

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, December 15, 2022 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

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Rosalind Penfound (Chair), David Caswell (Vice-Chair), Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair, Lewis Pope, Max Chauvin, Melissa MacKenzie

Regrets: Denise DiGiosia, Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Guests: Eric Hemphill, Project Director Strategic Health Partnerships and Shelby Riley, Social Work Student from the Department of Health and Wellness. Cynthia Bruce, Vice-Chair, Education Standard Development Committee. Ashely Campbell, Saint Mary's University Staff Interpreting Services Manger and Lisa Anderson, Deaf Professional and accessibility consultant.

Staff: Terri-Lynn Almeda (Manager), Hannah MacDougall, Amy Middleton, Jasmine Smart, Avery Maynard, Maddi Adams, Fola Adeleke, Kristel vom Scheidt

## **1. Welcome**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. She welcomed the new board members to their first virtual meeting and reviewed meeting protocols.

## **2. Board Operations**

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

The agenda as previously circulated was accepted.

### **b. Approval of Minutes from November 17, 2022**

Motion: The minutes from November were moved by Max Chauvin and seconded by Birgit Elssner. Motion carried unanimously.

### **c. Outstanding Business**

Terri Lynn Almeda, Manager provided an update that the second Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2022 to 2025), has been approved and will be publicly released on December 19, 2022. The press release will be provided to board members prior to public release and the board will receive a presentation on the implementing plan at the February meeting.

This approval will also convert the seven term positions at the Directorate to permanent, starting April 2023 with a total of 14 permanent positions.

Terri Lynn also shared a staffing update that Fola Adeleke has joined the Accessibility Directorate team as a Senior Policy Analyst, part time 40% and his work will include preliminary work on the 5<sup>th</sup> standard area, accessible housing, and accessible washrooms in restaurants.

Terri Lynn reported that the findings from the COVID-19 outreach that the Directorate did earlier in the year with disability organizations is now being shared across government and then will be shared back to the community in 2023.

The board's work plan for 2023-24 will be shared for input and review prior to the next meeting for comments and feedback.

She reported that staff are in the process of following up with all Cohort 1 PPSB's who have not completed their accessibility plans, and since November three more plans have been received for review.

At the November meeting interest was expressed in a comparison chart for built environment recommendations and proposed standard. When we advance the proposed standard for the built environment for approval to make public for feedback is when we will seek direction on information and documents that we share with the board and others.

### **3. Standards**

#### **a. Built Environment Standard: Update**

Maddi Adams, Senior Policy Analyst provided an update on the Built Environment Standard. Maddi reported that the Interdepartmental Working Group is continuing its work to draft an implementation plan for the proposed Built Environment standard. The plan will also outline education and awareness materials that are needed for the standard. The final draft standard and implementation plan will be advanced to the Minister in 2023. They also reminded the board that the final draft of the proposed standard will be shared as soon as it is approved for posting publically.

#### **b. Standard Development Committees**

##### **i. Employment: Update**

Kristel vom Scheidt, Policy Analyst provided the update on the Employment Standard Development Committee, saying that the full Committee has not met since November, but seven subgroups continue to meet and advance work in their focus areas.

## ii. Goods and Services: Update

Avery Maynard, Senior Policy Analyst provided an update that deadline to apply to the Goods and Services Standard Development committee has been extended to January 13, 2023. There has been internal government outreach, direct communication with community organizations, as well as a promotion on social media. Avery expressed appreciation for the board's assistance with sharing the recruitment materials. She also thanked the board members who have agreed to be part of the selection sub-group for the committee.

## c. Education Standard Recommendations: Decision

Amy Middleton, Senior Policy Analyst and Cynthia Bruce, Vice-Chair of the Education Standard Development Committee reviewed the feedback that was received at the November meeting on the draft recommendations and the process they used to address the questions and comments from board members. Amy specifically provided an overview of edits to the draft recommendations.

Cynthia explained that they will be seeking a decision on advancing the Education Standard Recommendations to the Minister.

There was a question about the inclusion of Deaf-blind individuals in the definition of disability in the draft recommendations. Cynthia responded, sharing that "Deaf" is inclusive to all aspects of Deaf culture. Another board member agreed saying that all groups within Deaf have experienced some level of language deprivation.

Amy then reviewed the consensus decision making model and Roz surveyed all board members to approve the draft recommendations.

