

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Summary

Tuesday, August 18, 2020 – 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, Kevin Russell, Anne Sinclair, Marcie Shwery-Stanley

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

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Gerry Post (Strategic Advisor), Terri Lynn Almeda, Amy Middleton, Caroline Read Kendell, Jenny Sears, Carla Bezanson, Avery Maynard, Laura Beth MacPherson, Lisa Jacobs

1. Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda.

b. Approval of Minutes from July 28 Meeting

Motion: Cynthia Bruce moved to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2020, meeting. David Caswell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Approval of Minutes from July 30 Meeting

Motion: Cynthia Bruce moved to approve the minutes of the July 30, 2020, meeting. David Caswell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

d. Review of Minutes from August 7 email meeting

Motion: Marcie Shwery-Stanley moved to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2020, email meeting, as amended. Cynthia Bruce seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

e. Outstanding Business

Dawn Stegen, Accessibility Directorate, provided updates regarding outstanding business from the June 11, 2020, meeting, including: the Deputy and Associate Deputy Ministers, Department of Justice, attending an upcoming meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Board; and, follow up from the motion regarding stimulus funding. The Accessibility Directorate is meeting with government departments to discuss stimulus funding as it relates to current and future funding streams.

Action: Accessibility Directorate to provide the Board with background information from the stimulus funding Briefing Note.

3. Standards Development

a. Debrief process used July 28 & July 30th

Rosalind Penfound, Vice-Chair, led a discussion about the decision-making and voting processes used at the July 2020 meetings related to approving draft education and built environment standard recommendations. The Board discussed that the consensus decision-making model supports a gradient of responses. The Board expressed concern regarding the use of email as a method of voting because it does not facilitate adequate discussion.

Decision: The Accessibility Advisory Board will not use email meetings to vote on issues or motions unless an urgent decision is needed.

b. Built Environment Standard Development Committee update

Laurie Cranton, Chair, Built Environment, Standards Development Committee, provided an update. The Committee met on August 10, 2020, to review the Board's feedback on the recommendations. The Committee appreciated the Board's feedback and noted that the suggested amendments will strengthen Phase 1 recommendations and inform Phase 2 of standard recommendations development. Laurie Cranton responded to questions and clarified that the recommendations will not apply to single family dwellings. Phase 2 is starting in September 2020. Six subcommittees will develop recommendations that will be reviewed and revised by the Committee in the winter. Public consultations are planned for Spring 2021.

4. Accessibility Advisory Board

a. Recruitment and Promotion

Dawn Stegen and Lisa Jacobs, Accessibility Directorate, provided an overview of the communications plan to promote applications to serve on the Accessibility Advisory Board. Email notices have been widely circulated through various government, community and other networks, including networks of persons from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

Board members identified accessibility barriers in the application process, including the short timelines and the need for an ASL video specific to the Accessibility Advisory Board to ensure members of the Deaf community are fully aware of the opportunity.

The Board discussed the language regarding persons with disabilities used in communications materials, including "persons with disabilities" and "persons with disabilities, Deaf, and neurodivergent". The Board's perspectives on the use of "persons with disabilities, Deaf, and neurodivergent" varied, ranging from being potentially divisive to reflecting the diversity of the disability communities. Gerry Post, Accessibility Directorate, noted that "persons with disabilities" is the language used in the Accessibility Act and recommended having a legal opinion to ensure barriers are not created. The Board appreciated the discussion and agreed to continue it at a future meeting. The Board agreed that for the purposes of promoting applications to serve on the Board, broad language should be used.

Motion: Barry Abbot moved that the Accessibility Advisory Board recruitment materials do not go out without an ASL video. Cynthia Bruce seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Action: The Accessibility Directorate will use the following language in communication materials for promotion of applications to the Board: “persons with disabilities, Deaf, and/or neurodivergent”.

Action: The Accessibility Directorate will seek legal opinion to determine whether the use of the phrase “persons with disabilities, Deaf, and/or neurodivergent” will create accessibility barriers.

Action: The Accessibility Directorate will work with the Executive Council Office to strengthen their capacity to make the Agency, Board and Commission application processes and timeframes accessible.

b. 2020-2021 AAB Work Plan and Priorities

Dawn Stegen and Lisa Jacobs, Accessibility Directorate, presented a draft tool that the Board can use to prioritize work plan items. The Board had no questions on the tool. The list of potential action items needs to be reviewed by Board members to ensure they are still relevant. An updated tool will be sent to Board members to complete and results will be used at the September Board meeting to inform a priority setting discussion.

Action: The Accessibility Directorate will send Board members the summary of potential work items to provide feedback on. The Accessibility Directorate will use this feedback to update the tool, which will be sent back to Board members to complete prior to the September board meeting.

c. Wrongdoing Policy

Lisa Jacobs, Accessibility Directorate, presented on the *Nova Scotia Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* and implications for the Board. The Board Chair, Doug Foster, is the designated officer for the Board. The Board had no questions.

5. Accessibility Directorate Update

a. Awareness Campaign

Rosalind Penfound, Vice-Chair, and Dawn Stegen, Accessibility Directorate, thanked the Board for their feedback on the awareness campaign. Four Board members participated in additional interviews, and a summary of the feedback and updates to the strategy will be presented at the September Board meeting. Board input and First Voice will continue to be a focus in developing and creating the campaign materials. The Board had no questions.

b. Public Sector Bodies

Dawn Stegen, Accessibility Directorate, provided an update on requests received from prescribed public sector bodies to the Minister of Justice to consider changing the timelines to establish accessibility advisory committees and accessibility plans because of the impact of the coronavirus on their planning and operations. The Accessibility Directorate contacted public sector bodies for status updates on their work and their preferences for extensions. While many are continuing to advance their work, the majority indicated a preference for a one-year extension. A Board member requested a copy of the questions for review. The Accessibility Directorate will be providing recommendations to the Minister and will continue to support public sector bodies in their accessibility work.

Action: Accessibility Directorate will send a copy of the survey questions to the Board member who requested them.

6. Other Business

Rosalind Penfound, Vice-Chair, noted that the Interim Accessibility Directorate Executive Director now reports directly to the Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Justice, and serves on the Department of Justice Senior Executive Team.

7. Next Meeting

Rosalind Penfound, Vice-Chair, confirmed that the next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 15, 2020.

8. Adjournment