

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 21, 2023 – 9:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
In person: Four Points Sheraton Conference Centre

Max Chauvin (Acting Chair), Denise DiGiosia, Birgit Elssner, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair, Melissa MacKenzie, Earl Muise, Lewis Pope

Regrets: Rosalind Penfound (Chair), Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Linda Campbell

Guests: Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Erica Fleck, Director of Emergency Management, Halifax Regional Municipality

Staff: Terri Lynn Almeda, Dawn Stegen, Kristel vom Scheidt, Jordan Keddy, Cris Adams, Fola Adeleke, Maddi Adams, Hannah MacDougall, Amy Middleton, Lashauna Smith

1. Welcome

Max Chauvin, Vice Chair, served as Acting Chair for the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. He noted September 21 is the International Day of Peace, September 23 is International Day of Sign Languages, the last week of September is National Gender Equality week, and September 30 is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Max referenced the recent losses to the disability community with the passing of Steve Esty and Jen Powley. He identified them both as advocates, friends, colleagues, and individual leaders, crediting their contributions as setting the foundation for the work the Board is doing today.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

Max noted one change to the agenda for item 3b.i: Employment SDC Update. He explained that instead of SDC Chair Charlie MacDonald, it will be Lashauna Smith giving the update.

One Board member asked if there would be time to discuss the updated workplan that was included in the meeting materials. Max responded to say there would be time in the roundtable discussion. The amended agenda was accepted.

b. Approval of Minutes from July 6 and 13

Motion: A motion to accept the circulated July 6 and 13, 2023 meeting minutes was moved by Melissa MacKenzie and seconded by Birgit Elssner.

c. Outstanding Business

Dawn Stegen gave an update on outstanding items from previous meetings including the letter on behalf of the Board in response to the work action of school support staff that occurred earlier this year, in support of the Education Council on Disability, Inclusion and Accessibility. Roz wanted the Board to know a letter has been delayed until after the Chair of the Council meets with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Dawn confirmed that the changes to the Terms of Reference for the Goods and Services SDC that was approved by email vote in September 2023 has gone to the Minister for approval.

Regarding upcoming Board vacancies as of February 2024, Dawn confirmed that Board Chair, Roz Penfound sent a letter to Minister.

Dawn connected with the Department of Community Services and has received confirmation that the public website on Human Rights Remedy website is delayed and will be posted later this year or early 2024.

For staffing updates, she announced Laura Beth MacPherson as the new Manager of Programs and Services, and Meghan Murphy is the new Senior Policy Analyst who will be joining the staff in October to lead the Education Standard work. Ongoing vacancies to be filled are a new Compliance Officer, Senior Policy Analyst, two Program Administration Officers, and a two-year Youth Intern position.

Dawn reported that the Directorate has received the completed Accessibility Plan from the Halifax Regional Centre for Education and the Conseil Scolaire Acadian Provincial.

A question from the Board was posed about the proposed tracking and reporting tool for PPSB's and when will it be completed. Dawn responded to say that due to staff capacity this has been delayed until spring 2024. Amy Middleton, Director of Policy and Standards did refer the Board to the Post Secondary Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which could be referenced by other PPSB's for support.

Dawn also reported on a webinar that was recently hosted by the Directorate on Emergency Preparedness and well attended by PPSB's. There was a question about this webinar covering information on preparing for storms, such as hurricanes and the response was yes, it focused on support for people with disabilities in all emergency situations.

ACTION: A link to the Are You Ready Guide and recording of the webinar will be sent by email.

There was a comment from the Board on the amount of work that is currently taking place, although the public may not be aware.

Finally, Dawn shared a newly completed video for the *Access Includes Everyone* campaign that was filmed at Pomquet Beach Provincial Park.

