



Town of Amherst
Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee
Agenda

Date: **Wednesday, November 12, 2025**
Time: **4:30 pm**
Location: **Council Chambers, Town Hall**

	Pages
1. Call to Order	
1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement	
"I would like to acknowledge that our gathering today is taking place in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional, unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaw people. I would also like to acknowledge that Nova Scotia has another unique people, the people of African descent whose legacy and contributions date back over 400 years predating confederation of this land. We are all treaty people."	
1.2 Approval of Agenda	
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3.3 Anti-Hate Call Application - Klooster	22 - 22
3.4 Green Space Update - Klooster	23 - 23
4. Next Meeting Date	
5. Adjournment	

TOWN OF AMHERST
Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee
Minutes

Date: September 17, 2025
Time: 4:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Councillor Kathy Wells, Chair
Deputy Mayor, Hal Davidson, Vice Chair
Marina Godfrey, Citizen Representative
Jim Prendergast, Citizen Representative
Tammy Gero, Citizen Representative
Vanessa Jones, Citizen Representative
Victoria Vance, Citizen Representative

Members Regrets LJ Barquilla, Citizen Representative

Members Absent Clifford Pinchbeck, Citizen Representative

Staff Present Sharon Bristol, Director, Community Living
Mallory Klooster, Community Well-Being Manager
Lori O'Connell, Marketing & Communications Officer
Sean Payne, Marketing & Communications Officer
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

Moved By Vanessa Jones

Seconded By Jim Prendergast

That the agenda be approved as circulated.

Motion Carried

1.3 Acceptance of Minutes - May 28, 2025

The Chair called for any errors or omissions in the minutes. There being none, the minutes of the May 28, 2025, meeting of the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee were accepted as included in the agenda package.

2. Discussion Items

2.1 Week Events for September 13 - 22, 2025 - Klooster

Mallory discussed the events that were planned for September 13 - 22, 2025, including the Transit Study In-Person Public Session being held on the evening of September 17th at the Community Credit Union Business Innovation Centre and Welcoming Week (September 13 - 22, 2025) with the Welcoming Party being held September 20th from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Amherst Curling Club. Further information is included in the agenda package.

2.2 Fall Events 2025 - Klooster

Mallory discussed the events that are being scheduled for the month of October 2025, including events for Truth and Reconciliation Day, Esther Fest, along with several other events as outlined on the calendar included in the agenda package.

2.3 Emergency Preparedness - Klooster

Mallory discussed Emergency Preparedness for those with disabilities. Mallory mentioned the Accessibility Directorate has several emergency preparedness resources, that are available to the Committee and the community, further information included in the agenda package. Town of Amherst staff will share these resources with emergency services.

The Chair suggested the Town's communication team advertise these resources on the Town's website and social media platforms.

Vanessa asked if there is a list of people with disabilities so if there is an emergency the proper staff can do a wellness check on them. Sharon Bristol suggested creating a data base, she will work with the Fire Chief and Operations Director to see what is needed to get this started.

Jim indicated that his mother used an oxygen tank, he had to inform Nova Scotia Power and the Fire Department that there was oxygen in the house, and he had to post a sign in the front and back door stating this. Nova Scotia Power would inform him when there was a planned power outage so he could ensure the generator was set up. Jim will provide Sharon with any information he may still have from the oxygen service provider regarding this.

Sharon suggested that perhaps staff could create an information video / bulletin on what to do in case of an emergency for those who are vulnerable.

2.4 Fall Training Manual - Klooster

Mallory discussed the Fall Training Manual Review, adding the training will include accessibility, equity and anti-racism.

Deputy Mayor Davidson asked that members of council be included with the target audience for this training and requested that any "Evaluation & Feedback" report also be forwarded to this Committee and not just Council.

Jim asked if this training will be available online. Mallory answered yes, adding that it is easily accessible.

2.5 Government of Canada Technical Guides - Klooster

Marina arrived at 4:48 PM.

Mallory discussed the Government of Canada Technical Guides which have been produced to support organizations on their accessibility journey. They include Procurement of Accessible Goods, Procurement of Accessible Services, Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services, including Customer Services. Copies were included as part of the agenda package.

The Chair asked if staff know if there is easy access to grants that might be available to those in the community needing to make accessibility improvements. Mallory answered that there is a wide variety of grants available and will look into how this information can be better communicated and well known to our community.

