

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 3, 2021 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Attendance: Doug Foster (Chair), Rosalind Penfound (Vice-Chair), Barry Abbott, Cynthia Bruce, Linda Campbell, David Caswell, Gus Reed, Anne Sinclair, Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Kevin Russell

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Gerry Post (Strategic Advisor), Amy Middleton (Acting Manager), Maddi MacDonald, Jenny Sears, Lisa Jacobs, Caroline Read Kendell, Kristel vom Scheidt, Lashauna Smith, Craig MacKinnon, Josh Bates.

1. Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq land acknowledgement and acknowledgement of African Nova Scotian history in Nova Scotia.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

b. Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2020

Motion: Doug Foster moved to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2021 meeting. David Caswell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Outstanding Business

Dawn Stegen provided updates regarding outstanding business from the January 21, 2021 meeting.

- Phase 2 draft recommendations are being presented to Board today before going out for consultation.

- The Board motion and Directorate briefing package to have employment as the focus of the third standard will be forwarded to Minister next week.
- The Directorate continues to follow up with colleagues on whether the details from staff briefing note on stimulus package funding can be shared with the Board. Dawn Stegen will provide Marcie Shwery-Stanley with publicly available information on allocation of stimulus funding.
- A follow-up email to disability organizations regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities, Deaf, and neurodivergent persons will be sent this month.

3. Accessibility Advisory Board

a. Standard Development Committee Updates: Education

Rosalind Penfound provided an update on the Education Standards Development Committee meeting of January 26, 2021. The meeting focused on draft recommendations for teaching and learning and accessibility services. The next meeting is March 10, 2021.

b. Adult Service Centres, Community Services

Department of Community Services Deputy Minister Tracey Taweel and Maria Medioli, Executive Director of the Disability Support Program shared an overview of the Adult Service Programs with a focus on Day Programming as requested by the Board.

Board members commented the presentation was very informative. There was some discussion on the measurement and evaluation and funding of service providers. Department of Community Services officials carry out routine site visits and strive to have strong relationships with their service providers.

Deputy Taweel expressed that she values the Board's input and would encourage open dialogue with the Board insofar as it relates to the Disability Support Program.

c. Standard Development Committees: Built Environment

Caroline Read Kendell, Accessibility Directorate, provided an update on the Built Environment Standards Development Committee meeting of January 25, 2021 and reviewed the draft Phase 2 recommendations.

The focus of the January 25th meeting was to finalize the draft Phase 2 recommendations that will be consulted on in March 2021. This included revising language on outstanding recommendations, deciding whether to include specific sections of the Ontario standard, and reaching consensus on how to proceed with the housing recommendation. Staff are working with Communications Nova Scotia to plan the details of the March consultation on the draft Phase 2 recommendations, recognizing that the method will be different this year in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

Caroline walked through the draft recommendations and Board members provided feedback related to universal design principles and ensuring full accessibility.

d. Peggy's Cove Accessible Viewing Platform

Rosalind Penfound facilitated a discussion on the Peggy's Cove project by Develop Nova Scotia has been announced. Part of this initiative includes making an accessible viewing platform for Peggy's Cove.

The Board had a fulsome discussion. Many Board members suggested that Develop Nova Scotia should engage persons with disabilities, Deaf, and/or neurodivergent persons in the design work to ensure accessibility features such as accessible washrooms and accessible wayfinding. There was discussion that these points should be covered by the Built Environment standards; however, it was suggested that including first voice in designing public spaces should be considered until such time as the standards are finalized.

Dawn Stegen spoke to the outcome of the Feb 2nd meeting the Directorate had with Develop NS. There was agreement to maintain

working relationship throughout the project and the Directorate will review the Built Environment recommendations for accessibility standard with Develop NS.

Motion:

Marcie Shwery-Stanley moved to advise Minister Furey that the Accessibility Advisory Board is supportive of the plans to create an accessible viewing deck at Peggy's Cove. Seconded by Barry Abbott. Motion carried.

4. Other Business

a. Accessibility Act Review – Feedback

Rosalind Penfound introduced Lisa Jacobs, Accessibility Directorate. Lisa gave a presentation and explained to the Board that within four years after the coming into force of the Act, and at least every five years thereafter, the Governor in Council shall appoint a person to undertake a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the Act and the accessibility standards and report on the person's findings to the Minister. The Directorate is developing a recommended approach for the review for submission to the Minister by the end of February. We also plan to have a reviewer selected by the end of May. The process will require various Government approvals, including a submission to Cabinet and this will take time over the summer. Based on our current estimations, we fully expect to have a reviewer appointed by Sept. 18. The purpose of the discussion with the Board was to seek feedback on the core qualifications and experience that a reviewer should have, including lived experience as a person with a disability, who is Deaf, and/or who is neurodivergent; experience living in Nova Scotia; and experience in management/public service. The Board was strongly in favour of the reviewer being someone who is a person with a disability, who is Deaf, and/or who is neurodivergent and has lived experience as such. Many Board members expressed the need for the reviewer to have experience living in Nova Scotia, and there was some discussion on a panel approach.

b. Advice and Discussion with Minister

Rosalind Penfound welcomed Minister Furey, Attorney General and Minister of the Department of Justice, and Minister responsible for the Accessibility Act. She thanked Minister on behalf of the Board for his leadership toward accessibility for Nova Scotia, and particularly during such a challenging time with the COVID19 pandemic. Rosalind expressed that the Board is proud of its work over the past three years. One of the biggest accomplishments was releasing recommendations for accessibility standards in education and the built environment. In addition to the standards work, the Board has continued to provide advice on important work, including prescribing of public sector bodies, the awareness campaign, and the Directorate's work on compliance and enforcement. Over the past three years, the Board has had numerous speakers engage with them on important issues ranging from domestic violence against women with disabilities to accessible rural transportation. Rosalind suggested that the Accessibility Advisory. Rosalind emphasised how critical it is to have a strong Directorate with capacity to support this work as it will only become more complex moving forward.

Minister Furey congratulated Rosalind Penfound and David Caswell for taking on the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair for the incoming Board. Minister thanked Doug Foster for his service as Chair of the outgoing Board. Minister thanked all the Board members for their service. Minister Furey shared that he was thinking of the late Alex Peeler, who served on the inaugural Board and was a mentor to him.

5. Adjournment

Rosalind Penfound thanked each of the Board members for their tireless and outstanding service. David, Cynthia, Linda, Anne, Marcie will continue on the Board, with David as Vice-Chair. Birgit Elssner, Andrew Jantzen, Ellen Johnson, and Jenny-Rachel Lind will be joining the incoming Board. Meeting was adjourned.