indigenous people includes access to land, language, medicine, and cultural practices. Broader systemic issues such as lack of housing and clean water must be considered.

A presentation from the Wabanaki Council on Disability and the Mawita'mk Society on the recent Accessible Canada Legislation highlighted some key facts about disability for the Indigenous population:

Disability prevalence in Indigenous Canadians (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) is estimated to be twice the national average of 30-32% and is triple the national rate for certain groups. Additionally, Indigenous women were more likely to have one or more disabilities than non-Indigenous women, including being more likely to experience severe or very severe disabilities (with a prevalence of 45% for women aged 40-54). The disparity between these rates of disability corresponds to disparities in rates of injury, accident, violence, self-destructive or suicidal behaviour, and illness that can result in permanent disability.

It was noted that historically underfunded, physical structures on-reserve would need significant financial resource to meet any new accessibility standards. If this is not given appropriate consideration when creating standards and regulations, it would create a significant financial burden for communities to comply with the Act.

Overall Findings

- New Brunswick demonstrates a strong, province-wide commitment to inclusion, with consistent emphasis on collaboration across regions and sectors. Its small population is an asset for collaboration and innovation.
- The existence of a legislated Premier's Council on Disabilities (PCD) was recognized as a key provincial asset.
- There is a lack of prioritization of disability inclusion within provincial decision-making. It is crucial to consider lived experience in policy development.
- Poverty emerged as a major cross-cutting issue, highlighting the need to shift from survival-based systems to approaches that promote autonomy, dignity, and full citizenship.
- The PCD must continue to elevate the narrative by sharing the stories and economic contributions of persons with a disability, and demonstrating how disability inclusion can help drive employment, economic growth, and community resilience.
- Government must model disability inclusion in its own services.
- New Brunswick faces challenges with outdated data systems, fragmented services, and persistent stigma.

- There have been improvements to infrastructure and assistive technology funding.
- There exist significant barriers across housing, healthcare, employment, transportation, and systemic policy.

Accountability/Outcome Measures

To monitor the actions taking place on all of these recommendations and to hold the implementation process accountable, the Premier's Council on Disabilities is committed to working with people with a disability, their families, disability agencies, government departments, and other community organizations.

Every partner involved in the design and delivery of supports to citizens with a disability should have a process to evaluate progress. Additionally, all government departments and agencies should dedicate a section of their annual report to describing the impact of services provided to persons with a disability during that fiscal year.

The Premier's Council on Disabilities will publish an annual public status report, presenting the progress made on recommendations from the Disability Action Plan.

Data should be collected and reported on the following systemic outcome measures:

- A comparison of **workforce participation** rates of persons with and without a disability (employment rates, unemployment rates, percentage in full/part-time employment, percentage in self-employment, etc.)
- A comparison of **education levels** achieved by persons with and without a disability
- The percentage of youth with a disability who are **employed or attending post-secondary education** within 12 months of graduation from high school
- The percentage of students requiring **disability-related education supports**
- The level of participation in **public policy processes** by persons with a disability and their advocates
- The percentage of persons with a disability provided with opportunities to participate in community-based **recreation, arts, culture, and active living**
- The percentage of persons requiring **accessible transportation** that are satisfied with the transportation options in their community
- The number of new clients with a disability requiring **suitable, affordable, and accessible housing** that were able to obtain such housing within a given year

- The percentage of persons requiring **financial support** that are satisfied and able to live with dignity
- The percentage of persons satisfied with the **healthcare support** (including mental health care) that they have access to and/or receive
- The percentage of persons with a disability accessing **home or attendant care** that are satisfied with the support they receive
- The percentage of persons requiring **assistive devices or equipment** that feel that they have been able to access the appropriate supports
- The collection of **program data and client outcome measures** should be an automatic component of all disability services

Acronyms

AO	Accessibility Office
CYA	Child and Youth Advocate
DH	Department of Health
DIA	Department of Indigenous Affairs
DTI	Department of Transportation and Infrastructure
EECD	Education and Early Childhood Development
ECO	Executive Council Office
ESIC	Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
FTB	Department of Finance and Treasury Board
HRC	Human Rights Commission
JPS	Department of Justice and Public Safety
PCD	Premier's Council on Disabilities
PETL	Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
PO	Office of the Premier
RSC	Regional Service Commissions
SD	Department of Social Development

Recommendation Table

Recommendation		Lead
1	Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities	ECO PCD PO
2	Implement Inclusive Autism Strategies Led by Autistic People	AO DH EECD FTB SD
3	Implement Mandatory Disability Awareness Training for Government Workers	AO FTB
4	Expand to Year-Round Public Education Campaigns	AO ECO ESIC FTB HRC PCD RSC
5	Implement Earnings Exemptions	SD
6	Utility Subsidies for Persons with a Disability	ESIC SD
7	Align Eligibility Criteria with Federal Programs	SD
8	Increase Extended Benefits Rates to Reflect Cost of Living and Disability-Related Expenses	ESIC SD
9	Active Support in Opening RDSPs	ESIC RSC SD
10	Assess Current and Future Demand for ASL/LSQ Services	DH EECD FTB JPS PETL/AO SD
11	Attract and Retain Qualified Interpreters in New Brunswick	FTB PETL
12	Establish Dedicated Budget to Funding Assistive Devices	EECD SD

13	Establish a Coordinated Transition Framework for Youth with a Disability	CYA EECD PETL SD
14	Overhaul the DSP Application Process	SD
15	Reduce the Frequency of Reassessments for Persons with a Lifelong Disability	SD
16	Implement Sliding Scale or No-Cost Access to Services	ESIC SD
17	Expand Rural Respite Care Options	DH SD
18	Enhance Capacity of FASD Services Across the Province	DH SD
19	Adopt Integrated Service Delivery Models	AO SD
20	Establish Inclusive Early Learning Standards	AO CYA EECD
21	Invest in Staff Training and Resources in Early Learning Centres	AO CYA EECD
22	Establish Deaf-Centric Education Programming Options	CYA EECD PETL
23	Expand Specialized Support Services for Students with Vision Loss	CYA EECD
24	Strengthen Educator and Educational Assistant Training	EECD
25	Support Community-Based and Virtual Service Models	DH SD
26	Boost Rural Diagnostic and Therapy Services	DH SD
27	Integrate Peer Navigation and Case Coordination	DH SD
28	Mandate Disability-Informed Training for Health Professionals	DH
29	Incentivize Recruitment of Primary Care Providers	DH
30	Develop Mobile and Telehealth Services for Underserved Areas	DH
31	Expand Public Coverage for Disability-Related Health Services	DH SD

32	Establish Dedicated Mental Health Teams for Disability Supports	DH SD
33	Implement Sustained, Wraparound Mental Health Supports	DH SD
34	Implement Dedicated Strategy to Enhance Mental Health Services	DH
35	Update the Direct-to-Tenant Rent Supplement	ESIC SD
36	Create Inclusive, Community-Based Housing	ESIC SD
37	Create Specialized Housing Options for Adults with a Disability	SD
38	Assess Urban Accessibility Transit Needs	ESIC RSC
39	Subsidize Taxi Services for Non-Drivers with a Disability	SD
40	Expand Community-Based Transportation Services	ESIC RSC

Recommendations

Please note that the following recommendations are not listed in order of priority. They also do not comprise a final list of all potential actions under the jurisdiction of the provincial government.

While lead departments are identified, it is expected that other departments, government agencies, and community agencies involved in the delivery of disability supports will collaborate to achieve effective solutions.

