

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, September 21, 2021 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance: Rosalind Penfound (Chair), David Caswell (Vice-Chair), Cynthia Bruce, Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Andrew Jantzen, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair

Regrets: Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Terri Lynn Almeda, Dustin Lyons, Maddi MacDonald, Avery Maynard, Amy Middleton, Caroline Read Kendall, Lashauna Smith

Guests: Laurie Cranton (Chair, Built Environment Standard Development Committee)

1. Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board (AAB) meeting with a Mi'kmaq land acknowledgement,

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

b. Approval of Minutes from July 13, 2021

Motion: Anne Sinclair moved to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2021 meeting. Birgit Elssner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from August 10, 2021

Anne Sinclair was marked as absent; however, she was present for this meeting.

Motion: Birgit Elssner moved to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2021 meeting with the above noted amendment. Ellen Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Outstanding Business & Directorate Updates

- Dawn Stegen provided updates on initiatives and outstanding business from the August 10, 2021 Board meeting. Materials from Affordable Housing Commission Report presented by Lindsey Wadden, Chief Operating Officer, Housing Nova Scotia, at the August 10, 2021 board meeting were shared in the Board package.

- Government of Nova Scotia (GNS) Accessibility Plan 2022-25
 - The Accessibility Directorate delivered presentations to seven departments' senior leaders on the GNS Accessibility Plan 2022-2025 to build awareness at decision making level. There are 22 departments currently working on drafting actions and commitments.
 - Directorate is leading regional kitchen table discussions to gain new perspectives, with a priority on engaging persons with disabilities and organizations that represent persons with disabilities, to inform the next GNS Accessibility Plan. This includes meetings with stakeholders across Nova Scotia (rural/urban areas) and conducting research on current accessibility issues for Nova Scotians.
 - Engagement with government staff, including those with disabilities will also take place
 - Reports from each engagement activity will be shared with departments in mid-October to inform final actions and commitments to be included in the plan.
 - Board members will have a chance to review the draft GNS 22-25 plan in late November/early December before it is finalized.
 - If there is interest from the Board to provide input into the plan before actions are finalized, please contact Laura MacPherson.

- New Minister
 - The Accessibility Directorate is working with Minister Brad Johns to brief him on the work of the Directorate and Board.

- Accessibility Act Review
 - Under the Accessibility Act, we are mandated to have an independent review of the legislation in 2021-22. Under the legislation, an independent reviewer should have been appointed by the Executive Council by September 18, 2021. The transition to a new government has caused a delay in the official appointment of the independent reviewer. This government is committed to improving accessibility in the province, and at the earliest opportunity, the appointment will be approved by Executive Council.

Rosalind Penfound thanked Dawn Stegen for these updates and invited questions or comments from the Board.

A Board member raised concerns regarding the Premier's message regarding vaccinations in light of a protest at Dr. Strang's house. The message was not accessible to Deaf/deaf people. It is crucial that the Premier ensures all of his messaging is accessible to all Nova Scotians. In the future, apps such as otter.ai could provide for high quality auto-transcription, which can be easily edited, for such unplanned communications.

Action: The Accessibility Directorate will follow up with the Premier's Office on the importance of accessible communications and offer support as needed.

A Board member also raised concerns with there being no mention of accessibility in Department of Justice Mandate Letter. It was noted that Mandate Letters do not always include all aspects of a department's work.

3. Accessibility Advisory Board

a. Standard Development Committees

i. Education

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, provided an update of the Education Standard Development Committee. Timelines to submit recommendations to the Board are slightly delayed; it was originally planned for March 2022 and now targeting May 2022.

Draft recommendations to come to the Board before going to consultation. The consultation will be targeted based on subject area (e.g. breaking apart Early Years from P-12 from universities and colleges).

ii. Built Environment

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Laurie Cranton, Chair of the Built Environment Standard Development Committee. Laurie noted that he is joining from out-of-province and noted numerous significant barriers that he experienced on his trip being a person with a disability, which highlights the importance of the work of the Board, the Directorate, and community in creating not only an accessible Nova Scotia but also an accessible Canada.

The Built Environment Standard Development Committee has completed its work. The standard recommendations are now with the Interdepartmental Working Group tasked with reviewing the recommendations and drafting the proposed regulations and guidelines.

iii. Employment

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst, and board member Andrew Jantzen, to present the Standard Development Committee membership recommendations to the Board.

Interim Executive Director Dawn Stegen has identified a conflict of interest with this file and has removed herself from the process and any reviews and discussions. As per the Accessibility Directorate process, all documents prior to today's Board meeting related to this file have been forwarded to the Accessibility Directorate Manager and not the Accessibility Directorate Interim Executive Director prior to inclusion in the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting package. Additionally, Dawn will now excuse herself from the next portion of the meeting as we review/discuss and approve these documents. Follow up and action will rest with Terri Lynn Almeda, Manager and Lashauna Smith.

