

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 – 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Rosalind Penfound (Chair), David Caswell (Vice-Chair), Birgit Elssner, Andrew Jantzen, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair, Cynthia Bruce, Linda Campbell

Regrets: Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Incoming Executive Director), Terri Lynn Almeda (Manager), Dustin Lyon, Maddi MacDonald, Lisa Jacobs, Lashauna Smith, Kristel vom Scheidt, Hannah MacDougall

Guests: Max Chauvin, Consultant, Richard Derible, Citizen Center Approaches Unit, Executive Council Office.

1. Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. She also congratulated Dawn Stegen on her position as the permanent Executive Director for the Accessibility Directorate.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed the agenda and made an amendment to switch the timing of two presentations, items 5a: COVID-19 Outreach and 4d: Accessible Washrooms in Restaurants. Andrew Jantzen moved to amend the agenda and Cynthia Bruce seconded the amendment to accept the agenda with changes.

b. Approval of Minutes from April 14, 2022

Motion: There was a suggested amendment to the minutes to add "Town of" Wolfville to item 5c). The amended minutes for the March meeting were moved by Ellen Johnson and Birgit Elssner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Outstanding Business and Directorate Updates

Dawn Stegen, incoming Executive Director, provided an update on board vacancies. The Department of Justice, Policy and Information Management Division is coordinating the screening the applications, with recommendations to the Minister of Justice by the end of June.

The Compliance and Enforcement framework and implementation plan is approved. The next step is a public release of the framework.

Staffing update: Dawn welcomed Hannah MacDougall a Master of Public Administration student from Dalhousie University who will be working with the Directorate as a Junior Policy Analyst until the end of August with a focus on employment standard development and prescribed public sector bodies.

ACTION: Board inquiry regarding compensation of personal care assistants will continue with Directorate staff connecting with officials at the Departments of Seniors and Long-Term Care, and Health and Wellness.

3. Standards

a. Standard Development Committees (SDC)

i. Employment Update:

Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst gave an update on behalf of the Chair of the Employment Standards Development Committee (SDC). Their last meeting was May 11 and 12, minutes will be circulated prior to June board meeting. The theme of the meeting was career planning and job search, which included panel of speakers from ReachAbility, TeamWork Cooperative, Autism Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Career Development Association and Post-Secondary Accessibility Support Services in the Department of Advanced Education. The SDC received a presentation on the results of the March 2022 consultations on barriers to accessible employment and a presentation on the Compliance and Enforcement Framework.

The SDC members have chosen to develop their work through seven focus areas, each aiming to meet four times between now and early March 2023. The next SDC meeting is scheduled for June 27 and 28 with the focus on Retention, Hiring and Onboarding.

ii. Education Update:

Rosalind Penfound Chair, Education Standard Development Committee provided an update on the work of incorporating feedback from the consultations through small groups of the committee utilizing committee member's expertise. The SDC plans to have their final recommendations to the board by July or August.

b. Recommendations for Built Environment

Dawn Stegen, incoming Executive Director, gave an update on behalf of Maddi MacDonald on the Built Environment Interdepartmental Working Group who are close to finalizing the draft standard. They are connecting with relevant subject matter experts and will share with the board in the next few months any differences from the phase 1 and 2 recommendations that were submitted to Minister. The ASL video for the Phase 2 recommendations from the Board is complete and will be posted soon.

There is a new project manager supporting the project planning and timelines for the consultation and implementation of the standard. More information will be forthcoming on the projected dates for public consultation and enactment at the next board meeting.

4. Business

a. Prescribed Public Sector Bodies (PPSB) Cohort 1 Compliance and Monitoring

Dawn Stegen, incoming Executive Director, gave an update on behalf of Julia Stephenson regarding the compliance of the Cohort 1 prescribed public sector bodies, with 70% of all accessibility plans now complete. Julia Stephenson is attending meetings and conferences to share information, support and connect with PPSB's.

There is a new two-year Accessibility Coordinator position at the Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia who will be supporting municipalities and villages in this work.

The Directorate will be reviewing all PPSB plans this summer and giving feedback to Cohort 1 PPSBs.

The Board asked about an improvement in compliance with some PPSB's who may have been struggling in the past, and specifically which municipalities have not started or completed their accessibility plans.

