

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, June 20, 2023 – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

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Rosalind Penfound (Chair), Max Chauvin (Vice Chair), Linda Campbell, Birgit Elssner, Ellen Johnson, Anne Sinclair, Melissa MacKenzie, Earl Muise

Regrets: Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Lewis Pope

Absent: Denise DiGiosia

Guests: Cynthia Carroll, Chair of the Education Council on Disability, Inclusion and Accessibility and Executive Director, Autism Nova Scotia,

Staff: Terri Lynn Almeda, Dawn Stegen, Kristel vom Scheidt, Jordan Keddy

## **1. Welcome**

Roz Penfound, Chair welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. She also gave attention to the fact that June is Indigenous History Month in Canada and International Pride Month,

Roz thanked Max for acting as Chair at the May meeting, and welcomed new Board member, Earl Muise who introduced himself, and members did the same. Roz explained that she will be meeting with Earl and Dawn Stegen next month for an orientation.

## **2. Board Operations**

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

Roz reviewed the meeting agenda and explained that for item 4.c. a guest will be joining the Board during the roundtable discussion. Cynthia Carroll, Chair of the Education Council on Disability, Inclusion and Accessibility and Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia will speak about the strike involving Support Workers in Halifax Regional Centre for Education and the impact this has had on children with disabilities and their families.

### **b. Approval of Minutes from Feb 16, 23 and May 18, 2023**

**Motion:** There was a suggested amendment to the May 18, 2023, minutes to change the wording disability community to communities. The amended minutes for the May and February meetings were moved by Birgit Elssner and Melissa MacKenzie seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **c. Outstanding Business**

Dawn Stegen, Executive Director gave some staffing updates, including the introduction of Jordan Keddy who is a Master's Student of Public Administration at Dalhousie University, and working as a Junior Policy Analyst for the summer. She announced the Directorate is hiring a Manager, Senior Policy Analyst, and a Program Officer for compliance and enforcement. Dawn's update included an update on the organizational structure which now includes two Director positions and some staff who are part-time are increasing their hours. Dawn also noted the American Sign Language (ASL) Coordinator did not receive any applications through a Request for Proposals procurement process.

Some discussion followed on the limitations of the RFP and hire process for the ASL Coordinator position.

Terri Lynn Almeda, Director of Program and Services clarified that the job description created in consultation with the Maritime Association of Professional Sign Language Interpreters (MAPSLI) and The Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians (SDHHNS). It is a part time consultant position and procurement procedures require an invitational process. The Directorate will be working with procurement and the plan is to host an information session to connect with potential candidates and answer any questions regarding the opportunity.

Dawn reviewed a number of actions from the previous Board meeting, including: sharing a link of Human Rights Case Remedy website when it is available, the Board work plan will be reviewed at a future meeting, the Accessibility Act Review will be a standing agenda item for the July and September meetings, and the Directorate will connect with the Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health to learn about the protocols for implementation of Medical Assistance in Dying.

## **3. Standards**

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

#### **i. Employment: Update**

Roz introduced the Chair of the Employment Standard Development Committee, Charlie MacDonald who gave an overview of the types of recommendations that are being drafted and an update on timelines and plans for fall public consultations.

#### **ii. Questions Goods and Services, Transportation, Education Standard, Built Environment Standard**

Roz explained that a written update on the status of the other accessibility standards was sent after the May Board meeting. Not included in that update was the recent addition of a member of the Deaf community to the Goods and

Services SDC. This individual was reconsidered after the initial screening and has agreed to join the committee.

**MOTION:** That the Accessibility Advisory Board approve Zoh Quereshi for membership on the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee and his membership recommendation be advanced to the Minister of Justice for approval.

Motion moved by Linda Campbell and seconded by Max Chauvin. Motion carried unanimously.

Roz reminded the Board of a request they received the week prior to join a working group which will conduct a review of the recruitment practices for standard development committees. One Board member has expressed interest to join this working group, and she would like to have two more.

### **b. Act Review Recommendations**

Roz introduced Terri Lynn Almeda, Director of Program and Services as well as Jordan Keddy, Junior Policy Analyst, who will be facilitating the conversation on the recommendations from Act Review Report that pertain to the Accessibility Advisory Board. Jordan and Terri Lynn presented the background and timelines for feedback and reviewed each recommendation with the evidence in the report. They collected feedback from Board members to support the Government's response to the Act Review report. There were conversations about more Board autonomy, including the advantages and disadvantages of this, including financial implications and the flow of information and communication between the Board and Directorate.

Jordan and Terri Lynn addressed the recommendation regarding a Co-Chair governance model with a disability organization in the community.

There was a conversation regarding the recommendation for a youth panel of the Board. Other discussions included the importance of including intersectionality more explicitly in the SDC's terms of reference.

The Board discussed the need for better communication about what happens after the standards are enacted and when they get reviewed.

Roz explained that due to the volume of recommendations this conversation will continue over the next few meetings, and if necessary, a small working group of the Board will be formed to assist with coordination.

### **c. Roundtable and Discussion**

Roz reminded the Board that most of this time will be spent on a conversation regarding the recent Support Workers Strike in the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) and the impact on children with disabilities and their families.

Roz gave some background and history for the context for this job action and that the most significant issues came out of this situation is the right or workers to strike and right for students to attend school. She explained that the education sector does not fall under the Essential Health and Community Services Act and therefore employees cannot be forced to return to work.

Roz said this is an important issue for the Board to learn about and consider. She then introduced Cynthia Carroll, Chair of the Education Council on Disability, Inclusion and Accessibility and Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia.

Cynthia explained one of the struggles is that all Regional Centres for Education operate with different decision-making processes. At the beginning of the strike all students who has support of an Educational Program Assistant were sent home, with the rationale being various safety issues. HRCE didn't haven't contingency planning in place. She shared stories of parents not having alternative arrangements with many having to take vacation or unpaid time off work. The resulting experience on families and students has been traumatizing. There was a history of schools prioritizing the most vulnerable during the pandemic by bringing them back to school first, but this did not apply during this strike, and was very inconsistent and confusing for families, which further segregated the students. Cynthia explained transition meetings between families and supports within the school system were cancelled, which meant students did not receive any of these services. The Council on Disability, Inclusion and Accessibility wants to work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to ensure that this doesn't happen in the future.

Roz thanked Cynthia and discussion followed.

**ACTION: Board Chair and Vice Chair will consider advice to Minister and bring to the Board for feedback.**

#### **4. Adjournment**

Roz adjourned the meeting and reminded members of the scheduled July 6 and 13 meetings.