

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 14, 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

Regrets: Linda Campbell, Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Staff: Dawn Stegen (past Interim Executive Director), Terri Lynn Almeda (Acting Executive Director), Dustin Lyon, Maddi MacDonald, Laura Beth MacPherson, Lisa Jacobs, Avery Maynard, Lashauna Smith, Kristel vom Scheidt.

Guests: Associate Deputy Barbrick and Executive Director, Kim Silver, Seniors and Long-Term Care. Allyson O'Shea, Senior Policy Analyst, Department of Justice.

1) Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement.

2) Board Operations

a) Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

b) Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2022

Motion: There was a suggested amendment to the minutes to change an error in item 4a) worship will be changed to workshop. The amended minutes for the March meeting were moved by Anne Sinclair and Cynthia Bruce seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c) Outstanding Business and Directorate Updates

Dawn Stegen, past Interim Executive Director, provided updates regarding her plans to continue to support the Accessibility Directorate during the time of transition until the permanent Executive Director is appointed. She also spoke about the outstanding vacancies on the board, and the opportunity to fill all five at the same time through the Executive Council Office.

The Board noted the importance for government to fill the vacancies as soon as possible.

The April 1st deadline for the Prescribed Public Sector Bodies in Cohort 1 has passed and Dawn Stegen reported that 40% have submitted their accessibility plans through the Compliance and Information form. The remaining Prescribed Public Sector Bodies have until April 30th to complete the form.

ACTION: Accessibility Directorate will bring a compliance report to the Board at the May meeting.

Dawn gave an update on changes in staff roles at the Directorate, including a new Program Officer that will be hired to support Prescribed Public Sector Bodies.

Dawn asked for time at the end of the Board meeting for advice on posting Built Environment Phase 2 Recommendations on the Directorate's website.

3) Standards

b) 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). The committee met on March 28 and 29 and the minutes from the first three meetings were included in the board package. At the last meeting they learned more about the Education and Built Environment recommendations and received presentations on the Employment Support and Income Assistance, and Disability Support programs from the Department of Community Services. They also spent time reviewing the

proposed focus areas where most of their work will occur. These focus areas include: Career Planning and Job Search; Recruitment Hiring and Onboarding; Retention and Advancement; Fair Pay and Total Compensation; Workplace Accommodations and Employment Support Services; Return to Work Processes; Disability Confident Employers. The next meetings are May 11 and 12, with the focus on Career Planning and Job Search.

There was discussion on Fair Pay and Total Compensation.

ii. Education Update:

Rosalind Penfound Chair, Education Standard Development Committee (SDC) provided an update on the results from the consultations on draft recommendations. She explained that there was significant, thoughtful and detailed feedback provided by focus group participants. Overall, the feedback was very positive, although some sectors noted proposed recommendations would require significant financial and human resources to implement. Most of the questions were around timelines, monitoring, and enforcement. The feedback from the public sector illustrated that some of the recommendations could be implemented through existing means. The SDC is currently reviewing and incorporating the feedback and plan to have the recommendations to the Board at an upcoming meeting.

b) Recommendations for Built Environment

Rosalind Penfound gave an update on behalf of Maddi MacDonald on the Built Environment Interdepartmental Working Group. The Working Group has completed its review of the Board's recommendations and is working to finalize the draft standard before it goes for consultation this summer, dates to be determined. Before released for public consultation, the Directorate will present the draft standard to the Board and discuss any amendments and differences from the recommendations the Board submitted to Minister.

4) Business

a) Update on Act Review

Lisa Jacobs, Senior Policy Analyst at the Directorate provided an update on the Independent Act Review and what to expect in the coming months, including the public launch of the review and collection of data through

consultations and an online survey. She explained that the board members will be contacted separately for individual interviews.

The Act Review website address is <https://nsaccessreview.ca/>

b) Public Awareness Campaign Launch

Terri Lynn Almeda, Acting Executive Director and Avery Maynard, Senior Policy Analyst with the Directorate provided an overview on the launch of the Accessibility Awareness campaign. This campaign is the result of two years of work with a marketing firm to develop the campaign strategy and creative material, scheduled to launch on April 28th. Avery reviewed the first three creative elements and the external media plan and the communication plan for internal government partners.

c) Review of the Adult Capacity and Decision-Making Act

Allyson O'Shea a Senior Policy Analyst, with the Policy and Information Management division in the Department of Justice led the multi-department working group that carried out the review of the Adult Capacity and Decision-Making Act. Allyson gave an overview of the Act and legislative review process that concluded in 2021, as well as the findings and recommendations. She explained that the public trustee must maintain a list of orders and review and monitor all applications that come through. Any interested party that has a concern about an order can go to the Public Trustee's office to review.

There was a question from the Board on how many people have used these orders in Nova Scotia and if there is a plan to review this legislation in the future or raise awareness of the advanced planning tools.

d) Seniors and Long-Term Care

Associate Deputy Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care, Tracy Barbrick and Kim Silver, Director of Home and Community Care provided an overview of their departmental programs, and priorities. They spoke about the focus on building a community sector and supports that are more flexible while dealing with staffing shortages.

There was a question from the board on the wages offered to staff in the self-managed care program and that this program is often used by younger individuals with disabilities.

Another question from the board was regarding plans for building new residential care facilities and consideration for all disabilities and accessibility in their design, including using the recommendations for the Built Environment Accessibility Standard.

5) Board Priorities

a) COVID-19

Maddi MacDonald, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate provided an update on COVID-19 developments. There is a continued increase in positive lab tests and hospitalizations, however, the risk of severe illness continues to be lower than in previous waves.

Dr. Strang recommends people continue to wear masks especially in indoor spaces.

Long-term care residents and adults 70 and older will soon be able to book a second booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

The provincial Paid Sick Leave Program has been extended until May 7 and the mask mandate has been extended in public schools until at least the May long weekend.

Paxlovid, a drug to treat COVID in the early stages, is now available to high-risk individuals in Nova Scotia.

The Directorate is finishing its work of connecting with disability organizations to learn of the impacts of COVID-19, through interviews and an online survey. These learnings will be presented at the May board meeting.

b) Housing

Rosalind Penfound reviewed highlights from the 2022-23 provincial budget specific to affordable housing programs and those commitments that support adults and children with disabilities including community housing.

She mentioned the study launched by the provincial government to determine the extent of the need for affordable housing in Nova Scotia, noting that this housing needs assessment will engage with municipalities and other key partners over the coming months.

In addition, another needs assessment will take place for African Nova Scotian communities, including an analysis of environmental racism and systemic barriers to finding housing.

The Supreme Court's decision to dismiss the Nova Scotia Government's application to appeal the decision that found evidence that it discriminated against people with disabilities was also discussed.

c) Roundtable

There was a discussion on topical issues and personal work board members are involved with in the disability community. There was a comment raised about accessibility audits currently underway at post-secondary institutions, specifically regarding consultation fatigue for those with first voice experience and often no financial compensation.

Another board member noted that the town of Wolfville moved forward its second Accessibility Plan.

There was a comment from the board regarding the connection between the work of the Department of Seniors and Long Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing, specifically since it is so linked in community.

Item deferred from Directorate Updates: American Sign Language (ASL) Video for Build Environment Recommendations.

Dawn Stegen, past Interim Executive Director explained that there was a delay in posting the Build Environment Recommendations to the Directorate's website. Dawn asked for the Board's advice on posting the Recommendations before the ASL video is complete. The Board were unanimous in their advice that the Directorate should lead by example and wait until all formats are ready to be posted together.

6) Adjournment

Rosalind Penfound adjourned the meeting. Next meeting will be on May 17, 2022.