

# **Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, March 24, 2022 – 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

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

Regrets: None

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

Guests: Deputy Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Vicki Elliot-Lopez, Senior Executive Director of Housing, and Stephan Richard, Executive Director Housing Solutions from Housing and Municipal Affairs, Stephen MacIsaac, Chief Executive Officer, Housing Nova Scotia, Philip Rizcallah, Chief Executive Officer, Director, Maggie Saunders, Brian Prairie, Senior Policy Analyst, with Accessibility Standards Canada.

## **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 February 15, 2022**

**Motion:** There was a suggested amendment to the minutes to change the wording in the action item in 5a) to personal care support worker. The amended minutes for the February meeting were moved by Andrew

Jantzen and, Anne Sinclair seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **c) Outstanding Business and Directorate Updates**

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, provided updates regarding outstanding business. The public awareness campaign has been approved by Minister and will be launched in late April. The Phase 2 on Accessibility Standards in the Built Environment will be posted on the Directorate's website shortly. The Minister's Annual Report 2020-21 is now available on the Directorate's website as well as the Board Annual Report 2020-21. Dawn asked if board members would like hard copies of these reports or send to community organizations.

**ACTION:** Directorate to send copies out to those who requested.

The Accessibility Act Reviewer is currently compiling a list of provincial events, conferences, or expos to present at in the upcoming months. Cohort one Prescribed Public Sector Bodies have received a survey regarding compliance support and status of meeting their obligations under the Accessibility Act.

### **3) Standards**

#### **a. Standard Development Committees (SDC)**

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

Charlie MacDonald, Chair of the Employment Standards Development Committee (SDC) gave an update on the first meeting of the SDC in February and provided an overview of the SDC's work plan for the next two years.

There was a question from the board about the practice of confirming disability through medical documentation. The board asked about how the committee will be discussing accessibility versus accommodation in the workplace and what is considered meaningful employment. There was a request that the board be sent the committee's meeting minutes for reference.

**Action:** Staff will ensure that Employment SDC meeting minutes are circulated to the board with meeting materials once approved.

### **i. Education Update:**

Rosalind Penfound Chair, Education Standard Development Committee (SDC) provided an update on the results from the consultations on draft recommendations, explaining that the board will consider this input after a report from the consultations is completed and reviewing by the SDC.

### **b. Recommendations for Built Environment**

Maddi MacDonald, Senior Policy Analyst gave an update on the Built Environment Interdepartmental Working Group. They have completed its review of the Board's recommendations with the exception Wayfinding & Signage, which is being addressed by a subgroup, including subject matter experts at Communications Nova Scotia. There will be public consultation on the draft standard later in the year, but prior to this the draft standard will be presented to the Board.

There was discussion on the review of the of the CSA Group B651 National Standard of Canada: Accessible design for the build environment that is currently taking place.

## **4) Business**

### **a) Resource for Engaging People with Disabilities**

Julia Stephenson, Capacity Building Program Specialist provided an overview of a workshop taking place in April on how Prescribed Public Sector Bodies can better engage persons with disabilities in their accessibility work. This workshop will include opportunities for peer conversation and learning, it will also include a toolkit. The content of this workshop will be tailored based on questions received from Prescribed Public Sector Bodies.

There were questions from the board on the definition of disability used in the workshop materials. and who could attend the workshop.

### **b) Accessibility Standards Canada, Roadmap 2040**

Philip Rizcallah, CEO of Accessibility Standards Canada provided an overview of their strategic plan and priorities, Roadmap 2040.

The board asked about challenges Accessibility Standards Canada might have obtaining services, such as American Sign Language. The board asked about waiting until 2040 for harmonization of provincial and

federal accessibility standards. The board asked if the standards are being developed in plain language, and what is the biggest, unexpected hurdle they have had to face so far. There was a suggestion from the board to consider Deaf Space principals in the new building standards in the update of the CSA Group B651 National Standard of Canada: Accessible design for the build environment that is currently taking place.

**Action:** Staff will pass along the [Saint Mary's University Deaf Space Guidelines](#).

### **c) Update on Affordable Housing Strategy**

Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Vicki Elliot-Lopez, Senior Executive Director of Housing, and Stephan Richard, Executive Director Housing Solutions from Housing and Municipal Affairs as well as Stephen MacIsaac, Chief Executive Officer, Housing Nova Scotia presented on the recommendations from the Review of Affordable Housing Commission that apply to accessible housing.

There were a number of questions from the board including plans for engaging persons with disabilities in the longer term provincial housing strategy, requirements for municipalities to apply an accessibility lens when creating more housing, support for housing needs assessments, actions that specifically support seniors, and the barriers that people with disabilities face when applying to Agencies, Boards and Commissions, and what measures they will take to ensure there is representation from the disability community on the new housing boards.

**Action:** Staff will follow up with Housing and Municipal Affairs to provide information on an accessible recruitment approach for Agencies, Boards and Commissions.

## **5) Board Priorities**

### **a. COVID-19**

Maddi MacDonald, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate provided an update on COVID-19 activities including:

-The ending of the public State of Emergency, and the lifting of public health restrictions such as gathering limits, social distancing rules, and mask requirements with some exceptions:

- Masking is still required in schools, hospitals, long-term care, day programming for adults with disabilities, and prisons.
- Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination protocol is still in place for high-risk settings, including visitors, caregivers, and workers in both healthcare and long-term care facilities; public school teachers and staff; workers in Department of Community Services facilities; workers in day programs funded by the Disability Support Program; workers and volunteers in correctional facilities; paramedics and physicians; early childhood educators and staff in regulated childcare; Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia.

-The Directorate has connected with disability organizations in the province to learn of the impacts of COVID-19 and any urgent concerns on Nova Scotians with disabilities as well as Deaf and or Neurodivergent Nova Scotians.

#### **b. Board Workplan**

David Caswell, Vice Chair reviewed the board workplan. There was a discussion about this being an outline of the priorities and that the board can change it as time goes on. There was a suggestion to add training or resources on plain language.

**Action:** Staff will invite Communications Nova Scotia to present at an upcoming meeting on plain language and accessible communications guidelines, as well as Inclusion Nova Scotia on the barriers to communication for persons with intellectual disabilities.

#### **c. Roundtable**

There was a discussion from the board on topical issues they are noticing in the disability community including challenges in recruiting deaf individuals to sit on standing committees and recruiting in general. Another topic was regarding the supports available for parents with disabilities.

### **6. Adjournment**

Rosalind Penfound adjourned the meeting. Next meeting will be on April 14, 2022.