Full Citizenship

Strengths:

- New Brunswick benefits from having a Premier's Council on Disabilities – a dedicated, legislated advisory body that provides guidance to government on issues impacting persons with a disability. The Council ensures that disability perspectives are consistently represented in provincial decision-making. The PCD serves as a critical bridge between government and the disability community, supporting more informed, inclusive, unbiased and accountable policy development.
- The Social Inclusion Program of New Brunswick supports community integration through employment and recreation.

Objectives:

- Improve Indigenous representation in Accessibility Governance
- Increase funding to Indigenous organizations (especially Urban Indigenous organizations like Under One Sky) so that Indigenous persons with a disability have access to culturally relevant and accessible programming.
- Ongoing improvement to public understanding of PCD's work to leverage Council's current strategic role to ensure that it continues to serve as an effective conduit between government and the disability community.
- Improve public understanding and recognition of disabilities, particularly non-apparent disabilities.
- Implement plans to conduct meaningful consultations with the community so that the voices of persons with a disability are heard.

- Reduce barriers to accessing justice, including communication barriers and a lack of legal decision-making supports.
- Make all communities in New Brunswick inclusive places for persons with a disability.

“The system was built for the ‘average person.’ We don’t fit that model, so we get left behind.”

– Consultation Participant

Recommendation 1: Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities

In the spirit of reconciliation and a commitment to inclusive governance, it is recommended that the Premier’s Council on Disabilities actively strengthen its relationship with New Brunswick’s Indigenous communities and organizations.

The PCD should actively seek and facilitate the appointment of Indigenous persons with lived experience of disability, or representatives from Indigenous organizations focused on disability, to the Premier’s Council on Disabilities.

Lead Department(s): DIA, ECO, PCD, PO

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 2: Implement Inclusive Autism Strategies Led by Autistic People

Autism strategies in NB have historically lacked meaningful leadership and input from Autistic individuals, contributing to policies that may not fully reflect the needs, priorities, and lived realities of the Autistic community.

Nova Scotia’s Autism Strategy Committee is co-led by Autistic people and is a best practice that could be implemented in New Brunswick.

Lead Department(s): AO, DH, EECD, FTB, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 3: Implement Mandatory Disability Awareness Training for Government Workers

Many government workers lack training on how to appropriately support individuals with sensory disabilities, such as vision and hearing disabilities.

Mandatory training programs should be developed and delivered to all public-facing government employees on how to support individuals with vision loss and hearing disabilities to increase awareness of communication tools, respectful interaction practices, and accessibility accommodations.

Lead Department(s): AO, FTB

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 4: Expand to Year-Round Public Education Campaigns

There is a widespread lack of understanding and recognition of disabilities, particularly non-apparent disabilities such as FASD, Autism, and vision loss.

New Brunswick should expand beyond occasional awareness weeks to implement consistent, year-round public education campaigns that promote understanding of disability issues and accessibility.

Province-wide awareness initiatives should be developed to combat stigma, promote dignity, and encourage full societal participation for persons with a disability. These campaigns should be ongoing and integrated across sectors, with a focus on fostering inclusion in schools, workplaces, and community settings. A public awareness campaign should centre on the lived experiences of persons with a disability, especially those with invisible disabilities.

Lead Department(s): AO, FTB, ECO, ESIC, HRC, PCD, RSC

Target: Year 1

Poverty

Strengths:

- The Canada Disability Benefit income supplement for persons with a disability has created a growing sense of momentum in increasing financial supports. New Brunswick has so far indicated that it will not claw back this benefit.

- The province is currently hosting engagement sessions to explore a Guaranteed Basic Income for persons with a disability.

Objectives:

- Improve support for working people with a disability.
- Simplify the process of obtaining a Disability Tax Certificate (DTC) and setting up a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).
- Increase earnings exemptions to reflect the cost of living.
- Improve access to direct billing of insurance at pharmacies in rural areas.
- Provide financial supplements to parents or support persons who must leave work to care for individuals with a disability.
- Reduce the overall level of poverty among persons and families living with a disability.

“I have 5 diagnosed conditions, am unemployed ... yet don’t qualify for any programs, because my wife works and is expected to carry the full burden of my disabilities.”

– Consultation Participant

Recommendation 5: Implement Earnings Exemptions

More flexible earnings exemptions (as seen in British Columbia) should be implemented to encourage employment, reduce poverty traps and allow persons with a disability to build financial stability.

Lead Department(s): SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 6: Utility Subsidies for Persons with a Disability

Electricity or utility rates should be subsidized for persons with a disability living on low incomes.

New Brunswick could model programs after Ontario’s Electricity Support Program (OESP), which helps reduce energy costs for eligible households. A similar initiative in New Brunswick could alleviate financial stress and promote energy equity for persons with a disability.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 7: Align Eligibility Criteria with Federal Programs

SD's eligibility criteria for income assistance are more restrictive than for the CDB or the DTC. This creates barriers for individuals who qualify for federal supports but are denied comparable provincial assistance and benefits.

The definition of disability used for determining eligibility for income assistance should be broadened.

Lead Department(s): SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 8: Increase Extended Benefits Rates to Reflect Cost of Living and Disability-Related Expenses

The base rate of disability assistance in NB is too low to cover basic living costs. Full-time minimum wage employment should be used as a benchmark for what would be realistic to cover basic needs. New Brunswick should explore targeted measures, such as supplementary allowances and automatic benefit top-ups to help offset the additional costs of living with a disability.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 9: Active Support in Opening RDSPs

The Department of Social Development should actively support people with a disability to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan if they are eligible for the federal Disability Tax Credit.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, RSC, SD

Target: Year 1

Disability Supports

Strengths:

- New Brunswick's Disability Support Program ("DSP") has expanded to include individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder ("FASD"). This inclusion reflects progress toward recognizing a broader range of invisible and cognitive disabilities within provincial support systems.
- The Ability Peer Mentor Program, administered by Ability NB but funded through the DSP, was highlighted as a successful initiative that offers meaningful peer support. This program helps to build confidence, reduce isolation, and foster community among persons with a disability.
- Autism Intervention Services (VEVO/VIVA) in Fredericton were praised as some of the best in Canada.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder ("FASD") clinics, wraparound services, and the Dream Catcher Service Delivery Model are strong examples of effective approaches to addressing systemic challenges. These models demonstrate the value of integrated, person-centered, service delivery which could be integrated across support services.

Objectives:

- Remove punitive eligibility criteria for the Disability Support Program and Income Assistance that discourage persons with a disability from forming personal relationships.
- Increase extended benefits rates to better align with the cost of living and disability-related expenses.
- Further increase funding available for assistive devices.
- Improve compensation for support workers.
- Improve training for government employees on delivering services to individuals with a sensory disability.
- Improve programming for supporting transition from youth to adulthood.
- Reduce the burdens associated with the DSP application and reassessment process.
- Improve cross-sector coordination so that systems such as health, education, justice, and social development can provide collaborative, person-centered support.
- Supports and services should be tailored to individual needs, rather than being based on diagnosis alone.

“There is a misconception that all people with a disability want or even need the same thing.”

– Consultation Participant

Recommendation 10: Assess Current and Future Demand for ASL/LSQ Services

Significant gaps in ASL/LSQ interpreter services exist across New Brunswick in healthcare, education, and public administration. The current system lacks funding, staffing, and coordination. As a result, Deaf residents do not have equitable access to services.

The province should collaborate with the Deaf community to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify current gaps and future demand for ASL/LSQ interpretation.

