

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 18, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Max Chauvin (Acting Chair), Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair, Lewis Pope, Melissa MacKenzie

Regrets: Denise DiGiosia, Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Rosalind Penfound (Chair),

Guests: Maria Medioli, Director, Disability Support Program Department of Community Services, Tim Stainton School of Social Work and Director of the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship University of British Columbia.

Staff: Terri Lynn Almeda, Dawn Stegen, Amy Middleton, Laura Beth MacPherson, Kristel vom Scheidt, Jordan Keddy

1. Welcome and Review of New Agenda

Max Chauvin, Vice Chair, served as Acting Chair for the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement.

Max reminded members that an updated agenda was emailed in advance. Max also asked permission of members in attendance to record the meeting to share with those members who were absent. Agreement was reached to record the meeting.

2. Business

a. Human Rights Case Remedy Overview and Update

Max welcomed Maria Medioli, Director, Disability Support Program Department of Community Services. Maria gave an overview of the results of the Human Rights Case Remedy and the transformation of the Disability Support Program. She explained how the remedy process worked, who was involved, and that the technical report was submitted in February 2023. This report provides recommendations for remedying the areas of discrimination and served as a foundation for the Disability Rights Coalition and the province of Nova Scotia to develop a draft agreement.

Maria gave an overview of the recommendation outcomes and what they mean for partners across government. She explained that there is a five-year plan with goals and targets for implementing these recommendations, which will require planning

and ongoing engagement with first voice, families, and partners. Maria also noted that an independent expert will assess progress and report back annually.

Maria explained that changes to the Disability Support program will follow the principles laid out in the remedy and will result in decreased waitlists, increased support options for participants to live in the community, lower caseloads for program staff, and stabilization of funding for service providers.

There was a question from the Board on the timeline of the Board of inquiry to do the review, and Maria explained that they are working through the approval process now.

Maria also mentioned that a website will be created for this work and relevant news and update will be available for the public to follow the progress.

ACTION: Board members will be sent a link to this website when it is available.

b. Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

Dr. Tim Stainton, Professor with the School of Social Work and Director of the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship University of British Columbia was introduced.

Tim gave an overview of the history and context of MAID in Canada, and an overview of the disability concerns and examples of individual experiences. He reviewed the intersecting issues of insufficient long-term care/personal care options, experiences of poverty and weak safeguards built into the MAID process. He also highlighted key concerns with mental illness disability, including the difficulties in determining if the condition is remediable, no requirement to accept potential treatments, a 90-day waiting period between request and administration, and concerns with consent.

There was consensus from the Board that they needed time to process the issues raised. There was a comment regarding the disability paradox as an attitudinal barrier, the false conception that those living with a disability are always suffering with a lower quality of life. They were hopeful that with the inclusion of first voice perspectives in policy and legislation that this will change.

The Board also wanted to know what supports are available to people who need them in this process, and how MAID is being administered in Nova Scotia. Tim responded to say that each province is responsible for implementing MAID and they have the ability to make changes on the regulatory side, for example Quebec is not instituting MAID for mental illness. Tim noted few people are aware of these issues.

ACTION: Board members in attendance agreed that they would like to connect with Nova Scotia Health and Wellness and learn about the protocols for MAID implementation.

c. Act Review

The Board received on May 17, the link to the Accessibility Act Review Report prepared by Dr. Katie Aubrecht. Max introduced Lisa Jacobs, Senior Policy Analyst to give a summary of the report, and the recommendations that specifically pertain to the work of the Board.

Max explained that this is the Boards first review of these findings and recommendations, and that the conversation can continue over the next few months.

There was a question from the Board on the next steps to engage with the Deaf community regarding these findings. Max responded to say that the Board can decide on the next steps for further promotion and sharing of the report with various communities.

ACTION: Make the Act Review Report a standard agenda item for the June, July and September meetings.

d. Roundtable and Feedback

Max thanked four members for representing the Board during a recent meeting with the Chief Accessibility Officer for Canada, Stephanie Cadieux. It was an important discussion and connection to make.

Max opened up the floor to members to comment on any previous items from the meeting or to share something that relates to their work or community.

A few Board members expressed that the presentation on MAID was insightful and unsettling, and they would need some time to think about the issues raised. One member expressed interest in bringing this information to more groups within the province, and to raise awareness on how this issue affects the disability community. Specifically, they would like the Board to provide advice to the health care system and it's regulating bodies.

ACTION: Board to consider how they would like to action continuing the discussion re: MAID and meeting with the health officials at a future meeting.

The Board is interested in meeting again in June to have time to discuss the recommendations in the Act Review. One member expressed interest in discussing

the role of the Board and capacity to outreach with community on the Act Review Report.

Another member explained the confusion they have regarding heritage buildings meeting the new barrier-free sections of the Nova Scotia Building Code. They explained that business owners do not know where to find information, and there is no coordination between the inspectors, business community, and municipalities. They would like to learn more about this and expressed an interest in having a future discussion as a Board to ensure that all players are considered, informed, and supported. Two more members echoed this concern, noting this is an example of what is going to happen with the industry in general around accessibility regulations.

ACTION: The Chair to consider Heritage building and built environment related education for an agenda item at a future meeting.

The Board would also like to revisit the workplan that was created at the beginning of the year and review any outstanding items.

ACTION: The Chair to consider the Board work plan for an agenda item at a future meeting.

One Board member commented that it was interesting to receive an overview on the Remedy from Department of Community Services. Another would like to revisit and discuss some of the details of the Remedy Report.

ACTION: The Chair to consider the Remedy Report for an agenda item at a future meeting.

3. Adjournment

Max adjourned the meeting and explained that members would receive dates regarding scheduling a June meeting and reminded the Board of the scheduled July 6 and 13 meetings.