2.6 Accessible Playground Update - Klooster

Mallory reviewed her memo included in the agenda package, noting that the Internal Playground Committee has finalized the budget for the Accessible Playground Project and will be applying for several grants to assist with funding support.

Tammy asked if the Internal Playground Committee has looked at other communities with similar playgrounds. Mallory answered yes, the committee has information from several other communities with accessible playgrounds.

Tammy asked if there is a location for the Accessible Playground. Mallory answered it will be located at the Beacon Street playground.

3. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting for the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity Committee will be held on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 4:30 PM.

Going back to the Fall events calendar, Tammy thought there could be better advertising for these events as sometimes they can be hard to find on social media.

Deputy Mayor Davidson suggested that perhaps there could be hyper links included on the digital calendar for each event for people to click on for more information.

Marina advised that she can have the events read off on air at the radio station that she works at (CFTA 107.9).

Victoria mentioned that NS Works / CANSA on the corner of Church and Victoria Street has what she calls a "Speakers Corner Window", where the calendar of events could be posted.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Councillor Kathy Wells
Chair

MEMO

TO: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee

FROM: Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being

DATE: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

RE: **Hailie Tattrie Research Presentation**

Hailie Tattrie, a Ph.D. candidate at Mount Saint Vincent University, received funding through MITACS, along with support from the Town of Amherst, Town of Oxford, and the Municipality of Cumberland, to conduct a study on youth resiliency in Cumberland County during 2023–2024.

Her research explores how Cumberland County can strengthen youth resiliency from a municipal government perspective. Hailie is currently finalizing her dissertation and will be presenting an update on her findings to the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee at today's meeting.

MEMO

TO: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee
FROM: Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being
DATE: Wednesday, November 12 2025
RE: **Annual Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Report**

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, *Access by Design 2030*, and the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* require municipalities to proactively work towards creating inclusive, accessible, and equitable communities. These frameworks mandate accessibility and anti-hate plans that identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities and marginalized groups, ensuring full participation and equal opportunity for all.

Since adopting the AIDE Strategy, the Town, Council, and staff have made significant progress in improving accessibility and inclusion across municipal services. Achievements include enhanced event coordination and communication, accessible digital platforms, and substantial investments in walkways, recreational areas, and year-round equipment to ensure usability for all residents.

The Town of Amherst Annual AIDE Report highlights the municipality's continued leadership and commitment to building a more inclusive, equitable, and accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

Appendix Item: Annual Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Report.

Annual A.I.D.E Report

Town of Amherst

2024-2025

Mallory Klooster,
Manager of Community Well-Being



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Executive Summary

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, *Access by Design 2030*, and the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* require municipalities to proactively work towards creating inclusive, accessible, and equitable communities. These frameworks mandate accessibility and anti-hate plans that identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities and marginalized groups, ensuring full participation and equal opportunity for all. Municipalities were required to have such plans in place by April 1, 2025.

To meet these obligations, the Town of Amherst consolidated its Accessibility Committee and Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee into a single, comprehensive Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE) Committee and Strategy. This integrated approach addresses all four pillars—accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity—through coordinated planning, community consultation, and public accountability.

Since adopting the AIDE Strategy, the Town, Council, and staff have made significant progress in improving accessibility and inclusion across municipal services. Achievements include enhanced event coordination and communication, accessible digital platforms, and substantial investments in walkways, recreational areas, and year-round equipment to ensure usability for all residents.

The Town of Amherst Annual AIDE Report highlights the municipality's continued leadership and commitment to building a more inclusive, equitable, and accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

Introduction and Overview

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, *Access by Design 2030*, and the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* mandate that communities across the province take proactive steps to build inclusive, equitable, and accessible environments for all. These legislative frameworks require municipalities to develop and implement accessibility and anti-hate plans that identify, remove, and prevent barriers—ensuring full participation and equal opportunity for people of all abilities and backgrounds. Under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*, all municipalities are required to have a plan in place by April 1, 2025.

In response, the Town of Amherst established a unified Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE) Committee, combining its Accessibility Strategy and Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Strategy into a single, comprehensive plan. This integrated approach reflects the Town’s commitment to addressing systemic inequities and promoting fairness through community collaboration, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Since the launch of the AIDE Strategy, Amherst Town Council, and staff, have made significant progress in improving accessibility, inclusion, and equity throughout municipal operations. Efforts have focused on making public events, facilities, services, and communications more inclusive and user-friendly, while investing in infrastructure and programs that enhance community participation for everyone.

