

## Accessibility Policy

Approved by Provincial Council May 2023

### OVERVIEW

The Nova Scotia New Democratic Party (NSNDP) is dedicated to promoting an equitable and inclusive environment for all people. To this end, the NSNDP will develop policy, practices and procedures to achieve accessibility and inclusion by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers, thus facilitating equitable access to and participation in the NSNDP for all people.

**“Disability”** includes a physical, biological, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders their full and effective participation in the NSNDP. An official diagnosis is not required.

**“Barrier”** means anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in the NSNDP of persons with disabilities. A barrier may be physical, architectural or technological, and may relate to information, communication, policy or practice.

### **This policy consists of six parts:**

- Part 1 – Policy Scope
- Part 2 – Commitments to Accessibility
- Part 3 – Training / Education
- Part 4 – Feedback
- Part 5 – Documentation
- Part 6 – Responsibility for the Policy

## **PART 1 – POLICY SCOPE**

1.1 The NSNDP, including the Provincial Office, provincial governance bodies and Electoral District Associations (EDAs), will achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing:

- NSNDP meetings, activities, campaigns, and events,
- Information and communication, and
- The built environment.

1.2 The policy requires all employees and all individuals in a volunteer leadership role with the NSNDP to meet the obligations under the policy.

1.3 The policy applies to any individual not mentioned in section 1.1, including people with a disability that enter the NSNDP’s premises, or interact with the NSNDP by telephone, over the internet, or through any other means of communication.

## **PART 2 – COMMITMENTS TO ACCESSIBILITY**

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

2.1 For the purpose of the policy, “communications” means a process of providing, sending, receiving, and understanding information.

2.2 The NSNDP is committed to communicating with people with disabilities in ways that take into consideration their disability. The NSNDP will ensure that all communication will be available in alternative formats upon request.



## **ASSISTIVE DEVICES & TECHNOLOGIES**

2.3 The NSNDP is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices and technologies.

## **CERTIFIED SERVICE ANIMALS**

2.4 The NSNDP is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a certified service dog or guide dog as required by the Service Dog Act and the Blind Persons' Rights Act.

## **SUPPORT PERSONS**

2.5 The NSNDP is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter all areas of the premises with the support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while participating in any NSNDP activities.

2.6 The NSNDP will waive all admission fees for the support person if they are accompanying a person with a disability.

## **PART 3 – TRAINING**

3.1 The NSNDP will provide training on accessibility to all staff and individuals in a volunteer leadership role.

3.2 The training will include:

- The NSNDP accessibility policy;
- The NSNDP's policies, procedures and practices relating to accessibility;
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a certified service dog or support person;
- What to do when a person with a disability is experiencing a barrier in participating in the NSNDP.

## **PART 4 – ACCESSIBILITY FEEDBACK**

4.1 The NSNDP including EDAs will invite feedback (information which is used as a basis for improvement) on accessibility in multiple modes of communication including but not limited to:

- by mail;
- by telephone;
- in person; and
- by email

4.2 Feedback received will be forwarded to the appropriate staff or volunteer(s), and the response will be documented and tracked.

4.3 A person providing feedback to the NSNDP will receive a response from the NSNDP within 5 business days.

## **PART 5 – DOCUMENTATION**

5.1 The NSNDP will make this policy available on the NSNDP website, and will provide such policy in alternative formats upon request.

5.2 At all events, the NSNDP will post a notice in the reception areas welcoming people to use assistive devices and encouraging them to ask for support from NSNDP staff or designated volunteers.

## **PART 6 – RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POLICY**

6.1 Provincial Council sets corporate administrative policy and program direction.

6.2 The Accessibility Advisory Committee:

- Conceptualizes and creates an annual accessibility plan;
- Monitors the performance of an accessibility plan;
- Guides the Provincial Director in interpreting and implementing this policy;
- Maintains and annually reviews this policy;
- Reports to the Provincial Council on program direction annually.

6.3 The NSNDP Rules & Privileges Committee:

- Reviews and approves recommendations arising from feedback on this policy;
- Reviews this policy annually; and
- Receives and reviews all feedback related to accessibility and ensures appropriate follow up with those providing the feedback.

#### 6.4 The Provincial Director:

- Implements corporate administrative policy and program direction;
- Monitors and ensures consistency in the application of the policy across the NSNDP;
- Coordinates or administers accessibility training;
- Maintains training records, including a record of the trainers, the individuals who received training, their positions, and the dates training was provided;
- Reviews this policy annually;
- Coordinates the preparation of an annual accessibility report to be provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Oversees the consistent application of the policy and related processes

#### 6.5 Accessibility Officer:

- Appointed by the party for events, an Accessibility Officer will be the lead individual for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers which may interact with a disability;
- Will receive enhanced accessibility training;
- Oversee the consistent application of the policy and related processes within their areas of responsibility including with third-party providers; and
- Will work to ensure that the NSNDP is compliant with this policy during events.