Lead Department(s): DH, EECD, FTB, JPS, PETL/AO, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 11: Attract and Retain Qualified Interpreters in New Brunswick

Incentives should be developed to attract and retain qualified ASL/LSQ interpreters, including competitive compensation, professional development opportunities, and relocation support. Stable, full-time positions in key sectors should be prioritized to support long-term service delivery.

Lead Department(s): FTB, PETL

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 12: Establish Dedicated Budget to Funding Assistive Devices

Individuals face long wait times, restrictive eligibility criteria, or out-of-pocket expenses for essential equipment such as communication devices, mobility aids, screen readers, and accessible software.

Funding streams for adaptive and assistive equipment should be increased and stabilized across NB. This funding should be available to persons with a disability regardless of employment status. Funding programs should also be responsive to

evolving technologies, individualized needs, and designed to minimize administrative burden on applicants.

Lead Department(s): EECD, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 13: Establish a Coordinated Transition Framework for Youth with a Disability

There is a significant gap in services for youth with a disability as they transition to adulthood. Many lose access to previously relied on supports as they age out of child-and-youth-focused programs

GNB should create a formalized, cross-departmental transition plan that bridges services from youth to adult systems.

Lead Department(s): CYA, EECD, PETL, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 14: Overhaul the DSP Application Process

The DSP application process was described as overly complex and inaccessible, particularly for individuals with a disability affecting executive functioning or literacy.

The application process should be redesigned using plain language and accessibility best practices. Multiple application forms should be introduced (digital, paper, verbal) and navigation services should be provided by disability organizations or trained staff.

Lead Department(s): SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 15: Reduce the Frequency of Reassessments for Persons with a Lifelong Disability

The Department of Social Development should adopt a policy of accepting initial medical documentation as sufficient evidence for supporting eligibility unless there is material change in condition for individuals with a permanent or lifelong disability.

Lead Department(s): SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 16: Implement Sliding Scale or No-Cost Access to Services

A sliding scale fee model or subsidized access to disability-related services should be introduced for individuals who do not qualify for income assistance but face financial hardship.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 17: Expand Rural Respite Care Options

The province should invest in rural respite programs by offering funding, recruitment incentives, and training for providers willing to work with individuals with an intellectual disability and/or Autism. Mobile respite units or partnerships with local community organizations should be considered to deliver flexible, on-demand support in underserved regions.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 18: Enhance Capacity of FASD Services Across the Province

To address the current limitations of the Centre of Excellence for FASD, additional staffing and expanded service delivery capacity are urgently needed.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 19: Adopt Integrated Service Delivery Models

Interagency collaboration should be expanded by adopting integrated service delivery models, such as the Dream Catcher Service Delivery Model, to ensure seamless access to services for individuals with a disability.

Clear accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure that agencies work collaboratively to meet the needs of individuals with a disability.

Lead Department(s): AO, SD

Target: Year 2

Education

Strengths:

- New Brunswick's Inclusive Education Policy 322 uses a rights-based approach which guarantees the right of students with a disability to learn alongside their peers in regular classrooms. Continued investment in educator training and classroom resources would help to build on this strong foundation.
- Increased availability of psychoeducational assessments for adults has expanded access to essential supports. This development has been especially meaningful for individuals with a learning disability, who are now explicitly acknowledged in New Brunswick's accessibility legislation.

Objectives:

- Improve inclusion and support for children with a disability in early learning centres.
- Improve educator capacity for identifying learning challenges, neurodevelopmental disabilities, and neurodivergence and providing supports for these students.
- Protect and prioritize student support roles in budgeting decisions.
- Increase availability of accessible equipment on school playgrounds.
- Support the Accessibility Office in establishing accessibility requirements for school infrastructure.
- Eliminate the practice of partial timetables and school exclusions for students with a disability, especially when done due to limited behavioural supports.
- Improve accessibility of post-secondary institutions.

“My son who is 20 and autistic had to quit school at 16 because the school treated him like he was not smart instead of disabled. There is no help without paying a lot of money, which middle class families cannot afford.”

– Consultation Participant

Recommendation 20: Establish Inclusive Early Learning Standards

Children are being excluded from early learning centres citing an inability to meet the needs of a child with a disability.

Clear provincial accessibility and inclusion standards should be developed for all early learning centres to prevent children being refused entry due to their disability.

Lead Department(s): AO, CYA, EECD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 21: Invest in Staff Training and Resources in Early Learning Centres

Funding and training should be increased to help early learning centres build their capacity to support children with diverse needs.

Lead Department(s): AO, CYA, EECD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 22: Establish Deaf-Centric Education Programming Options

New Brunswick does not offer dedicated Deaf education programs, relying solely on traditional classrooms. This approach often results in isolation, lack of cultural identity development, and negatively affects academic and mental health outcomes.

Deaf education programs that use bilingual-bicultural (ASL-English or LSQ-French) approaches should be considered to prioritize social-emotional learning, cultural connection, and inclusive peer environments.

Lead Department(s): CYA, EECD, PETL

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 23: Expand Specialized Support Services for Students with Vision Loss

The education system in New Brunswick does not currently adequately prepare students with vision loss for employment or independent living (especially within the Acadian Peninsula's French language system).

Students should be provided with access to qualified vision support teachers, orientation and mobility training, and life skills development in both Anglophone and Francophone sectors.

Lead Department(s): CYA, EECD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 24: Strengthen Educator and Educational Assistant Training

A lack of training on FASD and Autism was identified as a barrier to inclusive education.

FASD-specific training should be integrated into early childhood education and school systems to promote early identification and better classroom support. This would include more professional development to help prepare educators to meet diverse student needs, along with training to recognize learning disabilities and implement appropriate supports.

Lead Department(s): EECD

Target: Year 2

Healthcare

Strengths:

- The Canadian Mental Health Association of New Brunswick (“CMHANS”) offers valuable programs and services that support individuals facing mental health challenges. This plays a role in providing accessible mental health resources and fostering community connection.
- New Brunswick is one of only three provinces in Canada offering a dedicated mental health program for the Deaf community. This program addresses the unique challenges of communication barriers and isolation faced by Deaf individuals.

Objectives:

- Introduce training for lawyers and healthcare providers on shared decision-making and disability rights.
- Improve access to primary care providers.
- Improve access to mental health services.
- Remove cost barriers to accessing essential health services.
- Improve support and navigation options for accessing healthcare.
- Reduce wait times for critical services, especially in rural regions.

“If you have a visible disability, you are already faced with major challenges ... if you struggle with mental health or anxiety, it is even more difficult to access services.”

– Consultation Participant

“You have to be in crisis to get care. That’s not healthcare, that’s damage control.”

– Consultation Participant

Recommendation 25: Support Community-Based and Virtual Service Models

Partnerships between government and community health organizations should be encouraged to allow delivery of decentralized or virtual health services.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 26: Boost Rural Diagnostic and Therapy Services

Targeted funding for neurodevelopmental and mental health diagnostic and therapeutic services should be increased in rural and northern regions.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 3

Recommendation 27: Integrate Peer Navigation and Case Coordination

Peer support workers and case coordinators should be embedded into mental health systems to help individuals navigate career options, complete forms, and advocate for their needs.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 28: Mandate Disability-Informed Training for Health Professionals

Healthcare and mental health professionals, including psychologists, often lack the knowledge and tools to accommodate clients with a sensory disability.

Mandatory training should be developed for all publicly funded family doctors, nurse practitioners, and community health providers that addresses accessibility, disability rights, and inclusive communication. Partnering with organizations led by and for persons with a disability to co-design and deliver training content would ensure accessibility. All training should include modules on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, ASL/LSQ, tactile sign, and Deafblind communication, as well as cultural safety for Indigenous and other marginalized populations.

