

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes Part 2**  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

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Rosalind Penfound (Chair), Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair, Lewis Pope, Max Chauvin, Melissa MacKenzie, Denise DiGiosia

Regrets: Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Staff: Terri Lynn Almeda, Dawn Stegen, Amy Middleton, Crissy Adams, Kristel vom Scheidt, Fola Adeleke, Maddi Adams, Amy Middleton, Craig MacKinnon, Andrew Jantzen, Hannah MacDougall, Lashauna Smith

## **1. Welcome**

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

Roz reminded the Board that this is the second half of the February meeting and will mainly be updates from the Directorate staff with no external guests. She explained at the end of the meeting there will be time for a longer roundtable discussion to hear from Board members who did not share the week prior.

### **a. Board Operations**

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

Roz explained there was one change to the agenda item 3. a.ii: Good and Services. The agenda indicates standard development committee selection recommendations. The Board's selection subcommittee has not completed it's work yet. Dawn Stegen, Executive Director, will provide an update on next steps during this agenda item. The amended agenda was accepted.

### **b. Outstanding Business**

- Dawn Stegen, Executive Director informed the Board that since their last meeting the Minister has approved Public Transportation to be the 5<sup>th</sup> accessibility standard to be developed.
- She noted that the provincial Legislative Assembly will resume for the spring sitting on March 21, 2023.
- Dawn also indicated that the statement of work for a ASL coordinator with the Directorate has been approved for a one-year position and the request for proposals will be shared widely in the coming months.

### 3. Standards

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

##### i. Employment: Update

Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst gave an update on the work of the Employment SDC including their plans to meet in person in May to review and theme the draft recommendations. She explained that these will be further refined in June and will be presented to the Board in July. The draft recommendations will go out for public consultations in Fall 2023 and will come to the Board for feedback and final approval in early 2024.

##### ii. Goods and Services: Update

Dawn Stegen explained that the application deadline was extended a few times and there were many applications received from all regions of the province and various sectors. Currently the Board's application selection committee is reviewing this information and will present their recommendation to the Board in the coming weeks. There was a request from the selection committee to consider the recommendations for members at a special meeting of the Board the week of March 6 to 10, 2023.

**ACTION:** Board members will receive an email to poll availability for a special meeting the week of March 6 to 10.

#### b. Education Standard: Update

Amy Middleton, Senior Policy Analyst provided an update that the recommendations for a standard in education are currently being reviewed by the Minister. She reminded the Board that they received an email about the launch of the Decision-Making Guidelines for Accessible Education that are now posted on the Directorate's website. These Guidelines were also distributed to public and private education sectors, with a joint letter from the Ministers of Justice, Education and Early Childhood Development, Advanced Education, and Labour, Skills and Immigration, encouraging staff to use them to inform policy and program decisions. Amy explained that work is underway with these departments to develop a collaborative approach for drafting a proposed standard.

Roz reminded the Board of their discussions at their November meeting on issues that represent recommendations for other standard areas. There were three areas that require further direction in relation to the Built Environment and Goods and Services to ensure this work is considered. Roz proposed the following:

**Motion:** To request the Accessibility Directorate and Minister to examine the situation of buildings that have no plans for renovations, for example heritage buildings on university campuses.

Motion moved by Max Chauvin and seconded by Melissa MacKenzie, motion passed.

**Motion:** To recommend to the Minister that accessibility requirements in the built environment be considered for early learning and childcare settings be developed and enacted as regulations under the Accessibility Act or the Early Learning and Child Care Act.

Motion moved by Birgit Elssner and seconded by Ellen Johnson, motion passed.

**Motion:** To request the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee to consider a recommendation on implementation of adequate internet services to support the use of assistive technology and communication services in schools. Motion moved by Ellen Johnson and seconded by Denise DiGiosia, motion passed.

**c. Built Environment Standard: Update**

Maddi Adams, Senior Policy Analyst gave a presentation on the proposed approach for public posting of the draft Built Environment standard and the timelines. They explained this work includes regulations under the Accessibility Act, additions to the Nova Scotia Building Code, as well as guidelines. They stated the public posting of the draft standard is a requirement under the Act. Maddi explained the plan is to collect feedback through an online engagement platform in early summer linked to the Directorate website and more detailed summaries in technical language will be posted as well. Maddi said the analysis of public feedback will take place this fall and be shared with the Board before the standard is finalized and approval is sought to enact it.

