



**Easter Seals Nova Scotia's letter and submission to the Law Amendments Committee re:  
Bill 59 An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia**

**February 25, 2017**

**To the members of the Law Amendments Committee:**

Easter Seals Nova Scotia wishes to add its voice to those of other organizations that support and serve Nova Scotians living with disabilities - such as the Bill 59 Community Alliance - that seek enhancements to the proposed Accessibility Legislation first tabled last fall.

Our charity serves more than 2,700 Nova Scotians living with disabilities annually. Our programs include fully-accessible camp and sport programs, wheelchair and mobility equipment provision services, and skills training and supported employment programs. We've been serving children, youth, and adults with disabilities across Nova Scotia for several decades.

Easter Seals Nova Scotia offers its unconditional support of accessibility legislation for our province. We strive for a barrier-free province, and promote mobility, inclusion, and independence. Our programs are rooted in access for all Nova Scotians, and we share the core principles and mission of the Bill 59 Community Alliance, principles such as universal design and clear and enforceable standards.

We note the effort the Nova Scotia government has made to include and accommodate as many voices and perspectives as possible (notably, the voices and perspectives of persons with disabilities) in the gathering of feedback, expertise, and testimonials about Bill 59 during this stretch of the Law Amendments Committee's work. It's critical this effort to ensure the inclusion and advice of persons of disabilities be sustained throughout the design and development of Bill 59, and, importantly, in the following months and years of Bill 59's implementation, advancement, and enforcement. Organizations like ours develop and provide accessible services; however, it's important for legislators and governments to continue to directly engage and consult with the absolute experts in the field of accessibility knowledge: persons with disabilities. Their voices need to be included and represented in all committee or independent body or committee offshoots of Bill 59.

To expand on a few of the themes articulated by the Bill 59 Community Alliance:

We believe that timelines associated with Bill 59's passing, implementation, and follow-through must be realistic, achievable, clearly defined and enforced.

We also believe that a critical element of ensuring Bill 59's implementation and success is the development of a robust, inclusive, and multi-media communications strategy so that all Nova Scotians are aware of the core principles and changes that will accompany accessibility legislation. This is an opportunity for the Nova Scotia government to tell the story of what

accessibility looks like, and feature the voices and words of persons with disabilities. This also represents an opportunity to promote those businesses, organizations, places of learning, facilities, and venues that are already modelling and championing accessibility and inclusiveness. This accessibility legislation will need champions and proponents. Their voices should be embedded in the delivery and marketing of Bill 59. This type of multi-media campaign would also be instrumental in the erosion of attitudinal barriers about accessibility and persons with disabilities.

We think the Nova Scotia government should eliminate barriers to communication by investing in adaptive technology and tools that support the inclusion of all Nova Scotians in public conversations, so that these tools and technology can be accessed in public sites such as schools, libraries, and government offices.

We propose that Bill 59 include language that obviously denounces and calls to an end for discrimination, but also encourages Nova Scotia's public and private sector employers and educational institutions to pursue hiring, recruitment, and employment-related goals and programs with the diversity of ability and aspiration of Nova Scotians with disabilities in mind. We also propose that Bill 59 include language to ensure the ability of all Nova Scotians to access life-changing mobility equipment.

The Accessibility Legislation should include the requirement of provincial and municipal transportation agencies and businesses to promote and provide timely, accessible, and reliable barrier-free means and modes of public and private transport such as trains, buses, air travel, taxis, and rental vehicles. Bill 59 should also include language and accessibility standards for Nova Scotia's hospitality and tourism sectors to follow (hotels, restaurants, etc).

We propose the Nova Scotia government extend barrier-free legislation to include barrier-free design for and access to recreational facilities such as rinks, campgrounds and beaches. It should also allow for cross-jurisdictional standards; as an example, where the Nova Scotia government would work with regional school boards and athletic associations and leagues to support the design and implementation of barrier-free games, equipment, and competition for Nova Scotia children, youth and adults with disabilities.

This province's aim to introduce Accessibility Legislation is timely, in that it intersects with the Government of Canada's own work to develop federal Accessibility Legislation. This represents an excellent opportunity for all levels of government to work collaboratively and effectively to build strong legislation in support of full citizenship of all Nova Scotians and Canadians, and to share their resources and expertise in this matter. Thank you for reading this letter, and for considering our perspective.

Sincerely yours,

Henk van Leeuwen  
President & CEO  
Easter Seals Nova Scotia