The Town’s AIDE Strategy is guided by five key focus areas:

1. **Delivery of Goods and Services** – Ensuring equitable access to all municipal goods and services for residents and visitors.
2. **Information and Communication** – Providing accessible and inclusive information and communication channels for people with accessibility needs.
3. **Transportation** – Supporting the ability of residents and visitors with accessibility needs to move freely and access reliable transportation options.
4. **Employment** – Promoting the Town of Amherst as an equitable employer that supports the careers of employees with accessibility needs and seeks to attract and retain a diverse, skilled workforce.
5. **Built Environment** – Creating and maintaining buildings and outdoor spaces that provide meaningful, equitable access for all users.

Our 2024-2025 Accessibility Accomplishments

Accessible Standard: Goods and Services		
Accessible Objective	Equity and Anti-Racism Goals/Objectives	Accomplishment
<p>Increase inclusive and accessible community resources and services</p>	<p>Work to build an equitable and inclusive community</p>	<p>Brochure holders installed at Accessibility Standard level.</p> <p>Water fountain was replaced and positioned at the proper height to meet accessibility standards.</p> <p>Built an upgraded entrance ramp with handrail on the side of town hall to meet accessibility standards and enable easier access to the building for those who use mobility devices.</p>
<p>Improve service delivery for residents</p>	<p>Provide educational opportunities for elected officials and employees on respect, cultural awareness and the promotion and protection of human rights.</p>	<p>Development of an Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity training plan has been completed. Will put resources on our website for community. HR and CL Director to work together to implement with staff and council.</p> <p>Staff currently completing the Foundations of Belonging in the Workplace training created by Placemaking 4G.</p> <p>Front counter at Town Hall was designed to meet Accessibility Standards in regards to not only height but</p>

		also the amount of overhang, resulting in a safe space to approach in a wheelchair to conduct business
Improve program delivery	Be the leader in the community known for equity, inclusion and diversity	Summer student orientation included online EDIA Training Submitted an Anti-Hate application. If funded is granted, it would allow the town to hire a 2-year full time termed I.D.E Coordinator to move our goals and objectives forward in collaboration with community partners.
Ensure events are accessible for everyone	Ensure municipal services are equitable and accessible to all.	U17 considerations: cultural considerations for Czech visitors, ticket support to equity deserving groups- free tickets to students to promote youth participation Considerations for 55+ Games (Accessible Bocce Court, Equipment)

Accessible Standard: Built Environment		
Accessible Objective	Equity and Anti-Racism Goals/Objectives	Accomplishment
Review emergency management and building evacuation plan with a lens of accessibility	Existing documents will undergo a review to ensure we are updating documents to reflect our vision.	Review being done of Stadium Evacuation Procedure

Accessible Standard: Information and Communication		
Accessible Objective	Equity and Anti-Racism Goals/Objectives	Accomplishments
Ensure that all new public documents, website content, social media posts, publications, policies and procedures will be developed through an accessible and equitable lens	Shared Objective	Continued focus on using plain, concise language Ensuring appropriate colour contrast in design materials Repeating information contained within graphics as typed text Providing text-based links for document downloads alongside clickable graphics Ongoing review and update of website content for clarity and easy navigating.
Existing documents will undergo a review to ensure we are updating documents to reflect our vision	Shared Objective	Monthly review of policies and bylaws. 18 Policies and bylaws have been reviewed to date. Inventory and review of all marketing, communications and branding documents in progress.
Improve Signage to meet provincial standards	Work to build an equitable and inclusive community	Funding has been secured to create accessible trail signage/wayfinding materials.

