

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, November 16, 2021 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

---

Attendance: Rosalind Penfound (Chair), David Caswell (Vice-Chair), Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Andrew Jantzen, Ellen Johnson, Marcie Shwery-Stanley.

Regrets: Cynthia Bruce, Anne Sinclair.

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Terri Lynn Almeda (Manager), Dustin Lyons, Maddi MacDonald, Laura Beth MacPherson, Avery Maynard, Peter McCracken, Amy Middleton, Caroline Read Kendell, Lashauna Smith, Julia Stephenson, Kristel vom Scheidt.

Guests: *Honourable* John Brads (Minister of Department of Justice).

**1. Welcome**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board (AAB) meeting by acknowledging that the meeting takes place on traditional and unceded Mi'kmaq territory.

**2. Board Operations**

**a. Review of Agenda**

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

**b. Approval of Minutes from October 21, 2021**

Motion: Marcie Shwery-Stanley moved to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2021, meeting. Birgit Elssner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**c. Outstanding Business & Directorate Updates**

Dawn Stegen provided updates on initiatives and outstanding business.

- Act review contract is prepared for signing with Dr. Katie Aubrecht.
- Boards motions from October's meeting have been advanced to Ministers office.

- We have approval in February and March 2022 to consult on draft recommendations for standards in Education.
- The Board's recommendation for representation on the Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee has been shared with the Executive Council Office and Municipal Affairs and Housing.
- Directorate met to discuss prescription date and deadline with the Federation of Municipalities and Association of Municipal Administrators.

Marcie Shwery-Stanley suggested that Board members could submit a list of contacts to the Accessibility Directorate for distribution of the Board's annual report.

### **3. Accessibility Advisory Board**

#### **a. Standard Development Committees**

##### **i. Education**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, provided an update of the Education Standard Development Committee. The Standard Development Committee has found working in smaller groups to be more effective to making progress on the details of the recommendations. The final draft recommendations are to be discussed with full Committee on December 16, 2021, in advance of going for public consultation.

Linda Campbell asked to have the consultation broken up by groups with a designated group for the Deaf community to allow the focus group can be led in American Sign Language for a more fulsome conversation as relying on interpreters makes conversations more difficult. Rosalind Penfound agreed and stated that the Standard Development Committee does plan to have a focus group designated for the Deaf community.

##### **ii. Employment**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate, who provided an update on the Employment Standards Development Committee. The membership, Chair and Vice-Chair, and Terms of Reference have been submitted to the Minister for approval. Selected members will be notified by Rosalind Penfound following the Minister's approval. The plan is to announce the committee members on December 3 (International Day of

Persons with Disabilities) with a news release, ASL video, and update to the Accessibility Directorate website.

## **b. Minister's Visit**

Rosalind Penfound welcomed Minister Johns, Minister of Justice and shared an overview of the Accessibility Advisory Board, including background information, current priorities, and recent accomplishments. Rosalind explained that the Board has been meeting virtually since the pandemic.

Minister Johns introduced himself and expressed his commitment to this work as well as his personal connection to disability. Minister Johns expressed that he is committed to ensuring that the vacant positions on the board are filled. He also explained that while accessibility was not mentioned in the department's mandate letter, it does not mean that this is not a priority.

Marcie Shwery-Stanley expressed that accessible housing is a great need of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia and that accessible housing has been identified as a priority of this Board. Marcie commented on government's recent housing announcement and expressed that it is important the right portion of these affordable housing units be made accessible. Marcie asked Minister for his advice for us on how the Board can engage with this work. Minister Johns explained that he understands the need for accessible and affordable housing within the province, and he will continue to advocate for this within his Cabinet.

## **c. IDPWD: December 3**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Julia Stevenson, Capacity Building Specialist, Accessibility Directorate, who provided an update on activities taking place in Nova Scotia for International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Andrew Jantzen added that this year's theme is "Fighting for rights in the post-COVID era".

## **d. Compliance and Enforcement**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Caroline Read Kendell, Senior Policy Analyst, who presented the implementation plan for the Compliance & Enforcement Framework, which was previously shared with the Board at the June meeting.

Board members discussed the plan and provided feedback. Some Board members commented on post secondary institutions being delayed in their

accessibility planning and a lack of awareness across organizations. Rosalind Penfound spoke to the importance of the compliance work in implementing the accessibility standards. There were questions about balancing education and penalties.

#### **e. Intro to Disability Training**

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, introduced Kristel vom Scheidt, Research & Statistical Officer, Accessibility Directorate, who gave an overview of the background and context for the Introduction to Disability training video for public servants. This training was a commitment in the 2018-21 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility plan and is being co-led by staff the Accessibility Directorate and the Public Service Commission. The board members gave their feedback and suggested changes to the video. The final training video will be released to all provincial government employees in time for International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2021.

### **4. Board Priorities**

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

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, presented an update on COVID-19. The Board learned from the Clerk of the Executive Council that Board members who will be attending meetings in-person and who will be engaging in government business necessitating interaction with the Public Service are expected to comply by providing POV by November 30, 2021. Each Board will establish its own process for POV validation. Rosalind will work with the Accessibility Directorate to establish a process for verifying Proof of Vaccination or a valid medical exemption. Rosalind reminded Board members to not email their proof of vaccination records. If an appointee of an Agency, Board or Commission does not provide POV by November 30, 2021, they will not be able to attend in-person meetings and other events.

The Directorate is partnering with government communication leads to share plain language messaging with disability organizations on the Proof of Vaccination policy. A board member asked how people without access to a computer can access their proof of vaccination. Maddi MacDonald, Policy Analyst, Accessibility Directorate, explained that the Department of Health and Wellness has set up a 1-800 number for individuals to request a printed copy of their proof of vaccination be mailed to them if they are not able to access their proof of vaccination online.

#### **b. Accessible Affordable Housing**

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, Accessibility Directorate, gave an update on the government's efforts to support accessible and affordable housing.

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, reminding the Board of the housing update shared with the Board at the last meeting: the Province will spend nearly \$35 million to support over 1,100 new affordable housing units in communities throughout Nova Scotia and make 425 new rent supplements available immediately. Rosalind suggested the Board stay connected to this initiative and ensure that some of these affordable housing units are also made accessible. Rosalind suggested the following motion:

Whereas, affordable, accessible, safe housing is crucial for healthy communities, quality of life, attracting new residents, and growing the economy;

Whereas accessible housing is a great need of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia and accessible housing has been identified as a priority of the Accessibility Advisory Board;

Whereas the recent increase in need for affordable housing in Nova Scotia, we have seen this government respond with supports for new affordable housing units in communities throughout Nova Scotia;

Therefore, the Board moves to advice Minister of the importance of affordable housing be made accessible in communities throughout Nova Scotia. Moved by Marcie Shwery-Stanley and seconded by Birgit Birgit Elssner.

### **c. Roundtable Discussion**

The Board held a roundtable discussion to allow Board members to raise questions, concerns, or insights that they might be hearing in their communities and networks.

A few Board member expressed concerns about Prescribed Public Sector Bodies, including a need for training and resources. Another Board member said that while we are pushing for accessibility, we need to remember businesses are still recuperating from COVID-19. Another Board member mentioned that as the holidays are upon us, it is important to keep in mind the accessibility of holiday events.

## **5. Adjournment**

Rosalind Penfound adjourned the meeting. The next Board meeting will be held December 15, 2021, from 1 PM to 4 PM via Zoom.