

Building Accessibility

Human Rights & Public Buildings



Many people with disabilities face barriers because buildings are not accessible. This can limit access to public services and create unfair disadvantages. This resource explains the rights of people with disabilities, the laws in Newfoundland and Labrador about accessible buildings, and why inclusive design matters for universal access.

Designing for Inclusion & Promoting Access

Inclusive design is not just a best practice; it is a legal and moral obligation. This approach works to eliminate systemic barriers that create disadvantages for certain groups. The goal is to ensure that spaces can be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for modifications or individual accommodations.

Buildings Accessibility Act & Regulations

This requires new and reconstructed buildings, including government buildings, to be accessible to people with disabilities. The Act requires that:

- ✓ Accessible buildings must have accessible washrooms.
- ✓ Curb ramps must be safe and accessible.
- ✓ At least 6% of parking spaces must be accessible, with one in six van-accessible, and all meeting size and aisle requirements.
- ✓ Accessible doorways must be at least 800 mm wide when open.
- ✓ Every building must have at least one accessible main entrance at sidewalk or ramp level.
- ✓ The Department of Government Modification and Service Delivery (GMSD) inspects new and reconstructed buildings, and investigates related complaints.
- ✗ Does not apply to buildings that already existed as of December 24, 1981.

Human Rights Act

- ✓ Service providers have a legal duty to accommodate people with disabilities, regardless of compliance with the Buildings Accessibility Act and its Regulations, unless such accommodation would result in undue hardship.
- ✓ Accommodations can include adding ramps, automatic doors, or accessible parking.

Experiencing Barriers?

Can't access a new or reconstructed building? Talk to the landlord first. If not resolved, contact GMSD at DGSNLInfo@gov.nl.ca. Barriers in an older building? The Human Rights Commission may be able to help. Email humanrights@gov.nl.ca or call 709-729-2709.