3. Standards

a. Education Standard: Update

Amy Middleton, Director of Policy and Standards explained that work is happening at the interdepartmental level to collaboratively review the recommendations, and a project manager will be hired, similar to what happened with the Built Environment recommendations to support this process.

b. Standard Development Committee

i. Employment: Update

Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst reviewed the work to date by the SDC and an overview of the consultation plan including target audiences. These groups will be contacted via email to participate in virtual sessions that will take place in November and early December. There will also be an online survey with questions specific to target audiences and an invitation for written submissions. In addition, government departments with responsibilities related to the standard area will also be consulted with directly.

The Board asked if a plain language version of the draft recommendations will be available and Lashauna responded to say that individuals will be able to request these in “alternate formats”, including plain language.

Another Board member commented on the timelines and wondered if written feedback could be received later in December. The Board also asked when they will be able to review the draft recommendations, Lashauna responded that these will be sent in advance of the November 30 Board meeting.

The Board also suggested that consultations reach out to people who are unemployed or persistently unemployed due to their disability. Lashauna responded that this could be included in the online survey.

ii. Goods and Services: Update

Lisa Snider, Chair of the new Goods and Services SDC gave an update that they have met for an orientation session in June and will have their first full meeting at

the end of the month to review their workplan. The SDC's workplan will then be submitted to the Board for approval.

iii. Public Transportation: Decision Terms of Reference

Fola Adeleke, Senior Policy Analyst gave a summary of the research that has been completed to inform the scope of this standard area and priorities. He gave an overview of the Terms of Reference, specifically the differences and similarities to Goods and Services.

There was a question from the Board if the scope will include transportation providers such as Uber or rental car companies. Fola responded to say Uber could potentially be covered under "private taxis", but the standard would not include rental vehicles, because the Act specifies "public transportation".

Another question to inquire if public sector organizations that hire private companies for transportation would be included in the scope of the standard. Fola responded to say that if rural transportation is outsourced and funded by government this would be covered in the scope, but a more detailed list is included in the Term of Reference.

Motion: The Accessibility Advisory Board approve the Terms of Reference for the Public Transportation Standard Development Committee, as presented, and the Terms of Reference be advanced to the Minister of Justice for approval.

Motion was moved by Ellen Johnson and seconded by Birgit Elssner. The motion passed unanimously.

Fola explained that the next steps would be begin recruitment for this SDC before the end of the year using the updated SDC recruitment and selection processes and documents that will be discussed next with a call for members to go out in early 2024.

c. SDC Recruitment Review: Decision

Kristel vom Scheidt, Policy Analyst gave an overview of the work that a subcommittee of the Board completed this summer to review the recruitment processes and documents used for past SDC's. She reviewed proposed changes to the SDC application form, scoring tool, a process document as well as a draft communications plan for promoting future SDC opportunities.

A comment came from the Board about the use of the term "lived expertise" rather than "lived experience" with a suggestion that this is being used more widely and translates into First Voice principles of nothing about us without us. There was a

subsequent discussion regarding if “lived expertise” is considered plain language or if some people with disabilities may not consider their experience as “expertise”.

Motion: The Accessibility Advisory Board will adopt and use the revised SDC Membership Application Form, Scoring Tool, and SDC Application Review, Scoring and Approval Process for use with future SDCs. The Board will adopt and use the SDC Recruitment and Communications Plan as a guiding document to inform decisions about communicating SDC member opportunities.

Motion was moved by Birgit Elssner and seconded by Earl Musie. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Built Environment Standard

Maddi Adams, Senior Policy Analyst gave an update on a meeting that was held with the Board and Built Environment SDC on August 31st regarding the public release of the proposed standard. This information will be out for public review until October 30 through the online platform.

The board discussed their feedback on the proposed standard specifically in regard to gaps or strengths.

The Board also are interested in having further discussions on the recommendations that were not accepted and the intention behind these being proposed as non-regulatory policies and guidelines. The Board commented that some recommendations that were removed or changed, such as colour contrast leave gaps in the standard.

There were questions on what happens next with the feedback from the public. Maddi responded to say this will be shared with the Board later in the fall. They reminded members that feedback could be submitted collectively, as a board, and individually.

