

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board Meeting Summary

Thursday, January 21, 2021 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Attendance: Doug Foster (Chair), Rosalind Penfound (Vice-Chair), Barry Abbott, Cynthia Bruce, Linda Campbell, David Caswell, Gus Reed, Anne Sinclair, Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Kevin Russell

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Gerry Post (Strategic Advisor), Josh Bates, Lisa Jacobs, Caroline Read Kendell, Avery Maynard, Amy Middleton, Jenny Sears, Kristel vom Scheidt, Maddi MacDonald, Laura Beth MacPherson, Lashauna Smith, Carla Bezanson, Ethan Brown (Co-op Student)

1. Welcome

Rosalind Penfound, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting.

Dawn Stegen, Interim Executive Director, acknowledged Accessibility Directorate staff present and informed the Board Terri Lynn Almeda, Manager, who is on leave is doing well. Amy Middleton is serving as Acting Manager. Dawn introduced Ethan Brown, a co-op student with the Directorate.

The Board asked for best wishes for a speedy recovery be passed onto Terri Lynn.

Rosalind Penfound noted it has been confirmed Dawn Stegen will stay on for another year as Interim Executive Director and support the transition to a new Executive Director. With significant help of leadership at Dept. of Justice, the Executive Director position has been reclassified, and it will be a designated position when posted.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda as circulated.

b. Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2020

Motion: Barry Abbott moved to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2020, meeting. Doug Foster seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Outstanding Business

Dawn Stegen provided updates regarding outstanding business from the December 2, 2020, meeting. Accessibility Directorate staff briefed the Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister on the Board's interest in Adult Service Centres (also referred to as sheltered workshops) and a presentation from the Deputy of Community Services (DCS) on the matter. Staff met with DCS officials to get an overview of the Adult Service Program. A consultant has been engaged to begin work on framing the issue of accessible housing, which will include a jurisdictional scan and interviews to better understand the issue. The Accessibility Directorate continues to follow-up with government officials on releasing information contained in the Stimulus Funding Briefing Note (July 2020).

3. Accessibility Advisory Board

a. Standard Development Committee Updates

Rosalind Penfound acknowledged that the recommendations for accessibility standards in education and the built environment were made public on Monday January 18th. She thanked the Board and Standard Development Committees for their tremendous work developing these recommendations.

i. Education

Rosalind Penfound provided an update on the Education Standards Development Committee meeting of December 16, 2020. Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) staff provided an overview of the draft updated teacher assistant guidelines and new standard core curriculum for teacher assistant programs. Opportunity was provided for members to give feedback on this content, and EECD

was invited to stay connected with the Education standards development committee on this work.

The draft recommendations for teaching and learning were discussed. After meeting, staff sent out the draft teaching and learning recommendations, with additional questions for input via email aimed at providing more clarity and specificity to the recommendations.

Phase 2 development of these standards will need more engagement with experts from outside the committee, such as newcomers, African Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaq, the private school sector, early childhood sector, and adult learning. Staff and committee members will be connecting with representatives from these sectors/communities to seek feedback on the Phase 1 recommendations and explore opportunities for further input.

Rosalind Penfound and/or Cynthia Bruce will be attending a meeting of the government interdepartmental working group reviewing Phase 1 recommendations to provide a summary of the recommendations and answer any questions.

ii. Built Environment

Caroline Read Kendell provided an update on the Built Environment Standards Development Committee (SDC). The SDC met on December 14, 2020 to review and revise the Phase 2 draft recommendations.

Committee members suggested few clarifications and wording changes to the draft recommendations. The most significant discussion was around visitability and adaptability of multi-unit residential buildings. The committee agreed to set aside additional time to continue this discussion at the January meeting.

The SDC's consultation subcommittee has met twice regarding the March 2021 Phase 2 consultation. Staff are working with Communications Nova Scotia to determine next steps, recognizing that consultation will look different because of COVID-19. The final report of the consultation will be presented to the Board.

Board members requested a review the Phase 2 draft recommendations before the March 2021 consultation.

The Phase 1 recommendations are being reviewed by an Interdepartmental Working Group, and Frank Dunn has been hired as the Project Manager.

Action: Accessibility Directorate to share the SDC's draft Phase 2 recommendations with the Board in advance of next meeting for discussion at the February 3, 2021 meeting.

b. Next Standard Areas

Avery Maynard, Accessibility Directorate, presented further analysis and findings. At the request of the Board, this analysis included factors such as safety, prosperity, the social determinants of health and the Well-Being Index initiative of Engage Nova Scotia. The Directorate's recommendation to the Board was Goods & Services and Employment as the next two standards areas for development.

Discussion followed on transportation, the results in the Working Toward an Accessible Nova Scotia report, and how priority areas may have shifted because of COVID-19.