Lead Department(s): DH

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 29: Incentivize Recruitment of Primary Care Providers

Targeted incentives should be used to attract Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and General Practitioners to underserved areas. Incentives may include financial bonuses, relocation support, loan forgiveness programs, and opportunities for continuing education or specialization in inclusive care.

Lead Department(s): DH

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 30: Develop Mobile and Telehealth Services for Underserved Areas

Mobile health units should be created and telehealth programs should be expanded to be tailored to the needs of persons with a disability, especially in rural and remote communities.

Lead Department(s): DH

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 31: Expand Public Coverage for Disability-Related Health Services

Accessing further education, occupational therapy, psychological counselling, and specialized healthcare often comes with high out-of-pocket expenses for persons with a disability.

The scope of publicly funded services should be expanded to include counselling, occupational therapy, and coverage of essential prescription medications.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 32: Establish Dedicated Mental Health Teams for Disability Supports

Specialized mental health teams equipped with trauma-informed practices and accessible communication tools (plain language, ASL/LSQ, augmentative and alternative communication) should be funded in New Brunswick.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 33: Implement Sustained, Wraparound Mental Health Supports

Care models that provide long-term comprehensive support without requiring individuals to move between service levels should be introduced in the province.

Lead Department(s): DH, SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 34: Implement Dedicated Strategy to Enhance Mental Health Services

GNB should develop and implement a dedicated strategy to enhance access to mental health services for people with mental health concerns (including people with a co-occurring disability).

Lead Department(s): DH

Target: Year 2

Housing

Strengths:

- New Brunswick has taken a promising step in addressing the housing needs of individuals with complex neurodevelopmental conditions through the creation of a Supportive Housing Framework for Individuals Living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (“FASD”). Developed by the NB FASD Centre of Excellence in partnership with the Department of Social Development, this initiative emphasizes wraparound supports and housing models informed by an understanding of FASD. Expanding and implementing this framework could significantly improve long-term stability and independence for individuals with FASD.

Objectives:

- Improve access to affordable and accessible housing.
- Improve funding for residential accessibility renovations.
- Promote universal barrier-free design concepts in all new housing projects including renovations of existing housing stocks where feasible.

***“Old infrastructure is used as an excuse to keep oppressing us.” –
Consultation Participant***

Recommendation 35: Update the Direct-to-Tenant Rent Supplement

There should be a reform of New Brunswick’s Direct-to-Tenant Rent Supplement to reflect the real cost of accessible housing and the unique needs of persons with a disability. A new supplement would include a disability-specific stream, raising the benefit to 100% of market value, and ensuring that eligibility is not impacted by roommate or household income.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 36: Create Inclusive, Community-Based Housing

New Brunswick should shift toward inclusive housing models where persons with a disability can live independently within communities, rather than in congregate or institutional settings.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, SD

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 37: Create Specialized Housing Options for Adults with a Disability

Specialized housing for adults with a disability who require some support but also value autonomy should be created.

Lead Department(s): SD

Target: Year 3

Transportation

Strengths:

- New Brunswick cities benefit from accessible transit options such as Moncton's Codiac Transpo, Fredericton's Para Transit, and Saint John's Handi-Bus. These services all offer free fare for companions travelling with a passenger with a disability, as well as accessible vehicles. Codiac Transpo is lauded for its inclusion of persons with a disability on the same routes as passengers without physical or mobility related disabilities. These services boost independence, inclusion, and confidence for individuals with a disability living in urban areas.

Objectives:

- Improve access to accessible transportation in urban settings by improving availability and reducing costs.
- Increase accessible transit options for individuals living in rural areas.
- Support the Accessibility Office in conducting an accessible parking needs assessment to improve the availability of accessible parking in key public areas.
- Increase funding to sustain the Urban Rural Rides pilot.

“I have to rely on Facebook to find a ride. It’s not safe.”

– Consultation Participant

Recommendation 38: Assess Urban Accessible Transit Needs

A comprehensive study in urban centres should be conducted to evaluate current and projected demand for accessible transit services, including paratransit and accessible fixed-route buses.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, RSC

Target: Year 1

Recommendation 39: Subsidize Taxi Services for Non-Drivers with a Disability

To address transportation gaps for individuals who cannot drive, a provincially subsidized taxi program should be introduced to offer an alternative in areas where public transit is unavailable or inaccessible.

Lead Department(s): SD

Target: Year 2

Recommendation 40: Expand Community-Based Transportation Services

Further investment and operational capacity of MyRide NB and similar community-based transportation models is needed to meet the needs of persons with a disability and rural residents who lack access to fixed-route transit. As part of this, coverage, driver availability, and accessible vehicle fleets should be expanded.

Lead Department(s): ESIC, RSC

Target: Year 1

Recommendations in the following categories were summarized and shared with the Accessibility Office. A full listing of these recommendations is included in Appendix A.

Recreation and Wellness

Strengths:

- YMCA facilities in Fredericton and Moncton offer a variety of fitness and wellness activities, such as adapted yoga and pool lifts. These programs provide tailored support, allowing individuals with diverse abilities to engage in physical activity and community health in a welcoming, inclusive environment.
- Unified Basketball provides inclusive recreational opportunities for students with and without a disability.
- Special Olympics programs are available and well-attended by individuals aged 12 to 89 across the province.
- Bathurst's inclusive beach walk-out program was cited as a strong local example of physical accessibility in outdoor spaces.

Objectives:

- Improve mapping of accessibility features in recreation across the province.
- To increase the number of persons with a disability of all types and ages participating regularly in healthy recreation and wellness activities.
- To ensure that all public recreational programs and facilities are doing what is necessary to enable the inclusive participation of persons with a disability.

“For some of us, it’s the sliver of hope that will keep despair from taking over completely.”

– Consultation Participant

Employment

Strengths:

- Employment readiness programs offered by Inclusion NB and the Neil Squire Society are instrumental in providing essential skills development, workplace preparation, and confidence-building opportunities that help individuals with a disability prepare for and succeed in the labour market.
- The ReThink Ability training resource is a promising initiative that was developed in New Brunswick and includes training to educate employers on inclusive hiring

and workplace practices. This training has the potential to reduce stigma, improve understanding, and support the hiring and retention of persons with a disability.

- Educational resources for employers such as JDAPT, ACED, and CDID, were described as valuable in promoting inclusive hiring practices.
- Programs such as Ready, Willing, and Able help to build partnerships between employers and job seekers with a disability.
- The establishment of Avenue NB as a provincial coordinating body for employment-related organizations serving persons with a disability is a unique and valuable asset in New Brunswick. Although relatively new, Avenue NB has significantly improved the coordination of employment services and supports across the province. Its effectiveness has drawn interest from other jurisdictions such as Alberta, which have expressed their interest in learning more about this collaborative model. This demonstrates both the innovation and influence of New Brunswick's approach to cross-sector coordination.

Objectives:

- Reduce discrimination in hiring practices by improving awareness of disability-related needs and accommodations.
- Support the development of legislated paid short-term sick leave for employees with chronic conditions or disabilities.
- Improve GNB's accountability in hiring practices and provision of accommodations.
- Use metrics for retention of employees who develop a disability while in the workforce as a success indicator and fund retention efforts for people in this group.
- Increase the overall employment rate of persons with a disability.
- Increase the participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education and training.
- Enhance pre-employment and income support policies and initiatives to actively encourage and facilitate access to employment for persons with a disability.
- Develop engagement strategies with employers to increase their recruitment and retention of persons with a disability.