Evaluate how we communicate to our external partners	Increase opportunities for engagement by launching an outreach campaign to gather public information with diverse groups (to understand how to improve our engagement strategies).	Development of comprehensive communications plan that identifies strategies on how to communicate to and engage with the public is in progress. Input from equity deserving groups, persons with disabilities and newcomers was considered.
Conduct built environment assessments	Ensure compliance with the NS Human Rights Act.	Nova Scotia Building Code Regulation Checklists are used in all new construction. Staff have undergone trainings on the Built Environment Standard and also have taken Rick Hansen Courses.
Improve ability to provide barrier free participation in events	Ensure municipal services are equitable and accessible to all.	U17 considerations: accessible seating, seniors room
Improve access to safe, affordable and accessible housing	Ensure compliance with the NS Human Rights Act.	United Way Maritimes, The River Philip Foundation, and The Shaw Group have partnered on a new housing community called The Groves at Hillsdale . Located on Church Street in Amherst, Nova Scotia, this development is a clustered residential community of compact, well-built homes for rent and sale. The Groves at Hillsdale is designed to fill growing gaps in the missing middle of housing options, where homeownership

		<p>opportunities for working families with modest, stable incomes are in extremely short supply.</p> <p>When the project is complete, there will be 47 residential units in total. Most units will be available for sale through a modified shared-equity homeownership model, with the remainder available at affordable monthly rents.</p> <p>The Town of Amherst paid for all the infrastructure on Vista Drive totalling about \$625,000. This supported the development of water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer infrastructure as well as a curbed, built road.</p>
<p>Investigate and make recommendation on the establishment of an accessible playground</p>	<p>Ensure compliance with the NS Human Rights Act.</p>	<p>Proposed budget for the Accessible Playground Project has been finalized.</p> <p>Staff have received a Planning Assistance Grant to hire a landscape architect to assess the proposed park space.</p> <p>Staff have submitted an Expression of Interest to gauge funding possibility for various design options.</p>

Accessible Standard: Transportation		
Accessible Objective	Equity and Anti-Racism Goals/Objectives	Accomplishment
Improve pedestrian infrastructure	Ensure compliance with the NS Human Rights Act.	<p>Replacement of the sidewalk on the east side of Havelock Street - from Prince Arthur Street to Spring Street. \$40,000</p> <p>Additional sidewalk replacement projects planned for this year include: Wellington Street - Croft Street to Church Street (\$19,000); Dickey Street (North Side) - Rupert Street to Donald Avenue (\$18,000); and, Donald Avenue - Dickey Street to Dickey Brook (\$6,000).</p> <p>Ramp at the side of the Town Hall building was replaced to reduce the pitch which now is considered an 'elevated walkway' and not a ramp as to reduce fatigue while traversing.</p> <p>Doorways at Town Hall redone to allow for 36" passage. All transitions kept at 1" or below to fall within guidelines.</p> <p>Handrails installed at the two front doors of Town Hall to assist with entry and exit.</p>

<p>Continue to improve active transportation opportunities by reviewing accessibility of trails and sidewalks</p>	<p>Ensure compliance with the NS Human Rights Act.</p>	<p>The Town of Amherst is conducting a study to explore creating a public transit service, and WSP Canada Inc. has been retained to assist. A local transit service could provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More travel options for people who don't drive • Easier access to jobs, schools, healthcare, and shopping • A greener, more sustainable transportation choice • Better regional connections
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<p>Accessible Standard: Education</p>		
<p>Accessible Objective</p>	<p>Equity and Anti-Racism Goals/Objectives</p>	<p>Accomplishment</p>
<p>Continue to grow partnerships with schools and education centres at all levels to offer supports where needed</p>	<p>Increase Community Engagement</p>	<p>Active Living engagement with schools- Scarecrow Strolls, Welcome Days,</p>

Provide training and opportunities for accessibility, equity and anti-racism	Continue to increase our promotion, respect, understanding and appreciation of our community’s diversity by organizing workshops, offering educational resources on equity and anti-racism.	Development of an Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity training plan has been completed. Will put resources on our website for community. HR and CL Director to work together to implement with staff and council. Staff currently completing the Foundations of Belonging in the Workplace training created by Placemaking 4G. Operations staff have completed Accessibility Directorate Built Environment Webinars
Work to ensure Community Safety	Work to build an Equitable and Inclusive Community	Senior scooter videos Sidewalk crossing

Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations for the Accessibility Committee to review.

1. Sidewalks and crosswalks continue to be a top priority.

As the sidewalks are being revitalized, the demographics of the pedestrian population as well as the mix of road users at different time periods should be considered, and crossing facilities and control devices should be designed accordingly.

2. Accessibility Standard Audits

Comprehensive evaluations of our Goods and Services along with our Built Environment should be conducted to ensure we are meeting the guidelines and recommendations set out by the Accessibility Directorate.