Lashauna and Andrew presented the Employment SDC Membership Recommendations.

Motion: Andrew Jantzen moved to approve the recommendations for the Employment Standards Development Committee members as proposed by the review/selection sub-committee and to advance the Employment Standards Development Committee membership recommendations to the Minister of Justice for approval. Birgit Elssner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Fourth Standard Area: For approval

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Aver Maynard, Senior Policy Analyst to provide background and analysis for the fourth standard area. Avery Maynard's presentation included an overview of the research undertaken to inform the next standard, and anticipated outcomes.

A number of Board members expressed initial support for the Directorate's recommendation of Goods & Services as the fourth standard area to begin in 2022. The scope of this standard is expected to be far reaching and broad and include goods and services in many industries and sectors including healthcare. The former Board deferred recommending a fourth standard to the incoming Board.

Motion: The Board moved to recommend to Minister of Justice that Goods and Services be the fourth standard area to be developed, starting in 2022. Motion carried unanimously using the consensus decision-making model.

c. Awareness Campaign

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, reintroduced Avery Maynard, Senior Policy Analyst, to present information on the awareness campaign as a follow up on what was presented in November 2020 to the Board.

Awareness and Capacity Building is one of the six priorities outlined in Access by Design 2030. The Accessibility Awareness Campaign has been a collaborative project between the Directorate, Communications Nova Scotia, and the contracted marketing firm, Arrivals & Departures. Three campaign concepts were presented to the Board on November 17, 2020 and to Minister on November 23, 2020. Based on feedback, two concepts were chosen to progress to public concept testing. Public consultation on the two preferred concepts was conducted during December 2020 by Narrative Research. Three key stakeholder groups were engaged: Nova Scotians with disabilities, members of the public who did not self-identify as having a disability, and stakeholders from the business community. The stakeholder groups included participants from different genders, socio-economic backgrounds, and residents of different geographic areas across Nova Scotia. “Access Includes Everyone in Everyday Life” was supported by the stakeholders and approved by Minister as the preferred concept to proceed for creative development with minor modifications.

Avery Maynard presented the two draft advertisements, once without described video and once with described video. Staff reviewed next steps and timelines, and the Board is being asked to provide the Directorate with feedback on the creative content.

4. Board Priorities

a. Board Vacancies

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, updated the Board on its current vacancies. There are currently only nine members on the Board, with three vacancies. Previous direction was to save a seat for a member from a Mi'kmaq or Indigenous community when the current Board was selected. There was also one individual who declined their appointment to serve on the Board, which left the Board with ten members. Most recently, a member has moved out of province, leaving an additional vacancy.

As the new Minister gets acquainted to the work of the Board, the Board must continue to seek action on filling its three vacancies as soon as possible. The Board currently represents a broad range of diversity in terms of disability, age, geographical location; however, there is a lack of racial and ethnic diversity on the Board. The Board acknowledged that this is crucial to ensuring our work is reflective of all communities in Nova Scotia.

Motion: David Caswell moved to advise the Minister of Justice that the Accessibility Advisory Board is seeking action on filling the three vacancies on the Board and that the Board places top priority on having racial and ethnic diversity on the Board, including Mi'kmaq/Indigenous and African Nova Scotian/racially visible persons. Ellen Johnson seconded the motion.

b. COVID-19

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, presented a brief update on COVID-19 data for Nova Scotia as well as Nova Scotia's Reopening Plan.

Birgit Elssner suggested concerns with proof of vaccine presents challenges for some individuals with disabilities who are not able to or accustomed to carrying ID. Birigt Elssner also raised concerns about how caregivers/attendees handle proof of vaccination for persons with disabilities that they are caring for.

Other Board members expressed concerns about proof of vaccination if a photo ID is required, noting that individuals such as persons with disabilities, youth, and seniors who do not have a driver's licence and therefore do not carry a piece of photo ID on their person.

c. Roundtable Discussion

The Board held a roundtable discussion to allow Board members to raise questions, concerns, or insights that they might be hearing in their communities.

Board members shared back progress they are seeing in the community, including accessibility audits at universities and work completed to date to make Peggy's Cove more accessible.

Board members also shared concerns they're encountering including major impacts of COVID-19 on Deaf/deaf communities, poor sidewalk conditions in HRM preventing people from accessing sidewalks in wheelchairs, community members still struggling to access homecare, poor accessible transportation options in rural areas.

Another Board member discussed challenges with explaining to people the work of the Board and could benefit from laypersons terms to describe this work.

5. Adjournment

Rosalind Penfound adjourned the meeting. The next Board meeting will be held October 21, 2021.