“You are actually disincentivized to work. If you get a job, you lose your supports. It's not worth the risk.”

– Consultation Participant

Accessibility and Barrier-Free Design

Strengths:

- Learning disabilities have been formally acknowledged within the legislative framework. In doing this, New Brunswick has set a precedent for more inclusive and comprehensive policy making. This explicit recognition represents a critical step forward in ensuring that individuals with a learning disability are not overlooked in disability inclusion planning, program development, and service delivery.
- The Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick assented to the *Accessibility Act* in 2024.

Objectives:

- Increase the availability of ASL/LSQ interpreter services across the province.
- Support the Accessibility Office in assessing and improving public infrastructure.

“We have talked, we have screamed, but no one is bringing change that improves our access to our communities.”

– Consultation Participant

Conclusion/Next Steps

This Disability Action Plan reflects both the progress New Brunswick has made and the work that remains to advance accessibility and inclusion across the province. Through diverse engagement formats, including consultation sessions, interviews, and surveys, persons with a disability, and their families, advocates, and service providers shared candid reflections on barriers, gaps, and opportunities for change.

What emerged was a clear and consistent vision: one in which persons with a disability are supported to thrive through inclusive education, meaningful employment, accessible housing and transportation, and equitable healthcare and community supports. This report emphasizes the need for stronger leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and investment in accessible infrastructure, services, and policy frameworks. Disability stakeholders have also called for a shift in strategies for consultation with the disability community. It is critical for consultation to be rooted in collaboration, accountability, meaningful communication, careful and deliberate action, and demonstrated change that lets persons with a disability know that their voices are being heard. It is particularly essential to prioritize intentional outreach and relationship-building with Indigenous communities to ensure that cultural significance is considered and applied when creating policies that will affect that community.

New Brunswick's small size, strong community networks, and legislated Premier's Council on Disabilities provide a unique foundation for accelerating progress. With the province's disability and aging rates among the highest in Canada, the need for coordinated, timely action is urgent. In offering concrete recommendations informed by lived experience and sectoral insight, the Premier's Council on Disabilities is committed to a path forward that revolutionizes service delivery and ensures that accessibility becomes a shared and sustained provincial priority.

As a necessary first step toward better accountability, the Premier's Council on Disabilities will take responsibility for following up with the government departments responsible for each recommendation. Progress will be reported annually to the public and will inform necessary reviews and updates to the plan.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration in working towards our common goal of reducing barriers for persons with a disability living in New Brunswick.

“Are we doing enough to ensure that persons with a disability have the resources and opportunities to live fulfilling lives? If the answer is no, then we must act with urgency to close these gaps and create a society where no one feels that ending their life is their only option.”

- Consultation Participant

Appendix A: Feedback for the Accessibility Office

During the consultation and engagement process, the disability community shared several recommendations that the Council felt would fall under the mandate of the Accessibility Office. The following recommendations and feedback have been shared with them:

- The province should **consult on the creation of Service Animal Legislation in New Brunswick** to provide access to public places to persons with a disability who use a service animal by reason of disability.
- New Brunswick should **strengthen interpreter education and training pathways** to provide financial and academic incentives that would encourage students in New Brunswick to pursue training as an ASL/LSQ interpreter. Incentives could include bursaries, tuition supports, partnerships with interpreter training programs, and expansion of local training opportunities.
- An accessibility audit of hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare facilities should be conducted to **improve physical and sensory accessibility** by removing physical barriers such as inaccessible entrances, examination tables, or signage. Additionally, sensory-friendly design features like quiet rooms, adjustable lighting, and visual supports to accommodate neurodivergent individuals could be implemented.
- To address the barriers with making a home accessible, New Brunswick should **establish an upfront forgivable loan program** that provides funding for residential accessibility renovations. The Home Accessibility Expenses Tax Credit is issued retroactively, so it would be essential for a provincial program to cover upfront costs. This has been successfully implemented in several other provinces including Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan.
- The province should work collaboratively with Parks NB and local municipalities to conduct an accessibility audit of public beaches across the province and **map beaches with accessibility features**. This should be a publicly available map that highlights locations with features such as beach mats, accessible washrooms, designated accessible parking, and beach wheelchairs. Data generated from this could be used to identify gaps and prioritize infrastructure upgrades.
- **Accessibility and disability inclusion training** should be mandated for all employers to ensure that they can appropriately support employees with a disability in the workplace. Training should cover legal obligations, inclusive practices, and effective accommodation strategies.
- New Brunswick should **legislate paid, short-term sick leave and expand job protections** for people who require longer-term medical leave.

- The Equal Employment Opportunity program was criticized as ineffective, lacking both authority and enforcement to drive meaningful inclusion in public sector hiring and workplace practices. Designated **accessibility leads or champions should be appointed in each provincial government department** to support consistent implementation of accessibility standards. Leads would liaise with the central Accessibility Office and report on departmental progress.
- **Accessibility should be incorporated into rural transportation planning** by mandating that accessibility and equity lenses be applied to rural transit development. Persons with a disability, Indigenous organizations, and service providers should be engaged in designing routes, models, and setting priorities.
- A province-wide **analysis of accessible parking needs** should be conducted to identify the highest-impact locations for designated accessible parking spaces, considering both urban and rural contexts. This assessment should evaluate current gaps in proximity, availability, and compliance with accessibility standards. Findings should guide a targeted implementation plan to increase accessible parking in priority areas such as health centres, public buildings, recreational facilities, and main street areas.
- **Government accountability and oversight for accessibility policies should be strengthened** by aligning all government services with accessibility goals through consistent application of the *Accessibility Act*.
- **Local Accessibility Advisory Committees should be instated** in smaller communities such as Belle-Baie and Dieppe who do not currently benefit from such a committee. A committee informed by lived experience of individuals with a disability would strengthen community-informed accessibility planning at the local level.
- **Sector-wide, enforceable accessibility standards should be implemented** in priority areas such as customer service, transportation, employment, information and communication, and the built environment.
- The Accessibility Office should ensure that **accessibility standards have enforcement measures and incentives**, such as financial penalties for non-compliance and tax incentives for inclusive employers.
- An **infrastructure accessibility strategy should be developed and implemented** in collaboration with municipalities and the disability community. This would cover basic accessibility features in public spaces, such as ramps, automatic doors, elevators, and accessible washrooms. A region-by-region assessment of accessibility barriers in public infrastructure is needed to identify barriers in buildings, sidewalks, parking, pedestrian pathways, and more.
- Urban accessibility apps such as “Better Outdoors” should be used to report uneven surfaces so that **infrastructure design can be modified** (e.g. flattening cobblestones for wheelchair use).

- **Crowdsourced mapping of accessible places should be expanded** using the Canadian app “AccessNow”, which allows users to share information about the accessibility of public spaces (including entrances, washrooms, pathways, etc.).
- Most schools in New Brunswick do not have inclusive playgrounds that are funded by the provincial government. Instead, families and school communities report that inclusive playgrounds are in place due to fundraising at the local level. The province should **establish dedicated funding for inclusive playgrounds** so that every school in New Brunswick has accessible play structures.
- **Accessibility requirements should be integrated into school infrastructure standards** by mandating that new and renovated school playgrounds meet universal design standards that are inclusive by default.
- Government websites and communications should be **published in accessible document formats** and alternative formats should be provided automatically or upon request within a specified, published timeframe.
- All government websites and digital platforms should **meet or exceed digital accessibility standards** (ideally WCAG 2.2 AA). This would include features such as screen reader compatibility, proper alt text for images, and accessible navigation tools. Regular, manual testing of systems should be conducted by persons with a disability to identify and address gaps in accessibility of digital assets.