**Motion:** To accept the recommendations submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Board by the Education Standard Development Committee, with amendments, as discussed at the November and December Board meetings, and submit the recommendations to the Minister of Justice.

Motion was moved by Anne Sinclair, seconded by Max Chauvin. The motion is passed.

Roz explained that the next steps are a submission to the Minister of Justice on the board's behalf. She will review this package and request the recommendations be made public in accessible formats within 90 days of submission.

#### **4. Business**

##### **a. Board Annual Report 2021-22**

Terri Lynn Almeda, Manager provided an update on the 2021-2022 Accessibility Advisory Board Annual report. She thanked everyone for their review and feedback on the draft report and explained a final draft of the report was sent prior to the meeting. Terri Lynn clarified that the report is based on the fiscal year of April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022 so the list of Board members includes only those who were appointed as of March 31, 2022. She explained that after the Board's approval, Directorate staff will work with Communications Nova Scotia to have the report designed, posted to the website, and print copies made.

**Motion:** To accept the most recent version of the 2021-2022 Accessibility Advisory Board Annual report.

Motion was moved by Birgit Elssner and seconded by Ellen Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

##### **b. Health Equity Framework: Information**

Eric Hemphill, Project Director for Strategic Health Partnerships and Shelby Riley from the Department of Health and Wellness gave a presentation on the Health Equity Framework being developed by government. This framework is a guide for the health system to better understand and address factors contributing to disparities in health outcomes. He spoke about the equity groups that will be engaged in this process and the timeline for the final framework.

There was time for questions and discussion. One question raised was regarding efforts to ensure that there is first voice engagement from the disability community.

One board member shared that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals often experience significant barriers in accessing healthcare, specifically from a communications perspective. They also asked if the engagement process will include efforts to connect directly with Deaf and heard of hearing groups.

There were questions about how to embed this work within professional regulating bodies when the framework is released, and about sharing a plain language definition of "health equity framework" in materials and presentations the public.

Comments were raised about the importance of various way to connect with the public and that not all people use online surveys; and regarding health equity issues in the built environment specifically with older hospitals, clinics, equipment that is not accessible.

Another board member asked if the perspective of those who are unhoused or precariously housed will be sought in the consultations and if compensation will be provided for those who participate.

**c. Signed-Spoken Language Interpreting in Canadian Professional Settings: A review of available resources knowledge gaps.**

Dr. Linda Campbell and her research team: Ashely Campbell, Saint Mary's University Staff Interpreting Services Manager and Lisa Anderson, Deaf Professional and accessibility consultant provided a presentation on the findings of a research study regarding the use of signed spoken language interpreters in Canadian professional settings. This research looked specifically at current resources and knowledge gaps through connecting with Deaf professionals, working sign language interpreters and information on interpreter training programs in Canada.

There was time for questions and discussion. A question related to the typical salary of sign language interpreters was raised. Ashley Campbell responded that there are no standard rates, it varies across the country and in different communities.

Other questions asked if the research will be peer-reviewed and published in an academic journal, and about the amount of unemployment versus underemployment amongst interpreters.

**d. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Accessibility Standard: Decision**

Hannah MacDougall, Accessibility Capacity Building Specialist gave a presentation on the background research and analysis conducted in recommendation for the fifth and sixth accessibility standards to be developed. Based on this work she identified that a standard in Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure as the highest priority with a recommendation to begin preliminary work in 2023. She also recommended that a standard in Information and Communications be developed as the last standard to begin work in 2024.

There was a discussion on the diversity of rural populations and challenges that municipalities are facing in transportation and asked if this work will be developed in parallel with other government organizations.

A board member asked if the scope of the transportation standard has been identified yet. Hannah responded that scope will be under consideration for the Standard Development Committee once it is formed.

The need for better rural internet connectivity was raised. This was echoed with another board member who expected the recommendation for Information and Communications to come first, but they were pleased to see the support for Public Transportation.

**Motion:** To recommend to the Minister of Justice that the fifth standard area to be developed is Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure beginning in 2023, and the sixth standard area to be developed is Information and Communication beginning in 2024.

Motion was moved by Ellen Johnson, seconded by Max Chauvin. Motion carried unanimously.

**e. Adjournment**

Roz reminded the board that the meeting schedule for 2023 has been set based on their availability. These meetings are approximately seven to ten weeks apart and will rotate between two half day meetings virtually to full day in-person meetings in the Halifax area. The next scheduled “ virtual” meeting is February 16 and 23, 2023 on Zoom.