

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 15, 2022 – 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Rosalind Penfound (Chair), David Caswell (Vice-Chair), Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Andrew Jantzen, Ellen Johnson, Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Anne Sinclair

Regrets: Cynthia Bruce

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Terri Lynn Almeda (Manager), Dustin Lyon, Maddi MacDonald, Laura Beth MacPherson, Lisa Jacobs, Amy Middleton, Lashauna Smith, Kristel vom Scheidt.

Guests: Deputy Catherine Berliner, Deputy Minister, Office of Equity and Anti-Racism. Christine Gibbons, Executive Director, Policy and Innovation, and Miranda Romkey, Policy Analyst, Office of Equity Anti-Racism. Maria Medioli, Executive Director, Disability Support Program, Department of Community Services.

1) Welcome

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

2) Board Operations

a) Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

b) Approval of Minutes from December 15, 2021 and January 20, 2022

Motion: The minutes for both December and January meetings were moved by Anne Sinclair to approve the minutes as circulated, Birgit Elssner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c) Outstanding Business and Directorate Updates

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, provided updates regarding outstanding business. Board motion regarding advice to Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH) on the accessibility grant programs was submitted to Minister's Office. Directorate met with CCTH about the accessibility grant programs and working collaboratively. The Education Standard Development Committee has revised the draft Phase 2 recommendations based on feedback from Accessibility Advisory Board. Board members are invited attend the upcoming consultation sessions. The Act Review website has been delayed and will be launched by the end of March. The Directorate has requested access and use of Otter.ai software. A recent information session organized by the Directorate saw attendance of over 110 prescribed public sector body representatives. Board vacancies should be addressed soon, and new Board members appointed in May.

3) Standards

a. Standard Development Committees (SDC)

i. Employment Update:

Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate provided an update on the Employment Standards Development Committee. Their first meeting will be held February 22, 2022 and focus on setting the context for their work, reviewing and approving their terms of reference and workplan. This SDC will also receive presentations on government policies, programs and services that relate to employment and an overview of legislation and regulations related to employment and accessibility.

A vendor has been hired for the first consultations on barriers to employment for people with disabilities with targeted focus groups to take place in March. The next meeting of the SDC is March 28, 2022 and the Committee will receive an update and results from the consultations.

Motion: To accept Cynthia Carroll's application to the Employment Standard Development Committee. Motion was moved by Marcie Shwery-Stanley and seconded by Birgit Elssner. Motion carried.

i. Education Update:

Rosalind Penfound Chair, Education Standard Development Committee provided an update on the consultations on the draft recommendations scheduled from February 28 to March 10. There are over 200 people registered. Input from these consultations will be considered by the SDC. Their next meeting will be held April 6, 2022.

b. Recommendations for Built Environment

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, gave an update on behalf of Maddi MacDonald. The Built Environment Government Interdepartmental Working Group continues to meet biweekly. This working group is reviewing the recommendations and developing the proposed built environment standard. By April 2022 they will be focused on the application of the standard, the proposed implementation plan and compliance and enforcement measures.

4) Business

a) Are You Ready Guide

Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate, provided an update on this guide to emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities and older adults. The final English, French and ASL versions of resource guide has been posted to the Accessibility Directorate's web site, although an official launch will take place in May 2022 during Emergency Preparedness Week. At this time the guide will be released more widely.

The Board asked if there would be hard copies available to be distributed. The Accessibility Directorate will ask stakeholders how many hard copies may be needed and will order in time for Emergency Preparedness Week.

b) Quarterly Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting

Lisa Jacobs, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate provided an update of ongoing monitoring of activities related to implementing the Access by Design 2030 strategy. Lisa shared the results of her analysis of the partnerships and collaborations data base. The presentation reviewed the number of partnerships and collaborations involving the Directorate. She noted the nature of the partnerships, how often and the types of organizations. Lisa explained why it is important to track this information each year.

The Board asked about privacy and whether the partnerships included projects done in collaboration with university researchers. Lisa confirmed that it does.

c) Proposed Equity and Anti-Racism Legislation

Deputy Minister for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism, Catherine Berliner provided an update on the work of the Office. Executive Director, Christine Gibbons and Policy Analyst, Miranda Romkey presented the details of the focus areas of proposed equity anti racism legislation.

How the public can provide feedback on the proposed legislation was reviewed.

Following the presentation there was time for questions and discussion. The Board asked for clarity regarding the scope of this legislation, including definition of terms. The Board has a question regarding how this work may intersect with the Accessibility Act and the accessibility obligations for Prescribed Public Sector Bodies. Discussion followed on intersectionality and the lack of diversity in ASL interpreting community.

Roz Penfound thanked Deputy Berliner for the presentation and her ongoing support.

d) Moving Towards Community Living and Progress and Plans Department of Community Services

Maria Medioli, Executive Director, Disability Support Program, Department of Community Services gave an update on the transformation road map, the Disability Support Program community transitions, and other projects in progress.

The Board asked about information on the accessibility of existing small options homes, availability of funding for participants who are living in the community and how the Department of Community Services is collaborating with the Department of Health and Wellness on supports needed for personal and medical care. The waitlist for individuals transitioning out of homes was discussed.

Rosalind Penfound thanked Maria Medioli for the information provided.

5) Board Priorities

a. COVID-19

Maddi MacDonald, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate provided an update on COVID-19 activities including:

- Access to schoolwork for students and families vulnerable to severe illness from COVID.

- Enhanced public health measures in school settings include the Test to Protect program which provides access to rapid tests at home.

- Student Services available to students to support their learning and redeployment of regional staff to assist classrooms on a short-term basis.

- The urgent need for Continuing Care Assistants in Long-term Care and Acute Care across the province and the 23% pay increase for Continuing Care Assistants.

Maddi shared research from the Canadian Medical Association Journal, January 2022. Patients under 65 with traumatic brain injury, intellectual or developmental disabilities, and multiple disabilities were most at risk of severe illness with COVID. They also found that patients with disabilities spent an average of 36% longer in the

hospital than those without a disability and were 77% more likely to be readmitted within 30 days of their first hospitalization.

Knowing that COVID continues to disproportionately impact persons with disabilities, the Accessibility Directorate will be following up with disability organizations in the coming weeks to learn more about how COVID is impacting organizations and their clients.

The Board discussed support for agencies recruiting continuing care assistants, and the need to pay personal care assistants better.

ACTION: Accessibility Directorate will look into personal care support worker and report back to the Board.

b. Accessible Housing

Rosalind Penfound provided information on the independent Human Rights board of inquiry in the matter of the Disability Rights Coalition's case against the Province of Nova Scotia. This is a newly constituted board of inquiry following a decision by the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. The hearings begin on February 16, 2022 and are open to the public.

Following discussion on recent government announcements related to progress related to the affordable housing recommendations, the Board expressed interest in having further information on how accessibility is being considered as these recommendations are advanced.

ACTION: Invite Deputy LaFleche to an upcoming Board meeting.

6. Adjournment

Rosalind Penfound adjourned the meeting. Next meeting will be on March 24, 2022.