Appendix B: Innovations

Youth-Led Accessibility Initiatives

- The Enabling Accessibility Fund's youth stream is a promising model, empowering young people to identify barriers in their communities and lead local accessibility and disability inclusion projects. A similar project could be created in New Brunswick to promote leadership and awareness among youth while driving grassroots change.

Nova Scotia's "SchoolsPlus" Program

- This program was highlighted as an innovative model that delivers coordinated, school-based access to mental health services, mentoring, recreation, and academic support. A similar model could be explored in New Brunswick to better support students with a disability and complex needs.

Utility Subsidies for Persons with a Disability

- New Brunswick could explore subsidized electricity or utility rates for persons with a disability living on low incomes. In Ontario, the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) helps reduce energy costs for eligible households. A similar initiative in New Brunswick could alleviate financial stress and promote energy equity for persons with a disability.

Integrated Income and Support Model in Ontario

- Ontario's Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides both income and employment support under one program. This unified disability support model could be implemented in New Brunswick to simplify access to services and improve continuity of care.

Nova Scotia Pain Self-Management Program

- This program is a meaningful model that provides coordinated care, including specialized services and supports for individuals with chronic pain. This program could be explored in New Brunswick to offer comprehensive, accessible pain management for those affected.

Learning Disabilities and Education

- Universal screening for learning disabilities, as practiced in Alberta with support from Dyslexia Canada, is a strong model that could be adopted by New Brunswick.
- Nova Scotia's remedy-based approach to identifying systemic barriers could inform similar practices in New Brunswick.

Service Design and Evaluation

- Ontario's model of equipment funding for persons with vision loss was cited as a useful benchmark.
- Newfoundland's tailored services for persons with vision loss, including training for healthcare professionals, could be replicated by New Brunswick.

Wheelmap.org

- Allows users to rate and map accessible places, offer practical tools to support everyday mobility.

Legislation and Governance for Autistic Individuals

- The UK's Autism Act, which includes adult-specific provisions.
- Scotland's one-stop service model for Autistic individuals.
- Australia's neurodivergent-affirming Autism strategy
- Nova Scotia's Autism Strategy Committee, which is co-led by Autistic people.

Appendix C: Renaissance College Student Projects

As part of the Premier's Council on Disabilities' commitment to inclusive policy development and community-engaged research, the Council partnered with student consultants from Renaissance College at the University of New Brunswick. These students contributed valuable research and analysis on key issues affecting persons with a disability in New Brunswick. The following summaries highlight the scope and findings of four student-led reports.

Indigenous Services Report

Prepared by: Tarrah Gauthier, Macy Metallic & Molly Miller

Date : April 11, 2023

This report was developed in response to Recommendation 35 of the New Brunswick Disability Action Plan, which calls for collaboration with Indigenous communities to address service gaps for Indigenous persons with a disability (IPWDs). The student consultants conducted a jurisdictional scan and engaged directly with Indigenous leaders and organizations to identify needs and opportunities for culturally informed disability services.

The goal of this project was to identify service gaps and propose actionable steps to improve support for IPWDs in New Brunswick. The scope included a pan-Canadian and New Zealand jurisdictional scan, as well as community engagement with leaders from Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar), Listuguj First Nation, and Under One Sky Friendship Centre. The findings revealed a lack of culturally appropriate services, limited funding, and infrastructure gaps.

The report highlights best practices from British Columbia and recommends that New Brunswick build stronger partnerships with Indigenous communities, invest in culturally grounded services, and advocate for increased funding to support IPWDs.

Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) Uptake Report

Prepared by: Olivia Hamilton, Olivia Harrington, Shannon Kinsella & Maya Kors

Date : June 17, 2022

This report was created to support Recommendation 38 of the Disability Action Plan, which calls for increased uptake of the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) in New Brunswick. The student consultants conducted a literature review, environmental scan, and province-wide survey to identify barriers and opportunities for improving RDSP participation.

The goal was to inform a provincial RDSP communication strategy. The scope included a review of national best practices, academic and government literature, and a survey of New Brunswick residents.

Key findings include:

- Low awareness of RDSP eligibility among Disability Tax Credit (DTC) holders
- The critical role of financial institutions in supporting uptake
- Confusion around withdrawal rules.

The report recommends targeted promotion, improved DTC support, and stronger partnerships with financial and community organizations. It also highlights the urgency of action, given the significant federal funds available to eligible New Brunswickers.

Mental Health Services Recommendation Report

Prepared by: Bailey Desjardins, Valerie Cullinan, and Piper Daken

Date: April 27th, 2024

This report was developed in response to Recommendations 19 and 20 of the New Brunswick Disability Action Plan, which call for expanded mental health supports and improved coordination for persons with a disability. The student consultants conducted a jurisdictional scan and mapped mental health resources across the province, with a focus on accessibility, language, and geographic equity.

The goal of this project was to identify service gaps and propose actionable steps to improve access to mental health supports for persons with a disability in New Brunswick. The scope included a province-wide inventory of services, a bilingual interactive map of 394 mental health resources, and research into best practices to support underserved populations, including rural and Francophone communities.

The findings revealed a lack of bilingual providers, limited crisis response services, and gaps in disability-informed care. The report recommends expanding mobile crisis teams, improving disability awareness training, and offering incentives such as loan forgiveness to attract bilingual mental health professionals to underserved regions.

Service Animal Legislation Environmental Scan Report

Prepared by: Emma Smith & Marin Claassen

Date: March 6, 2025

This environmental scan was conducted to assess the current state of service animal legislation across Canada and to identify gaps in New Brunswick's policy landscape. The student consultants reviewed legislation, policies, and responsible departments in each province and territory to inform future legislative development in New Brunswick. The goal of the scan was to provide a comparative overview of how service animals are defined, regulated, and protected across Canadian jurisdictions. The report examined legislation in all provinces and territories, identifying which ministries are responsible for enforcement and what legal protections are in place.

The findings revealed that while many provinces have dedicated legislation (e.g., Alberta's Service Dogs Act, Nova Scotia's Service Dog Act), New Brunswick lacks enforceable laws specific to service animals. Instead, it relies on the Human Rights Act and a non-binding guideline.

The report concludes with a recommendation that New Brunswick develop clear, enforceable legislation to protect service animal users and align with national best practices.

Appendix D: Accessibility Survey Consultation

This survey was conducted from June 4 to June 24, 2025 and made available to community members in both English and French. This report presents a synthesis of the data collected through Microsoft Forms.

Completion Numbers: 324 respondents

Community and Demographic Information

Question 1: Which community are you closest to?

Total Respondents: 60

Rows with text **bolded and marked with an asterisk (*)** indicate the most common response(s).

Answer Choice	Responses (count)
Bathurst	2
Campbellton	1
Edmundston	3
Fredericton *	27
Miramichi	1
Moncton *	13
Saint John *	11
Tracadie	1
Unknown	1

Question 2: What is your first language?