A concern was brought forward by another board member regarding the use of the Post Secondary Accessibility Framework by some PPSB's in their plans. This concern was also regarding that 30% of plans are not complete. There was discussion about the urgency that should be demonstrated in response to those who are currently noncompliant.

ACTION: Staff will send out the details of the compliance status of each PPSB to the Board following the meeting.

ACTION: Staff will prepare an overview for the Board on requirements for accessibility plans as laid out in the Accessibility Act.

b. Monitoring and Evaluation Quarterly Update

Lisa Jacobs, Senior Policy Analyst, gave an overview of the results from accessibility questions included in the Winter 2022 Atlantic Quarterly Omnibus Public Opinion Research Survey which asked about knowledge and understanding of disability and accessibility. The Accessibility Directorate has submitted questions in this survey each year since 2019.

There were questions from the Board on numbers of people with physical limitations and if the number of barriers increased, and if the changes in the data from year to year were statistically significant.

There were comments regarding how this information would be useful to support the work of PPSB's, and that it is important to work with consultants or researchers that have background knowledge and context in this area for future data analysis.

ACTION: Staff will come to a future board meeting to present in more detail the qualitative data from the 2022 Atlantic Quarterly Omnibus Public Opinion Research Survey.

c. Access Awareness Week 2022

Kristel vom Scheidt, Policy Analyst, gave an overview of what is planned for Nova Scotia Access Awareness Week, including events in community, for PPSB's and within the provincial government.

5. Board Priorities

a. COVID-19 Outreach

Maddi MacDonald, Senior Policy Analyst and consultant Max Chauvin shared a presentation on what they learned from their research on the impacts of COVID-19 on Nova Scotians with disabilities. This research was to follow up on work done by the Directorate at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 regarding the impacts of COVID-19. 18 disability organizations participated in interviews as well as 15 more completed an online survey.

Board members commented that this is such valuable data and should be considered in potential future accessibility standard areas and asked about consent to mobilize and share this knowledge.

There was a comment that the findings show the need for health care as a stand-alone standard.

The Directorate will be sharing these findings with Minister and internally within government.

4. Business continued

d. Accessible Washrooms in Restaurants

Richard Derible, Executive Director in the Executive Council Office gave an update on the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Board of Inquiry decision regarding washroom facilities in restaurants. Richard has been involved in this work since 2019 and led the restorative process that engaged the complainants, representatives from the

restaurant sector, government departments and community. The Directorate co leads this file with the Executive Council Office, support provided by Dawn Stegen, incoming Executive Director and Josh Bates, Senior Policy Analyst.

There was a comment from the Board regarding how complex issues of accessibility are, and specifically the difficulties that can be faced once they interact with government regulations.

There was a question from the Board on the possibility of using Food Safety licenses to communicate the requirement of accessibility upgrades to businesses.

The Board thanked Richard for his detailed presentation, as it shows challenging this work is and the progress that is being made.

A Board member asked about the current status of MLA offices and if they are they all accessible.

ACTION: Staff at the Directorate will inquire on the status of the MLA office accessibility.

5. Board Priorities continued

b. Housing

There was a discussion among the Board on accessible housing as an important standing agenda item. Roz Penfound, Chair specifically mentioned a project from Disability Alliance of British Columbia; the Right Fit Project, which helps facilitate accessible and inclusive housing for persons with disabilities. She highlighted the Home Accessibility Tax Credit, provided by the federal government to offset some of the costs to make homes accessible.

c. Roundtable

Board discussed topical issues and personal work they are involved in. One Board member specifically spoke of the results of Covid research by the Directorate and the real issues of gaps in care from lack of personal support workers.

Comment from another Board member about the danger and inaccessibility around construction sites they are noticing during construction season. There was a suggestion from to invite Mayor

Savage or Paul Vienneu to a future Board meeting to respond to issues related to the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Roz Penfound took the time to recognize Cynthia Bruce who will be leaving the Board effective June 1, 2022. She was part of the inaugural Board in 2018 and instrumental in the policies and processes of how the Board operates. Cynthia was thanked for her outstanding service. She is not leaving her role as Vice Chair of the Education SDC. Appreciation and gratitude was expressed by all member and well wishes.

6. Adjournment

Rosalind Penfound adjourned the meeting. Next meeting will be on June 21, 2022.