There were questions from the Board on the possibility of supporting some communities to participate in the public engagement, specifically for those who don't have access to technology or the internet. Maddi responded that print copies would be made available.

Another question was about partners and groups that could share and promote the opportunity to comment on the draft standard to their own members and stakeholders. Maddi responded to say that accessibility leads in PPSB's will be asked to assist in communications.

The Board asked about best practices for this process from other jurisdictions. They also commented that the spring and summer is a busy time for the construction industry and recommended an engagement session be held with architects, designers, and contractors.

One member commented that they would like to see a comparison table and review the reasons why recommendations advanced by the Board were not accepted in the proposed standard.

Another comment from the Board was regarding the method of consultation, explaining that townhalls are often the most effective way of gathering feedback from the Deaf and hard of hearing community. This Board member recommended connecting with the Maritime Association of Professional Sign Language Interpreters and the Nova Scotia Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing to help coordinate a townhall.

There was a question from the Board if members of the Interdepartmental Working Group have a background in universal design or barrier free design. Maddi responded to say there is a combination of both.

During the discussion Board members shared related resources:

-Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Cost Comparison Feasibility Study <https://hcma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020.01.15-RHFAC-FINAL-Report-FULL-v4.pdf>

-Updated Canadian Standard Association Accessible Design for the Built Environment: B651-23 <https://www.csagroup.org/store/product/CSA-ASC%20B651%3A23/>

#### **d. 5<sup>th</sup> Standard Update (Public Transportation)**

Fola Adeleke, Senior Policy Analyst gave an update on the preliminary work for the standard in Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure. He explained that the first step will be an academic literature review, including reports and best practice guides, and review the of existing standards, regulations, and policies within Nova Scotia and across Canada. Fola also explained the Directorate will be meeting and engaging with external partners and key government departments and has joined the provincial active transportation strategy working group led by the department of Public Works.

### **4. Business**

#### **a. Awareness Campaign Update**

Terri Lynn Almeda, Manager gave an update on the accessibility awareness campaign “Access Includes Everyone”, specifically showcasing images from a province wide photoshoot that took place over the fall and winter. She explained there were thousands of photos taken from almost every region in the province in a variety of settings, and there are plans to share with the rest of government.

There was a discussion amongst the Board on the importance of breaking down stigma around disability, but the challenge is to garner the attention of people who are not acknowledging that this is an issue. They explained there is a need for imagery and language geared towards getting this audience to pay attention.

Another comment was about the importance of having a visual description to accompany the images.

The last comment was about the importance of showing people with disabilities in their everyday lives, as most of the images in the presentation depicted only those with disabilities together and not in a mixed, larger group.

#### **b. Compliance and Enforcement Framework: Overview**

Lashauna Smith, Senior Policy Analyst gave a presentation on the development of the Compliance and Enforcement Framework and the three-year implementation plan. She explained this approach would start with monitoring, detecting, and verifying non-compliance, collaborating to achieve compliance, and lastly enforcement. Lashauna explained that the Directorate is in the discovery phase of a digital solution that will act as a compliance database, and she would like to ask participation from any Board members who would be interested to be part of this work.

The Board asked if this database would monitor compliance for only the standards or other parts of the Accessibility Act. Lashauna replied to say they are still in the discovery process, but it will most likely be one database with different sections for all areas.

There was a comment from the Board about the grey areas and gaps in the compliance and monitoring of the Nova Scotia building code. They were wondering how this can be avoided when it comes to the accessibility regulations and improve the inspection process. Lashauna responded to say that complaints that are not part of our standards will be referred to the Building Code officials, but there is a possibility to build capacity of those inspectors in the process.

The Board asked if these future inspectors will be government employees and if there would be opportunities for those with lived experiences to be a part of the process as staff or consultants. Lashauna responded to say that they will be government employees, although there would be a first voice committee to provide advice, training, and guidance as well.