Total Respondents: 58

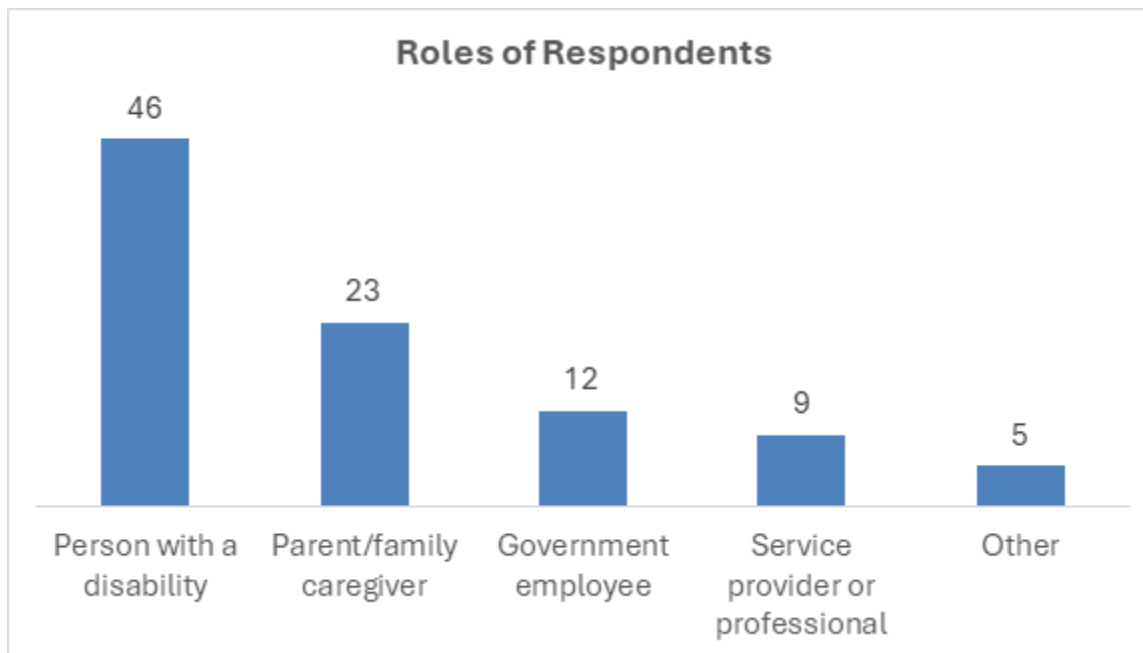
Rows with text **bolded and marked with an asterisk (*)** indicate the most common response(s).

Answer Choice	Responses (count)
English*	45 – 77.6%
French	12 – 20.7%
Chinese	1

Question 3

Please select all roles that apply to you:

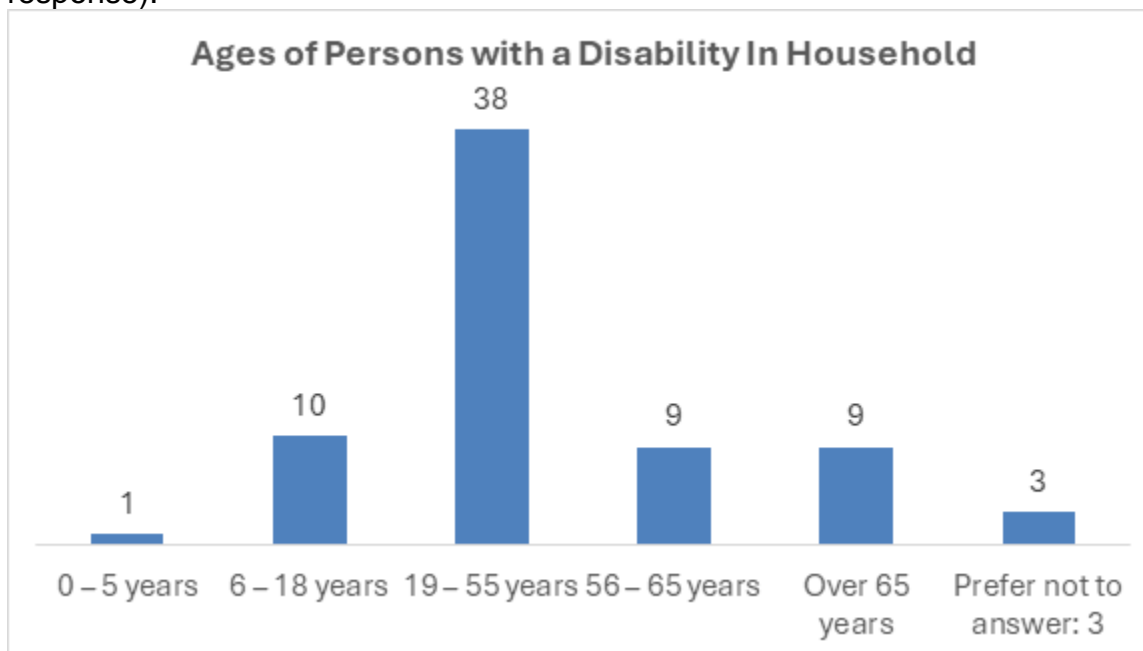
Total Respondents: 59 (Respondents had the ability to choose more than one response).



Question 4

What are the ages of persons with a disability in your household? (Check all that apply)

Total Respondents: 59 (Respondents had the ability to choose more than one response).



General Perceptions

Question 5

What is working well for persons with a disability in New Brunswick that should be continued or expanded?

Disability and Community Support Programs

- The Disability Support Program (DSP), Inclusive Education Policy 322, and employment initiatives from Inclusion NB and the Neil Squire Society were highlighted as effective programs with province-wide benefit.
- The Ability Peer Mentor Program and Ability NB services are making a strong impact by fostering inclusion, independence, and peer connection.
- Social Inclusion Programs and peer-led support groups for Autistic individuals are offering valuable social and emotional support.
- Access to Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs), basic income support, attendant care, and medicare were acknowledged as important pillars for daily life.
- The Premier's Council on Disabilities was recognized for its role in ensuring persons with a disability are heard and included in dialogue.
- Some respondents appreciated improvements in caseworker continuity and highlighted the benefit of having multiple modes of communication (e.g., phone and email).
- ASL Interpreter Services through NBDHHS were praised as a critical service for Deaf communities, with growing recognition of their value.

Employment and Work-Integrated Supports

- Participants shared successes such as supported work placements and part-time jobs, especially those that promote pride and independence for persons with a disability.
- Community-based employment readiness programs are creating accessible on-ramps to meaningful work.

Education Supports

- The K–2 literacy curriculum updates were recognized as an improvement to foundational reading instruction.
- Respondents recognized the value of early intervention, tutoring, and post-secondary options tailored for diverse learners.
- Workshops for adults with a disability and support for family caregivers were also mentioned as valuable education-related offerings.

Health and Mental Health Services

- Programs delivered through CMHA NB are providing helpful mental health resources.

- The Mental Health Program for Deaf community members was highlighted as one of only three in Canada that addresses unique communication needs and fosters inclusion.

Transportation Accessibility

- Some respondents noted increased access to mainstream bus routes for wheelchair users, especially in summer months.
- Access to Codiac Transpo services in Moncton and a subsidized taxi pilot program for people not requiring retrofitted vehicles were praised for improving mobility and independence.

Built Environment Improvements

- Positive steps were noted in improving accessible parking, automatic doors, sidewalks, and other elements of the built environment.
- There is appreciation for efforts to increase renovation funding for NB Housing and to add ramps and elevators to public buildings.

Public Awareness and Education

- Government-led mental health seminars were acknowledged as a good step toward improving disability awareness in the public sector.
- Respondents valued initiatives that raise awareness of invisible disabilities, such as ADHD, anxiety, and emotional intensity disorders.
- There is a growing interest in year-round education efforts to improve public understanding of diverse disability experiences.

Policy and Legislative Foundations

- New Brunswick's Accessibility Act was recognized as a promising step toward long-term systemic change.
- Participants expressed optimism that standards and enforcement mechanisms will continue to develop in alignment with the Act.