4a. Halifax Regional Municipality Accessibility Plan

Max introduced Melissa Myers, the Accessibility Advisor from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for the Halifax Regional Municipality. Melissa gave an overview on initiatives taking place in Halifax, including their Accessibility Strategy, annual reporting, the internal task force leading this work, and an upcoming review and plans to update the strategy.

The Board had a question about the training Melissa referenced and if it was available to the public. She responded to say it was developed specifically for Municipal staff.

Another question was regarding the process of getting approval for the Accessibility Strategy and financial resources through Municipal Council.

One member asked how Melissa's position was viewed when it was created and if it has changed. She responded to say that she has adapted her priorities based on the current situations and is looking forward to support from the province once the accessibility standards are enacted.

Melissa was thanked by Board members for all the work she has done within Halifax, and as a resource to other municipalities.

4b. Halifax Regional Municipality Vulnerable Persons Registry

Max introduced Erica Fleck, Director of Emergency Management for the Halifax Regional Municipality. Erica gave an overview of the work being done to establish a vulnerable person's registry. Erica explained there she is part of a new business unit in the Municipality that is responsible for community safety, which includes emergency management, homelessness, social policy, public safety, and bylaw enforcement. She explained that they completed a scan of other jurisdictions in Canada regarding vulnerable persons registries and are learning as they go and adapting to support local communities. Erica explained that the registry is available to any resident that does not have 24-hour support and experiences severe difficulty with mobility, vision, hearing, developmental/cognitive disabilities, mental health conditions and those who require electricity for life sustaining equipment.

Erica explained that individuals themselves or family members can request someone be added to the online or through the 311 municipal information line. She explained there is screening process to confirm eligibility, and a note added for 911 at the address with a bi-annual check-in to validate the list. The registry software was built internally and there are plans to adapt it into a mobile application.

The Municipality is starting to advertise this registry publicly in the immediate future and a hazard, risk and vulnerability assessment will be completed with climate and public health data, to map gaps in services and determine the severity and type of risk that exists.

Erica explained some of the biggest challenges are lack of cell phone service in some rural areas of the municipality. There was an opportunity for the Board to ask questions.

4c. Act Review Recommendations

Max welcome Terri Lynn Almeda, Director of Program and Services and Jordan Keddy, Junior Policy Analyst to continue to lead the Board's response to the Act Review Report.

Max reminded Board members they have given input and feedback to help shape the response to the recommendations and have decided to send a letter of advice to the Minister. Terri Lynn referred to this draft letter that was included in the meeting materials and reviewed their past discussion, including through a smaller Board working group.

There was discussion about raising this letter with the Minister at the next meeting he attends, and this could be an opportunity to highlight priority issues.

The Board suggested they also submit a companion document that provides a background for the Minister on more details on their work to date and plans to connect with other government departments.

Earl Muise moved to accept the Board's letter of advice to the Minister, Ellen Johnson seconded, motion passed unanimously.

4d. Roundtable

Max opened up the floor to ask members if there are issues to discuss or follow up on from the presentations earlier. He begun the conversation on the next steps to connect on feedback with the Build Environment SDC. He said members will receive a calendar appointment in the next few weeks to have a collective conversation with this group and share comparison chart in advance.

A Board member raised the idea of writing to advise the Minister on the Halifax Regional Municipality's Vulnerable Persons Registry and ask for more information on a collaboration with the provincial Emergency Management Office.

Motion:

The Accessibility Advisory Board will write a letter to advise the Minister on the role of the provincial government in supporting municipal vulnerable persons registries.

The motion was moved by Earl Muise and seconded by Birgit Elssner, motion passed unanimously.

The updated workplan was discussed. The addition of the Board consultation on the draft recommendations developed by the Employment SDC was explained. The Board also expressed a desire to learn more about the accessibility challenges in indigenous communities.

Several Board commented on enjoying meeting in person and the productivity of the discussions and would like to ensure this continues a few times next year.

5c Adjournment

Max thanked all members for their time and contributions and reminded them that the next meeting will be on Zoom in October.