

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Friday, October 18, 2024 – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Virtual

Board Members: Max Chauvin (Chair), Melissa MacKenzie, Earl Muise, Linda Campbell, Louise Gillis (via Zoom), Sarah Moore, Ellen Johnson (Vice-Chair), Rob Patey, Denise Pictou Maloney

Regrets: Birgit Elssner, Shellene Sparks, Amy Lays

Staff: Dawn Stegen, Amy Middleton, Sumona Sunda, Terri Lynn Almeda, Ashley Gaudet, Hannah MacDougall and Jenny Thornhill.

Guests: Sherri Aikenhead, Board Coordinator, Travis Gunn, Chair of the Goods and Standard Development Committee (SDC) and Lianne Sarson, Thinkwell Research.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Max Chauvin welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting and invited Dawn Stegen, Executive Director of the Accessibility Directorate, to remind participants about the meeting protocols and introduced staff.

Dawn:

We have CART captioners and ASL interpreters in the meeting, please ensure you are speaking clearly and take the time to pause. The ASL interpreters may seek clarification from time to time from whomever is speaking and signing. Their role is to ensure that each person is understood, interpreted and has the information being shared and discussed.

- Mute microphone when not speaking
- Say your name before speaking.
- If necessary, please change your name on Zoom so your full name is showing.
- Ensure your video is on when speaking
- If you have any questions or comments signal with the “hand up” feature or an old fashioned “hand up”
- We encourage you to also use the chat function to ask questions, make comments etc.

Dawn welcomed staff members Amy Middleton, Sumona Sunda, Terri Lynn Almeda, Ashley Gaudet, Hannah MacDougall and new staff member Jenny Thornhill, Sr. Policy Analyst – providing support to both Goods and Services and Information and Communications SDCs.

Max shared a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. He then brought regrets from Birgit Elssner, Shellene Sparks, Amy Lays.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The agenda as previously circulated was accepted.

b. Outstanding Board Business and Directorate Updates

Dawn told members a compliance manager is being hired. She recognized the board members who volunteered to work on a communications plan and noted a survey will be sent to board members to identify communication methods currently being used to inform the committee. A second survey will go out to board members for feedback on the Atlantica Hotel where the in-person meeting was held September 27. The board's annual report is being drafted and will be brought back for approval later this fall. The two guides to planning accessible meetings and events have been circulated within government departments and sharing these resources is encouraged.

3. Business:

a. Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2025-2028

Max welcomed Hannah MacDougall to provide an update on progress. She said all government departments are working collaboratively to develop the updated plan. A member said she hopes there will be more resources put towards hiring interpreters for government.

b. Consultations Goods and Services Recommendations

Max thanked Lisa Snider who served as the Chair of the Goods and Services Development Committee since it began in 2023. He informed the board Lisa had submitted her resignation effective October 6. Vice-chair Travis Gunn will take on the role as chair of the committee effective immediately.

Max and Ellen Johnson nominated John Smith, a member of the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee, as the new Vice-chair of the Goods and Services SDC.

A motion to recommend John Smith was put forward by a board member, seconded and unanimously approved.

Action: The board will submit this recommendation to the Minister for approval.

Max welcomed Lianne Sarson from Thinkwell Research to lead a consultation on the draft recommendations for an accessibility standard for Goods and Services. The board was given the materials ahead to review. Lianne was joined by Amy Middleton and Jenny Thornhill from the Directorate as well as the new SDC Chair, Travis Gunn.

A discussion followed including suggestions to include requirements for the Deafblind community around certain types of communication and emergency situations for services and the need for deaf interpreters.

3.d Roundtable:

Max asked board members to prioritize items in the updated workplan for 2024-2025. A member asked about the status of the working group on housing that was identified in Government's Response to the Accessibility Act Review. Dawn Stegen noted this commitment is scheduled to be actioned in 2025-26. The Directorate will work with the board to establish a built environment housing working group that will look at initiatives designed to increase accessible housing availability and affordability.

Another member noted the new board website, increasing communications and engagement, and finalizing the recommendations for a Goods and Service Standard were their priorities.

Dr. Linda Campbell shared her recent experience at Gallaudet University which was a celebration for deaf and Indigenous community members.

Max adjourned the meeting.