## **5. Board Priorities and Standing Agenda Items**

### **c. PPSB Update**

Andrew Jantzen, Accessibility Capacity Building Program Specialist gave a status update on the accessibility plans submitted to date. 84% of cohort 1 PPSB's have developed and submitted plans with several joint plans amongst municipalities and libraries. Those who have not submitted plans are municipalities and villages and all but two anticipate completing them by May 2023.

Andrew shared that all the plans were reviewed and assessed for compliance based on four requirements: progress made to remove and prevent barriers, how the organization will remove and prevent barriers, processes in place to assess the impact of proposed actions, and if the plans were publicly available. He explained that of the plans submitted 70% met all obligations and the Directorate has been following up with those that did not to offer support.

Andrew explained the Directorate has been in touch with PPSB's in cohort 2, with a deadline of April 1, 2023 for submission of their plans.

The Board asked about PPSB's developing joint plans, if they also had joint Accessibility Advisory Committees. Andrew responded yes.

Another question was asked if organizations in cohort 1 who have not met the obligations in their plans have been informed, and Andrew responded that is currently in progress.

The last question was about how much support will be given to those who have not met all the obligations in their accessibility plans. Andrew responded to say that they have the option to amend their plans now or include changes in their next plan in 2025.

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

Fola Adeleke, Senior Policy Analyst reported that the Directorate is attending regular meetings with staff in the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He explained this has led to an invitation to present to the Investment Property Owners Association of Nova Scotia (IPOANS) to increase awareness on the rental repair and adaptation program. He is working with Municipal Affairs and Housing to develop a joint communication sheet for housing stakeholders on the accessible housing programs that are currently available. Fola said discussions are underway to develop a broader educational plan for this sector which may include webinars and meetings with landlords, property developer associations and the new affordable housing association of Nova Scotia.

### **c. COVID-19**

Maddi Adams, Senior Policy Analyst referred to the presentation they gave to the Board last May regarding the findings of outreach to the disability communities on their experiences during the pandemic. Maddi explained that the findings from this outreach have since been shared internally across several government departments and have been used to inform policy development and priority setting, and at pan Canadian conferences and meetings.

They explained that these results were recently shared back to the disability communities who participated in the outreach.

There was a question from the Board regarding any findings on the affects of specific accessibility issues during covid, such as safety barriers, masks, distancing, signage not being accessible. Maddi responded to say yes, this was covered in their initial sessions.

Roz reiterated the importance of this work to give insight into some of the broader issues that the disability communities are facing, which have been amplified by the pandemic.

### **d. Roundtable**

Roz opened the discussion about the concerns of the community relating to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) and asked what other members thought about a future conversation on this issue.

There was support for this suggestion, specifically regarding MAID being offered to people with mental health disabilities and individuals who may not have the supports in place for other options.

The Board discussed the importance of these open conversations during the roundtable in their meetings. They suggested some updates be sent in advance and to use the roundtable for a deeper dive into issues facing disability communities. This would allow the Board to be proactive and be send more recommendations and advice to government.

There was consensus from the Board that more time needs to be built into their meetings to support these conversations, with a focus on the first voice experiences and what is happening in various communities.

Board members then each took time to report on their own work; discussing accessibility in long term care facilities, the opening up of day programming for adults with intellectual disabilities, participating in a global workshop at Gallaudet

University on sign languages in Science, and the Honour Song in Mi'kmaw sign language receiving an award and featured on CBC Gem.

One Board member spoke about the importance of prioritizing Mi'kmaw sign language and asked how the Board can support this. They were also an interest in having more conversations around cultural and language revitalization.

A member shared an article. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/honour-song-sign-language-translation-1.6717747>

The conversation then moved to the new Canadian Standard Association Accessible Design for the Built Environment: B651-23. A Board member noted that there is no cost, but that you still need to sign up for an account and require Adobe software to open it.

**ACTION**: Dawn will pass this feedback onto the Canadian Standards Association.

## 5. Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled in person on May 18, 2023 in the Halifax area. More details on this will be sent approximately a month in advance.