

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

Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting by Zoom

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

Guests: Laurie Cranton, Chair, and Ramzi Kawar, Vice-Chair, Built Environment Standard Development Committee

Staff: Dawn Stegen (Interim Executive Director), Gerry Post (Leadership Transition), Terri Lynn Almeda, Amy Middleton, Caroline Read Kendell, Jenny Sears, Carla Bezanson, Avery Maynard, Laura Beth MacPherson, Lisa Jacobs

## **1. Welcome**

Doug Foster, Chair, welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting.

Dawn Stegen, Accessibility Directorate, Interim Executive Director, introduced three new staff in Senior Policy Analyst positions and reviewed Zoom protocols.

## **2. A Moment of Silence for Alex Peeler**

The Chair acknowledged the recent death of Board member, Mr. Alex Peeler, and highlighted that this is a significant loss to the Board and for the disability community. The Board recognized a minute of silence in memory of Mr. Peeler.

## **3. Board Operations**

### **a. Review of Agenda**

The Board reviewed and accepted the agenda. The Board noted that as this meeting is focused on the Education Standards, the action items from the June 11, 2020, meeting will be reviewed at the August 18, 2020 meeting.

### **b. Approval of Minutes from June 11, 2020 Meeting**

**Motion:** Barry Abbott moved to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2020 meeting. Rosalind Penfound seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **c. ABC Diversity Recruitment and Inclusion Report**

Doug Foster, Chair, provided an overview of the annual report which was completed and submitted by the Accessibility Advisory Board to the Department of Justice. All Department of Justice Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs) complete this annual report to promote the principles of diversity and inclusion and to ensure that transparency and accountability mechanisms are in place. The Accessibility Advisory Board's annual report notes that the majority of members have completed diversity training and that while the Board strongly reflects some aspects of diversity, increased racial and cultural diversity is important and will be pursued as vacancies arise.

### **d. Consensus Decision Making Model**

Rosalind Penfound, Vice Chair, presented an overview of the Consensus Decision Making Model, which has been adopted by the Standard Development Committees, as this model may be useful to the Board in considering the recommendations, rather than using a majority yes/no decision making model. The Board discussed the strengths of the consensus decision making model, such as supporting more fulsome discussion of differences in views, as well as some limitations, such as potentially taking more time if further discussion is needed.

**Motion:** Rosalind Penfound moved that the Accessibility Advisory Board use the Consensus Decision-Making Model, as circulated, to make decisions about the Phase 1 recommendations for education and built environment standards. Cynthia Bruce seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

## **4. Education Standards**

Amy Middleton, Accessibility Directorate, provided an overview of the process to develop standards development and related requirements under the Accessibility Act.

Rosalind Penfound, Chair, Education Standard Development Committee, presented the committee's Phase 1 recommendations to establish a foundation for accessibility standards in education.

The first phase of recommendations outlines critical conditions and commitments that Nova Scotia's education system must ensure in order to realize equitable access to education as a fundamental human right. The recommendations are foundational and include commitments in the areas of capacity building, teaching and learning, accessibility services, communication and navigation, research, and

accountability. The recommendations are not for accessibility standards, but will provide the framework for more specific recommendations for accessibility standards in Phase 2.

The Education Standard Development Committee is recommending that this first phase of recommendations be implemented as provincial guidelines endorsed by Government, or as a provincial charter on accessible education. They are also recommending that a regulation be enacted requiring public education entities prescribed as public sector bodies under the Act to implement the guidelines/ Charter in their accessibility plans.

The recommendations were informed by consultation with over 700 Nova Scotians involved in the education system as students, parents, and staff. The committee also considered information provided through a jurisdictional review, and presentations and resources from those working in the education system.

The Board discussed the recommendations, as well as the definitions included in the recommendations, including consideration of additional definitions such as language deprivation and universal design for learning. The Board also discussed the importance of investment in education to ensure that all Nova Scotians participate and achieve in society, and the recommendation that these form a provincial charter on accessible education.

**Motion:** Rosalind Penfound moved that the Accessibility Advisory Board accept the Phase 1 recommendations as submitted by the Education Standard Development Committee, with an amendment to include reference to 'language deprivation' in the definitions, and that the recommendations be forwarded to the Minister of Justice. Cynthia Bruce seconded the motion. Motion was carried by consensus, as per the consensus decision making model.

## **5. Next Meeting**

Doug Foster, Chair, confirmed that the next meeting will be on Thursday, July 30, 2020 to review the recommendations from the Built Environment Standard Development Committee.

## **6. Adjournment**