

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 13th, 2021 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Attendance: Rosalind Penfound (Chair), David Caswell (Vice-Chair), Andrew Jantzen, Anne Sinclair, Birgit Elssner, Cynthia Bruce, Ellen Johnson, Jenny-Rachel Lind, Linda Campbell, Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Amy Middleton, Caroline Read Kendall, Lashauna Smith, Lisa Jacobs, Laura Beth MacPherson, Terri Lynn Almeda,

Guest: Max Chauvin

Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, welcomed everyone, including the members who were attending their first business meeting since their February 2021 appointment, to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq land acknowledgement.

1. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

Anne Sinclair requested, if time at the end of the meeting, to receive an update on the Peggy's Cove accessibility work that is underway.

b. Approval of Minutes from February 3, 2021

Motion: Cynthia Bruce moved to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2021 meeting. Marcie Shwery-Stanley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Accessibility Advisory Board

a. Standard Development Committees

i. Education

Rosalind Penfound provided an update on the work of the Education Standards Development Committee (SDC). The Education SDC has met 5 times since the last

Board meeting, each focusing on a specific area of the work. Discussions continue with public P-12 sector, universities and colleges, early years and private career colleges and language schools. Ongoing engagement/consultation planned with private schools (P-12) and Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. The next Education SDC meeting will be on June 9th, 2021.

ii. Built Environment

Caroline Read Kendell provided an update on the work of the Built Environment Standards Development Committee (SDC). The Built Environment SDC met on April 12, 2021, when they received a presentation from the Office of the Fire Marshall, received an update on public consultation sessions and reviewed feedback from consultation sessions. Staff have revised Phase 2 recommendations based on consultations and SDC comments/feedback for review at the next Built Environment SDC meeting that will be held on May 26, 2021.

iii. Employment

Lashauna Smith provided an overview of work related to launching recruitment for the Employment Standard Development Committee (SDC). The following documents were put forward for approval of the Accessibility Advisory Board.

- Employment SDC Membership Criteria
- Employment SDC Application
- Employment SDC Application Review Process
- Employment SDC Application Scoring Tool

Minor amendments were recommended to the Employment SDC Membership Criteria document and agreed to by the Accessibility Advisory Board.

Motion: David Caswell motioned that the Accessibility Advisory Board recommend that the Membership Criteria (with minor amendment), Application, Application Review Process and Application Scoring Tool be forwarded to Minister of Justice for approval and Accessibility Directorate continue work, with aim to launching SDC recruitment in June 2021. Marcie Shwery-Stanley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Board Workplan

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, provided an overview of the workplan that was developed by the Accessibility Advisory Board in fall 2020 which outlines priorities under four categories: Priority and Emergency Issues; Board Capacity Building; Accessibility Standards; Lower Priority Issues.

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, provided an overview of key items to be brought forward for Board review, consideration, and approval over the next six months.

The Board discussed the opportunity for inviting Minister Randy Delorey to an upcoming Board Meeting. The Accessibility Directorate will facilitate this invitation.

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, suggested that Board members consider the workplan as presented and send any comments/feedback to Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director or herself.

c. COVID-19

The Accessibility Advisory Board reviewed a Briefing Note, prepared by the Accessibility Directorate, on cross-government work related to persons with disabilities and the Covid-19 response, and received a presentation on the impacts of Covid-19 on Nova Scotians with disabilities

The Accessibility Advisory Board recognized that addressing pandemic and post pandemic actions through accessibility and disability lenses is an important issue for the Board. While the Covid-19 pandemic threatens everyone, persons with disabilities are disproportionately impacted due to attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers that are reproduced in the Covid-19 response.

Board members discussed that there needs to be more attention given to the impacts of Covid-19 on persons with disabilities and the barriers associated with Covid-19 response (such as access to health care, booking vaccines and inaccessible vaccine locations).

The Accessibility Advisory Board agreed to keep Covid-19 as a standing agenda item for the foreseeable future.

d. Accessible Housing

The Accessibility Advisory Board received a presentation from Max Chauvin, President of Chauvin Resource Development, a local for-impact organization consulting firm.

Max Chauvin has been working with the Directorate, to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in finding safe, suitable and stable housing, through research and interviews with key stakeholders and service providers.

In summary, the following key issues have been identified through this piece of work.

1. Finding an accessible home, there is insufficient stock in our communities to meet the demand.
2. Ability to afford rental costs. In most cases, accessible units are in new construction with high than average rents.
3. Access to support(s) individuals need to live independently on their own.

Board members indicated that accessible housing is a complex issue and one that they would like to continue to discuss as work of the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission advances.

The Board agreed to continue conversations on accessible housing. The Accessibility Directorate will solicit feedback/comments from the Accessibility Advisory Board (via email) on what issues to focus on at future meetings, and the report prepared by consultant Max Chauvin.

3. Other Business

a. Accessibility Act Review

Lisa Jacobs provided a presentation to the Accessibility Advisory Board on the upcoming Accessibility Act review. The purpose of this presentation was to provide a general background on the Act review, inform board members of the recruitment process and solicit feedback from Board members on potential reviewer candidates.

The Accessibility Act scope has been approved by the Minister of Justice. It will include general changes required to the Act; development of accessibility standards and implementation of Access by Design 2030. The Accessibility Directorate will lead the process for candidate search, with potential candidate names submitted to the Minister of Justice in June 2021.

Reviewer qualifications will include:

- a person with a disability;
- a resident of Nova Scotia;
- have knowledge of disability and accessibility issues;
- demonstrate past success conducting research and/or consulting with multi-sector stakeholders; and
- possess an understanding of government systems and/or legislation.

Additional desirable assets include demonstrated leadership and credibility within the disability, academic, and/or provincial government communities.

The Accessibility Advisory Board was asked to consider persons within their networks who meet the qualifications and submit names to Lisa Jacobs. The Accessibility Directorate will contact persons to assess qualifications, gauge interest and formally request a resume.

b. Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2022-2025

Laura Beth MacPherson provided an overview of work to develop the next Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2022-2025). Government of Nova Scotia – Leading by Example is one of the key priorities within Access by Design 2030.

A collaborative approach is being used in development of the next plan including:

- commitment to a cross-government approach (25 departments/offices)
- alignment with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion priorities
- first-voice perspectives at every step in the process
- alignment with department budget/business planning cycles

The plan will be informed by internal and external consultations and the Accessibility Advisory Board will be engaged for feedback on draft commitments, with the aim to launch the 2022-2025 plan in April 2022.

The Accessibility Advisory Board was asked for advice on engaging with persons with disabilities as part of the public consultation plans, whether they will be willing to provide feedback into draft commitments and whether there is any other work the Accessibility Advisory Board should be playing as part of this work.

The Accessibility Advisory Board expressed interest in providing suggestions for engaging with persons with disabilities and providing feedback on the draft commitments. Laura Beth MacPherson will follow up with Board members via e-mail.

4. Adjournment

Prior to adjournment, Rosalind Penfound, Chair, provided an update that no applications came in for the vacancy designated for an indigenous/Mi'kmaq person. The Department of Justice has advanced a recommendation to Minister to fill two vacancies, and the Accessibility Directorate will continue to engage Mi'kmaq communities to promote opportunities to serve on the Board.

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, provided an update on the Develop Nova Scotia work at Peggy's Cove. The Accessibility Directorate has met with

representatives from Develop Nova Scotia, and the Accessibility Directorate will continue to be involved as this work progresses.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 pm. The next meeting (virtual, via Zoom) will be held on June 10, 2021.