

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes  
September 27, 2024 – 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
In-Person Meeting**

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**Board Members:** Max Chauvin (Chair), Birgit Elssner, Melissa MacKenzie, Earl Muise, Linda Campbell, Amy Lays, Louise Gillis (via Zoom), Sarah Moore, Shellene Sparks, Ellen Johnson (Vice-Chair), Rob Patey

**Regrets:** Denise Pictou Maloney

**Staff:** Dawn Stegen, Kristel vom Scheidt, Amy Middleton, Ashley Gaudet, Sumona Sonda, Terri Lynn Almeda, Maddi Adams (via Zoom) Megan Murphy (via Zoom)

**Guests:** Sherri Aikenhead, board coordinator, Maria Medioli, Executive Director of the Disability Support Program and Remedy, Department of Community Services, Megan Melanson, Deloitte, Vicki Harvey, project manager and Amanda Alexander, interim Executive Director, Autism Nova Scotia, Travis Gunn, Vice Chair of the Goods and Standard Development Committee and Lianne Sarson, Thinkwell Research.

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Max Chauvin welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced new member Rob Patey. He then recognized the ASL interpreters and captioners.

Max then opened with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. Max noted that Oct. 1 is the start of Mi'kmaw History Month, International Day of Sign Language, National Gender Equality Week and that Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. October is also the start of Disability Employment Awareness Month.

A member recommended how to communicate at the meeting so that interpreters can capture full conversation and to be inclusive.

## **2. Board Operations**

### **a. Review of Agenda**

The agenda as previously circulated was accepted.

**b.** Max asked for approval of Minutes from the May 1 and June 21 meetings. Two typos were corrected. He then called for a motion to approve. *“Motion that the minutes of the May 16<sup>th</sup> and June 21<sup>st</sup> Accessibility Advisory Board meetings be approved as presented.”*

### **c. Outstanding Board Business and Directorate Updates**

Dawn noted that as part of the annual workplan, the board requested today's presentation on the Remedy. Planning is also underway to hold a panel with Prescribed Public Sector Bodies (PPSB) as requested. Government's 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan is in development and the board will receive an update at an upcoming meeting. An update to the Access by Design 2030 framework is also underway.

Dawn spoke about the *Accessibility Foundation Workshop* that is being held this fall. Information was circulated following the meeting. The Accessibility Directorate shared support tools and resources to help PPSBs update their plans. Invest Nova Scotia, Build Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency are now prescribed under the Accessibility Act general regulations. And finally, the Directorate filled two vacant permanent positions for senior policy analysts.

### **3. Business:**

#### **a. Remedy Update Presentation**

Maria Medioli, an Executive Director of the Disability Support Program and Remedy, with the Department of Community Services, gave the board an overview of the Human Rights Remedy, including the human rights case and the four areas addressed: unnecessary institutionalization, right to assistance, denial of community of choice, and delays in assistance.

Government launched a Human Rights Remedy website with its five-year plan to remedy the discrimination, including individualized planning and support, access to individualized funding, and community capacity building. There are community living facilitators and regional hubs in supporting individuals transitioning out of institutions.

A board member asked how the plan will be monitored. Maria explained that there is a requirement for reporting and external evaluations. Other board members spoke about the importance of community engagement with municipalities.

#### **b. Board Letters to Justice Minister**

Max thanked the board members who worked on a letter to the Justice Minister voicing the board's desire to see the Built Environment Standard be approved and the Nova Scotia Building Code amendments be adopted. He was pleased to see the government's announcement that the Building Code changes will come into effect April 2025.

The chair circulated other draft correspondence and sought input before finalizing.

#### **d. DOJ Police Review Engagement Session**

Max welcomed Megan Melanson, a consultant from Deloitte, to lead an engagement session on behalf of the Department of Justice which is conducting a review of police services.

The board members responded to questions posed by Megan. Overall members said they felt safe in their community. They discussed how homeless people may be fearful of police based on a previous encounter. Some members shared specific incidents that concerned them.

Members raised communication barriers that people with disabilities face with police and the need for more mental health training for officers.

Members have seen some improvements in police services over the years, yet people are hesitant to call the police and relationship building and an accessible educational video on what to expect may be helpful.

#### **4. a. Nova Scotia Autism Action Plan**

The board received a presentation on the Autism Action Plan being developed from Vicki Harvey, project manager, and Amanda Alexander, the interim Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia has 32,000 people with autism, one of the highest rates in the country. They are leading the development of an action plan that focuses on services and support for individuals. People with autism are part of the advisory group and work began in May 2024 and the final action plan and implementation plan is due in summer 2025.

**Action Arising:** Members asked for information on the autism consultations underway including a public survey that they would share with their own networks.

#### **b. Standards Update Goods and Services**

Max welcomed Travis Gunn, Vice-chair of the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee and Leanne Sarson, a consultant from Thinkwell Research. Feedback on the proposed draft recommendations for a goods and services standard is underway. The consultation involves:

- Persons with Disabilities and Deaf persons
- Service Providers (Business, non-profit, community and public sectors)
- Prescribed Public Sector Bodies
- Organizations that work with persons with disabilities
- Families, friends, support persons of persons with disabilities
- Other Nova Scotians with an interest in accessible service delivery

Input from these sessions will be taken into account by the SDC as it finalizes the recommendations for the board. The board will participate in a consultation session in October.

**c. Education Standard:**

Max welcomed Megan Murphy, Sr. Policy Analyst, to provide an update. Megan said the Presidents of the Universities and NSCC received an update on the development of an education accessibility standard. The goal is to have the proposed standard ready in winter 2025 and make it public for comment in Spring 2025.

**d. Employment Standard:**

Max welcomed Amy Middleton to provide an update. The Minister of Justice may make the board's recommendations public in October during Disability Employment Awareness month. Once confirmed the Directorate is advise the board.

**e. Built Environment Standard:**

Max invited Maddi Adams to provide an update. Maddi noted the government announced the new accessibility requirements in the N.S. Building Code will come into effect April 1, 2025. All new and renovated buildings will be required to meet the new code requirements. The standard regulations under the Accessibility Act have been advanced for approval to be enacted.

**e. Public Transportation Standard:**

Max invited Ellen Johnson, Vice Chair of the Board and the Public Transportation Development Committee to provide an update. Ellen said the 22 new committee members met for an orientation session. They represent a range of disability types, as well as organizations that have expertise in the area, and that will likely be impacted by a transportation standard. They meet in October to review the draft workplan and learn about the current state of accessible public transportation in Nova Scotia. A full day in person meeting is planned for November to identify the accessibility barriers in public transportation.

**g. Information and Communication:**

Max welcomed Jeff Overmars, the new Chair of the Information and Communication Standard Development Committee and Board member Dr. Linda Campbell, as Vice-Chair of the committee. The committee's orientation meeting is being planned for November.

**h. Website Update:**

Max asked Kristel vom Scheidt to give a short update on the development and timelines for a new website for the board. She said the test site is almost ready and the board members who have been working on the development of the website have

provided good feedback. Kristel confirmed there will be a link to the *Access Includes Everyone* website and the *Accessibility Directorate* website and a description as to what information you can find by going to both sites. Birgit Elssner said the website is a good way to introduce the board and members to the public as well as showcase the work of the board.

### **Communications Plan Discussion:**

Max welcomed Sherri Aikenhead, acting board coordinator, to lead a discussion on what to consider when developing a board communications and awareness plan. Terri Lynn Almeda joined her to speak to upcoming education and awareness resources and plans available from the Accessibility Directorate.

Board members discussed who they want to communicate with, how to identify a target audience, and what they want to share. They agreed the new board website when it launches is a good starting point. Members discussed the importance of social media as well as traditional methods. Members were given memory sticks with links to existing resources and key messages to share while the website is still being developed.

**Action Arising:** Max asked members to form an ad-hoc working group to bring back recommendations on next steps for rolling out a board communication plan in 2025. Members Rob Patey, Shellene Sparks, Sarah Moore offered to meet to undertake the work.

### **5.Roundtable:**

Max congratulated member Sarah Moore for her appointment to the Accessibility Standards Canada Board. He then asked member Earl Muisse to share advice he gave to the government review committee looking to improve accessibility when Nova Scotians apply to Agencies, Boards and Commissions.

### **6.Adjournment:**

Max thanked everyone for the great participation in the in-person meeting and the meet and greet time during the board dinner the previous night. He asked board members if they agree to a November meeting.

### **Action Arising:**

An additional November meeting will be held.