#### 6.6 Volunteers in a Leadership Role:

- Attend training sessions on accessibility when requested;
- Foster an environment that reflects and supports the purpose of the policy;
- Oversee the consistent application of the policy and related processes within their areas of responsibility including with third-party providers; and
- Reviews the “Party’s Accessibility Checklist” for guidance

## Accessible Meeting & Event Checklist

An accessible event benefits all participants/attendees, including individuals with invisible disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, and ensures people of all ages and body types can fully engage in the program.

### 1. Check Venue in Advance

#### **MOBILITY: CONSIDER THOSE WHO USE A WHEELCHAIR OR HAVE OTHER MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS:**

- Accessible parking; proximity to bus stop
- Automatic doors; wide doorways and aisles to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters (min 850mm width)
- No loose cables across walking areas
- Ramp and/or elevator access (as needed)
- Accessible gender-neutral washrooms

#### **VISIBILITY: CONSIDER THOSE WITH IMPAIRED SIGHT:**

- Well-lit meeting space & adjacent areas
- Projection screen that is visible from all seating areas
- Clear signage with large high contrast print (identifying locations & directions)

#### **ACOUSTICS: CONSIDER THOSE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT:**

- Microphone / Public Address system & roving microphone
- No unnecessary background music
- Seating available near presenter for lip reading
- Assistive listening devices available





**TECHNOLOGY: CONSIDER THOSE WHO MAY NEED TO USE ADAPTIVE DEVICES:**

- Electrical outlets that are accessible in seating areas to accommodate devices, laptops, etc., extra space or work surfaces.
- Zoom Meetings – Zoom provides accessibility options, please visit the website for assistance in making this option more accessible. <https://zoom.us/accessibility>

**SERVICE ANIMALS MUST BE ALLOWED: CONSIDER ACCESS & SPACE:**

- A comfortable space for service animals to rest during event
- Accessible toileting and watering facilities nearby

## 2. INVITING GUESTS: Make Sure to Ask!

When you send out the invitation or notice, include a welcome message to let invitees know they can contact the planner regarding accessible accommodations. Your message might include text such as:

*“We strive to host inclusive, accessible events that enable all individuals, regardless of abilities, to engage fully. To be respectful of those with allergies and environmental sensitivities, NDP spaces are scent free. To request an accommodation or for inquiries about accessibility, please contact (name, email, phone).”*

Another approach is to include a checklist in your meeting RSVP. For example:

I will need the following accommodations to participate:

- Assistive listening devices
- Captioning
- Language interpretation, including ASL.
- Large print (best practice size: 14)
- Advance copy of slides to be projected.
- Wheelchair access to working tables throughout room.
- Diet Restrictions. List: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Make sure you follow up on all requests received. If it appears you will be unable to meet a specific request, follow up with the individual who made the request to determine whether an alternative arrangement can be made.

### Questions?

Make sure to contact [accessibility@nsndp.ca](mailto:accessibility@nsndp.ca)

### 3. At Event

Ensure that presenters are aware of NSNDP's commitment to disability-inclusive meetings. Ask them to prepare and deliver with accessibility in mind.

#### **SPACE:**

- Barrier-free pathways and covered cables
- Reserved front row seating and designated microphones.
- Designated assistive listening devices area (as requested)
- Scent-free environment / Participants are expected to be masked (as required)
- Gender-neutral washrooms / **New Democrats are committed to providing free menstrual products**
- Designated lactation room / childcare space
- Designated rest / quiet room

#### **DESIGNATE:**

- At larger events, designate someone to be responsible for disability-related accommodations, to assist with seating, to make sure captioning and other technology are working, and to meet other needs.

#### **PRESENTATIONS:**

- Provide presenters with a checklist requesting that they: submit materials in advance so that they can be forwarded to individuals who may not be able to view screens or flip charts; verbally describe visual materials (slides, charts, etc.)
- Have printed copies available (in size 14 font); ensure speakers (including those asking questions) always use a microphone.

- Activate captions on any video used in the presentation.
- Organize breakout group activities to maximize distance between groups (each group going to a corner of the room or side rooms).

**Q&A SESSIONS:**

- Make sure to repeat questions posted by audience before responding, especially if there is not a roving microphone available.
- Ask presenters or audience members to speak into a microphone, even though they may express confidence that they are loud enough and do not need a microphone.

**FOOD:**

- Clearly indicate allergens and gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options.