Accessible Standard: Employment		
Accessible Objective	Equity and Anti-Racism Goals/Objectives	Accomplishment
Diversify recruitment methods	Work to create a diverse municipal workforce.	People Strategy, to be implemented in early 2026. This strategy will strengthen our accommodation processes and help remove barriers to employee participation and success.
Promote Amherst as an inclusive and diverse workforce	Provide educational opportunities for elected officials and employees on respect, cultural awareness and the promotion and protection of human rights.	<p>Conducted a comprehensive wellness survey to better understand the diverse needs of our employees (Dec 2024/Jan 2025)</p> <p>Launched a virtual health platform to improve access to care and supports (Feb 2025)</p> <p>Introduced more inclusive onboarding practices, including a tailored orientation for our summer students (Spring 2025)</p> <p>Established an official employee wellness committee, offering activities that reflect a diverse range of interests, abilities and perspectives (Sept 2025)</p>
Review of policies and procedures	Existing documents will undergo a review to ensure we are updating documents to reflect our vision.	We continued our HR policy review through an accessibility and equity lens and updated the Smokefree Workplace Policy (June 2025)

		and the Workplace Violence & Harassment Prevention Policy (Sept 2025) to support a safer, healthier, and more respectful work environment.
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3. Community Education Campaign

Building on our success of the past few years, town staff should inform the public and also include how we announce our progresses in our Communication Plan. This could include updating our website to reflect our accomplishments.

Moving Forward 2025-2026

The Accessibility Directorate has been working towards enacting the Accessibility Standards to meet their goal of having an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. Most recently enacted is the "Built Environment Accessibility Standard" which has been in effect as of March 6, 2025, with enforcement beginning on April 1, 2026, for new construction and redevelopment projects. Next to be drafted is the "Goods and Services" accessibility standard which is currently in the government review and drafting phase, with a release timeline of 2025–2026.

The following are examples of the accessible work that the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee and the Town of Amherst will undertake over the next year.

1. Staff are moving ahead with securing funding to complete the Accessible Playground Project at 51 Beacon St.
2. Staff will be adding tactile plates to the intersection of Victoria & Lawrence Street.
3. Staff will be renovating the seminar room at the library to make it accessible. This project will be done in January/February 2026.

MEMO

TO: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee
FROM: Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being
DATE: Wednesday, November 12, 2025
RE: **Town of Amherst and YReach Snack and Survey Social**

As outlined in Council’s *Strategic Priorities for 2024–2028*, staff have been directed to develop a strategy aimed at attracting and retaining new residents in the Town of Amherst, with a focus on specific demographic groups.

Community Engagement:

To support this initiative, staff have been engaging long-term residents to gather insight into what makes Amherst a great place to live. Additionally, on Tuesday, November 4, the Community Living Department and YREACH hosted a “*Snack & Survey Social*” from 5:00–7:00 p.m. at the YMCA Community Room.

Event Overview:

The event provided an opportunity for newcomers to complete a brief survey about what brought them to Amherst and to share suggestions on how the Town can better support their decision to make Amherst their home base. Light refreshments were served, and participants were encouraged to ask questions, provide feedback, and learn more about getting involved in the community.

MEMO

TO: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee
FROM: Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being
DATE: Wednesday, November 12, 2025
RE: **Anti-Hate Call Application Submission**

The *Anti-Hate Call for Proposals* supports initiatives across Canada that aim to prevent and address hate by empowering communities to foster inclusion, resilience, and unity. The program emphasizes community-led, intersectional projects that reduce social isolation, strengthen collective identity, and build a more inclusive and cohesive society.

The Town of Amherst staff have submitted an application under this funding stream to support the hiring of a Full Time 2-year termed staff person who would lead the collaborative project with community partners. The goal of this initiative is to strengthen community-led strategies, address and prevent hate, promote safety, and enhance residents' sense of belonging and collective identity.

This initiative would support the Town of Amherst and the AIDE Committee in achieving the anti-racism goals and objectives outlined in the AIDE Strategic Plan.

MEMO

TO: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee
FROM: Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being
DATE: Wednesday, November 12, 2025
RE: **Green Space Update**

Staff are currently consulting with Indigenous allies to develop a name for the park. In trying to translate the suggest name Healing Space it has been identified that there is no direct translation to the language. Further consultation is being done to come up with an alternate solution.