Community Spirit and Collaboration

- Grassroots groups like Notre Voix / Our Voice and other advocacy efforts were mentioned as signs of a growing, engaged community.
- Many respondents expressed hope and appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to positive change through consultations like this one.

Question 6

What innovative accessibility initiatives are happening in other provinces or countries that New Brunswick could adopt?

Programs and Services

- Nova Scotia's Pain Management Program and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) were highlighted as helpful models for income and health supports.
- The Enabling Accessibility Fund, a federal initiative that empowers youth to identify and address local barriers, was praised as a replicable concept for New Brunswick.
- Respondents suggested rehabilitation and residential care models that include peer-led support groups and hybrid access to mental health education and mentoring.
- Other provinces were noted for better adaptive technology supports for people who are Blind, as well as library books in alternative formats.
- A dedicated Disability Ministry or Department was suggested to improve focus and accountability, separating disability supports from general welfare systems.
- There is a call to ensure that disability benefits are not penalized based on employment or relationship status, reflecting a dignity-based income support approach.

Employment and Economic Participation

- Innovative jurisdictions are investing in disability arts funding, enabling participation for those who may not work conventional jobs.
- Ontario's practices for matching individuals with employers were regarded as stronger and more proactive.
- Support was expressed for Pathways to Employment initiatives and piloting four-day work weeks to increase workforce inclusion while reducing burnout.
- Jurisdictions with stronger accommodation frameworks in the workplace were cited as positive models.

Education

- The universal use of assistive technology in classrooms was identified as a best practice for inclusive learning environments.
- Life skills training programs that enable independent living with limited staff support were flagged as important for future planning.
- Nova Scotia's Schools Plus model was regarded as comprehensive, offering services for students and families in one place.
- Deaf education models in other provinces were described as more socially inclusive, with peer learning opportunities not currently available through NB's mainstream-only approach.

Health Care and Mental Health

- There is strong interest in models that provide more sick days and flexible accommodations for individuals with chronic mental health conditions.
- The Mental Health Program for Deaf communities was highlighted as a rare but impactful model that could be expanded across Canada.

- National and international models emphasize consistent access to family doctors and mental health services as foundational to accessibility.

Transportation

- Examples from other jurisdictions include flexible transit systems, subsidized taxi services, and accessible subway networks.
- Rural transportation services for persons with a disability and caregivers—like those found in parts of Quebec and Australia—were suggested as essential.
- Programs like Wheelmap.org, which allow users to rate and map accessible places, offer practical tools to support everyday mobility.

Built Environment and Housing

- Global examples such as Japan's use of robotics, sound beacons in the Netherlands, and the Better Outdoors app in Rotterdam demonstrate how technology can enhance public accessibility.
- Beach access tools, portable ramps, and tiny home communities were mentioned as innovative physical environment adaptations.
- Universal design standards for housing in Australia and affordable housing efforts in Quebec were recognised as models for NB to consider.
- Respondents also noted that housing subsidies and accessible renovations must be included in planning and budgeting from the outset.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

- Accessible government websites, digital forms, and publicly available mobility apps were cited as necessary innovations.
- There is growing recognition of the need for digital literacy supports to help persons with a disability navigate essential services online.

Legislation and Governance

- Respondents noted promising legislation from other regions, including:
 - The UK's Autism Act, which includes adult-specific provisions.
 - Scotland's one-stop service model for Autistic individuals.
 - Australia's neurodivergent-affirming Autism strategy.
 - Nova Scotia's Autism Strategy Committee, which is co-led by Autistic people.
- The AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) was named as a gold standard, with many respondents expressing a desire for NB to adopt a similar approach before 2040.

Question 7

In your experience, how inclusive is your community for individuals with a disability?

Total Respondents: 56 (Respondents had the ability to choose more than one response).

Rows with text **bolded and marked with an asterisk (*)** indicate the most common response(s).

Answer Choice	Responses (count)
Extremely inclusive	1
Mostly inclusive *	17
Neutral	6
Slightly inclusive *	21
Not at all inclusive	11

- **32.1% of respondents** viewed their community as inclusive (extremely or mostly)
- **10.7% of respondents** were neutral.
- **57.1% of respondents** viewed their community as not inclusive (slightly or not at all).

Question 8

When prompted for more information regarding their answers to how inclusive their community is, respondents provided the following:

Programs and Services

- Families supporting children with FASD face difficulties accessing diagnosis and are often excluded from specialized services due to restrictive eligibility. A more inclusive, navigable approach is needed.
- Individuals with rare or dual diagnoses (e.g., deletion 6 and schizophrenia) require better access to coordinated treatment, housing, and cognitive rehabilitation.
- Respite care is difficult to find in rural areas, and many providers are reluctant to support people with intellectual disabilities or Autism.
- Several respondents shared that while services exist, they are difficult to locate, fragmented, or focused only on younger children, leaving teens and adults with few resources.
- There is demand for more activities and support groups, especially in Moncton, both in-person and virtual, to reduce isolation and build community.

Employment

- Respondents highlighted a disconnect between employer statements and actual practices, especially regarding accommodations for mental health, ADHD, and Autism.
- Many individuals feel they are not offered genuine opportunities for inclusion or retention in the workplace.

Education

- Parents shared that children with a disability are often misunderstood or unsupported in school settings, with one noting their son left school at 16 due to non-inclusive treatment.
- Concerns were raised about cuts to library staffing and the implications for students with reading difficulties and disabilities.
- Participants noted that inclusive playgrounds are not funded by the province, requiring communities to fundraise to ensure access for all children.
- One caregiver emphasized that their input focused specifically on learning disabilities, a reminder that individual needs vary greatly and must be reflected in policy and practice.

Health Care

- The most identified needs were for family doctors and mental health services, especially in rural areas.
- Respondents noted a lack of provider knowledge about ADHD and Autism, even within mental health services, leading to delays or ineffective support.
- While some changes to access policies were acknowledged, system-wide improvements in provider education and service navigation remain a priority.

Transportation

- Physical access to transit stops is a barrier to using public transportation, particularly in Moncton.
- Respondents praised the Urban Rural Rides pilot but noted the need for sustainable funding to continue and expand it.
- Affordable, accessible transportation remains a challenge in the Kennebecasis Valley (KV) and in reaching final destinations that may still lack ramps or have stairs.

Built Environment

- Numerous accessibility concerns were raised about sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps, and public space design, particularly in Bathurst and Moncton.
- One respondent described unsafe sidewalk patios and a lack of tactile or visual cues for people with sensory disabilities.
- The high cost of accessibility upgrades was cited as a barrier for older buildings, but many emphasized that minimum standards must still be met.
- Respondents advocated for updated building codes and consultation with people with lived experience to guide improvements.

Legislation and Governance

- Several municipalities, including Bathurst and Belle-Baie, were noted as lacking Accessibility Advisory Committees, which was identified as a governance gap.
- Participants expressed frustration with slow progress, unfulfilled commitments, and a lack of accountability in implementation.
- Despite these concerns, some noted a gradual increase in public awareness and advocacy, which is regarded as a hopeful sign for long-term improvement.

Awareness and Public Attitudes

- There is a need for more education on communicating with Deaf individuals, and on the experiences of people with Blindness and invisible disabilities.
- Several respondents noted that physical disabilities are more accepted and supported than mental health or neurodivergent conditions.
- Experiences of stigma, dismissal, and exclusion, particularly around invisible disabilities, were common. One respondent described inclusion as “surface level,” with little substantive support or understanding.
- Another respondent noted that intersectional representation (e.g., disability alongside age or ethnicity) can lead to certain voices being marginalized or overlooked in community planning.

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