Rosalind Penfound reminded the Board that the third and fourth standard areas would not be addressed simultaneously, rather work would occur on the third standard area followed by the fourth standard area. She recommended the Board vote on the third area so that work can begin and allow the new Board to advance a recommendation on the fourth standard area.

Motion: Cynthia Bruce moved to recommend to the Minister that the third standard area be Employment. David Caswell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Feb. 3 Minister's Visit

Rosalind Penfound updated the Board that Minister Furey will attend the final meeting of the Board on February 3, 2021. The Board discussed their accomplishments they would like to highlight to the

Minister. It was suggested Minister be made aware of challenges the Board faced and suggested improvements going forward. The Board will thank the Minister for his leadership, particularly during COVID-19.

d. 2019-2020 Board Report

Maddi MacDonald, Accessibility Directorate, presented the draft 2019-2020 Board Report for discussion. Board members noted the need to use “persons with disabilities, Deaf, and/or neurodivergent persons” in the report instead of “persons with disabilities”. It was also suggested that the Board forego their photos in the report to honour Alex Peeler, whose photo is included.

David Caswell moved to approve report with noted amendments. Kevin Russell seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

e. Board Report Card

Lisa Jacobs, Accessibility Directorate, introduced the topic. Lynn Liao, Research Associate at Davis Pier, presented a sample dashboard that could be used in the future to monitor progress of *Access By Design*. The dashboard can be included in annual Board reports or on a Website and regularly updated. Board members emphasized that the report card and all materials presented to the Board need to be fully accessible.

f. Bill-59 Alliance Update

This agenda item was deferred.

4. Accessibility Directorate Update

a. Updates on Current Directorate Activities

i. Inclusive Education

An article in December 2020 reported that Nova Scotia had unspent funds that had been allocated to inclusive education. Staff followed up with officials at EECD for background as well as with Autism NS for their perspective. Approximately \$3.5 million of the

\$15 million funding for Inclusive Education will not be spent in 2020-21; however, EECD has confirmed that this funding will be available to regions in 2021-22.

Some hiring in the Regional Centres of Educations is paused, given the uncertainty in the system related to COVID-19, and some regions are having difficulties filling positions. A small percentage of students are currently learning at home. If a student has health issues, parents/guardians are advised by EECD to discuss their child's risk of COVID-19 related illness with their medical specialist. If the advice is for a student to learn from home, parents/guardians are advised to work with the school principal to ensure that their child is supported to learn from home. If parents/guardians experience issues in this regard, they are advised to contact the Student Services Facilitator or Coordinator in the region or board.

ii. Awareness Campaign

Results of the Accessibility Creative Testing Research conducted in December clearly show Concept Two (Access includes everyone in everyday life) should be selected for further development. Creative Development and web design are scheduled to begin this month. The aim is to launch the campaign in Spring 2021.

iii. Prescribed Public Sector Bodies

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, several prescribed public sector bodies (PPSB) have expressed concerns about meeting their obligations under the Accessibility Act within the previously announced timelines for developing accessibility plans. In January, a one-year extension to the timelines was approved for Prescribed Public Sector Bodies as follows: Cohort 1 – prescribed effective April 1, 2021 includes all municipalities and villages, universities, Nova Scotia Community College, and Regional Libraries.

Cohort 2 – prescribed effective April 1, 2022 includes Housing Nova Scotia, Develop Nova Scotia, Events East, Conseil Scolaire Acadian Provincial, Regional Centres for Education, Nova Scotia Health Authority, IWK Health Centre, Atlantic Provinces Special

Education Authority, Nova Scotia Business Inc., Nova Scotia Innovation Corporation, Tourism Nova Scotia, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, and Nova Scotia Museum.

Cohort 1 will now have until April 1, 2022 to develop an accessibility plan and establish an accessibility committee; while Cohort 2 will have until April 1, 2023. All PPSB have been notified.

iv. Standards Recommendations

Recommendations for accessibility standards in education and the built environment were made public this week and available on the Accessibility Directorate web site. The Department of Justice will be promoting the recommendations and acknowledging the excellent work of the Board and Standard Development Committees via emails to stakeholders, social media, thank you letters, and other activities including a resolution in the Spring during Accessibility Awareness Week.

v. COVID-19 Email to Disability Organizations in January

In March 2020, the Accessibility Directorate emailed approximately 60 community organizations across the province, including the Accessibility Advisory Board, to ask for information about critical issues related to COVID-19 impacting Nova Scotians with disabilities. As issues were raised in Spring 2020, they were communicated to the Senior Officials Vulnerable Citizens Committee and directly to staff in relevant departments and other partners for response. A report titled *COVID-19- Responding to the Needs of Nova Scotians with Disabilities* was released in September 2020 and summarized the issues and how they were addressed. A follow-up email to these organizations will be sent in February 2021 to establish the current state of persons with disabilities navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Adjournment

Next meeting will be on Wednesday, February 3, 2021. This will be the last meeting of this Board.