

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Summary

March 16, 2018 - 10:00 am – 3:00 pm - 1690 Hollis Street, Halifax, NS

Attendance

Board: Doug Foster (Chair), Rosalind Penfound (Vice-Chair), Barry Abbott, Cynthia Bruce, Irene Campbell-Taylor, David Caswell, Amy Parsons, Alex Peeler, Gus Reed, Kevin Russell, Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Anne Sinclair

Staff: Gerry Post (Executive Director), Craig MacKinnon, Amy Middleton, Lashauna Smith

Regrets: None

1. Welcome

- Doug Foster, Chair, welcomed all Board members and thanked them for attending.
- The Honourable Mark Furey, Minister of Justice, delivered a welcome message to the Board via video.

2. Introductions

- Board members introduced themselves to each other, outlining their background and interests.

3. Review of Board Terms of Reference

- Amy Middleton, Accessibility Directorate, reviewed the content of the Board Terms of Reference. It was noted that the Terms of Reference was in draft form, as it was being reviewed by the Minister.
- When reviewing Section 10: Decision Making, Board members questioned whether there should be more information around voting. Specifically, the Board is seeking clarification on when the Chair votes (i.e. all votes or only when there is a tie) and whether proxies should be allowed.

Action: The Directorate will seek clarity on when the Chair should vote, and whether to allow proxies, including asking if there is precedence among ABCs in this regard. Information will be provided to the Board, who can make a decision and include in an administrative policy.

- When reviewing Section 11: Communications, Board members discussed the need for more extensive policies around communications, including areas such as: inclusive language, communicating with the media, communicating regionally and with the involvement of disabled persons. Board members also discussed how meeting proceedings should be communicated with the public; specifically, whether, meetings should be streamed online, in addition to issuing a public summary of each Board meeting.
- It was decided that these considerations should be outlined in the Administrative Policies and Procedures rather than the Terms of Reference, and that a sub-group of Board members should meet with Directorate staff to review these issues and provide a recommendation to the Board.

Cynthia Bruce, Amy Parsons, Gus Reed, and Marcie Shwery-Stanley volunteered to form this group.

Action: Directorate staff will arrange a meeting for Cynthia, Amy, Gus and Marcie to review the aforementioned communications issues and draft a recommended communications policy for review and approval by the Board.

- When reviewing Section 14: Conflict of Interest, Board members questioned the statement, “A Board member shall not use his or her position or participate in or attempt to influence decision making to directly or indirectly benefit himself or herself.” Given that the mandate of the Board involves improving accessibility, which will directly or indirectly benefit Board members, they could be considered in a conflict of interest for a significant amount of deliberations and decisions.

Action: The Directorate will follow up with Adriana Meloni, Solicitor, Department of Justice, for her advice on re-wording this statement.

4. Administrative Policies & Procedures

- Amy Middleton reviewed the additional Board administrative policies and procedures, noting that they are intended to develop as the Board work evolves.
- A Board member noted that a statement in the communications section (“It is the responsibility of Board members to ensure access to a computer and necessary software to access and contribute to Board materials.”) conflicts with a statement in Section 16 of the Terms of Reference (Board members will be “reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, including any costs related to accessibility supports, as approved by the Directorate.”)

Action: Directorate will review the aforementioned conflicting statements related to accessibility supports and assistive technology, and provide clarification to the Board.

- Logistics around reimbursement for expenses were reviewed. A member asked whether attendant care would be considered an expense. The Directorate responded that it would be covered, but could not confirm the allowable amount.

Action: Directorate will confirm the allowable expense for attendant care and relay information to the Board.

- The section on meeting conduct was reviewed. A Board member advised that the use of the term “ASL translation” was inaccurate in this context, and requested it be changed to “ASL interpretation services”.

Action: Directorate will change statement in “Meeting Conduct” section of “Administrative Policies and Procedures” document that refers to “ASL translation” to state “ASL interpretation services”.

5. Review of the Accessibility Act

- Gerry Post, Accessibility Directorate, reviewed the Accessibility Act, including the purpose of the Act, responsibilities of public sector bodies, accessibility standards areas and how they will be developed and implemented, compliance and enforcement, and how principles of transparency and consultation are embedded in the Act.
- A Board member requested that a summary of the Act be distributed to the Board members.

Action: The Directorate will issue a summary of the Act to Board members.

6. Board Work Plan

- Lashauna Smith, Accessibility Directorate, reviewed the timeline and deliverables required by the Directorate and Board to release the implementation strategy (Access by Design 2030) by the legislated deadline of September 2018. She discussed research and consultation activities, associated summaries and discussion paper, Cabinet submission, and the final publicly available document.
- The Board discussed the need to ensure Board discussions and actions remained focused on issues relevant to the mandate and objectives of the Board.

Action: At a future meeting, the Directorate will lead the Board through a strategic planning session to set priorities.

7. Discussion of Priority Issues

- Board members were invited to discuss some of the accessibility issues they consider to be priorities. Issues discussed included enforcement of existing regulations (such as the building code), access to health care and self-managed care, and rights of persons with intellectual disabilities.
- The Board also discussed the issue of financial barriers to health care for persons with disabilities, and the value of having a discussion with the Department of Health and Wellness about this issue.

Motion: A motion was made by Irene Campbell-Taylor, and seconded by Marcie Shwery-Stanley to, at a later date, request a meeting between the Board and representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness and Medavie Blue Cross to discuss the issue of financial barriers to obtaining health care for Nova Scotians with disabilities. The motion carried.

8. Other Business

- It was decided that Board meetings would be held monthly in April, May, June and July.

Action: The Directorate will send out potential dates for April- July meetings to Board members, with a view to confirming meeting dates within the next week.

9. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned.