

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 13, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

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

Regrets: Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Denise DiGiosia

Guests: Charlie MacDonald, Chair Employment Standard Development Committee, Doramy Ehling, Chief Executive Officer and Brad McCannell, Vice President of Access and Inclusion of the Rick Hansen Foundation

Staff: Terri Lynn Almeda, Dawn Stegen, Kristel vom Scheidt, Jordan Keddy, Cris Adams, Fola Adeleke, Maddi Adams,

1. Welcome

Roz Penfound, Chair welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement and shared that July is Disability Pride month. She reminded the Board that this is the second part of a two-part meeting from the week prior.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

Roz explained that due to scheduling, the agenda has been amended and items #2: Act Review Recommendations and #4: Standard Updates have switched time slots. The amended agenda was accepted.

b. Approval of Minutes from June 20

Motion: A motion to accept the circulated June 20, 2023 meeting minutes was moved by Birgit Elssner and seconded by Earl Muise.

c. Outstanding Business

Dawn Stegen, Executive Director reported she and Roz met with new member Earl for a Board orientation last month. They were also able to visit Birgit at her workplace with plans to connect with other Board members in the coming months.

Dawn reported on a number of projects and news including;

- the “Are you Ready” emergency preparedness guide will be launched into a webinar this fall, partnering with the Emergency Management Office and the Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

- The Accessibility Coordinator for the Association of Municipal Administrators has left their position and this opportunity is currently posted until August 4th.
- Staff at the Directorate are currently creating a list of conferences and community events the Directorate could have a presence. She encouraged board members to pass along any events or conferences happening in their community.
- A Board subcommittee is conducting a review of SDC recruitment practices and processes over the summer with recommendations presented at the September meeting. The Directorate is supporting this process.
- The Board 2022-2023 Annual Report will come to the Board this fall for feedback and approval.
- An update on the Board's workplan and progress made so far will be sent out in advance of the September meeting.

3. Business

a. Act Review Recommendations

Terri Lynn Almeda, Director of Program and Services and Jordan Keddy, Junior Policy Analyst continued the conversation from the last meeting on the Act Review Report, with the focus specifically on advice from the Board to the Minister on issues that should be a high priority for government. Discussions took place on the importance of accessible housing, and more engagement with the business community. A smaller working group of the Board to meet and finalize this advice to the Minister, which will be presented to the September meeting for approval. Any additional comments from the discussion could be sent in by email.

4. Standards

a. Education Standard: Update

Dawn Stegen gave the update on behalf of Amy Middleton. She noted the recent public release of the draft Phase 2 Education Recommendations and the CBC Cape Breton radio interview. All partners including PPSB's received information on the posting of the recommendations via email. Work is underway to draft an approach for a government interdepartmental working group to review all the recommendations.

b. Built Environment Standard: Update

Maddi Adams, Senior Policy Analyst gave an update to say the draft standard has been reviewed by Government departments including the Office of Regulatory Affairs.

The target date is late August for public posting of the proposed standard for 60 days for comment. After the public review period, there will be a process to share feedback with the Board, finalize the regulatory language, complete the compliance and implementation education plan for the standard, and advance the standard for approval and enactment as regulations.

A request for a written update on standards, in the future, was made.

c. Standard Development Committees (SDC)

i. Employment: Update

Charlie MacDonald, Chair of the Employment SDC gave an update that the committee has reviewed the first draft of the proposed standard, which will be organized into categories such as systems change, funding and resources, career exploration and job search, recruitment and hiring, accommodation, return to work, and emergency preparedness. SDC members have provided feedback on the draft recommendations, and a meeting was held July 12 to discuss some additional questions that arose.

The SDC is also working on how to define large and small employers, and that a smaller working group is finalizing the definitions of significant terms that will be part of the recommendations.

The SDC is meeting in August and September to finalize the draft recommendations with the goal of reviewing them with the Board in October prior to public consultations in November.

ii. Goods and Services: Update

Fola Adeleke, Senior Policy Analyst reported that a jurisdictional scan and literature review on goods and services has been completed as well as consultation reports on barriers to goods and services. He stated research materials are being sent to the SDC for their meeting in September. An orientation meeting for the SDC was held in June, after this they will meet monthly and will advance their work plan to the Board later this fall.

iii. Transportation: Update

Dawn Stegen gave the update. The recruitment of this SDC will take place later in the fall after the Board subcommittee review on SDC recruitment has advanced recommendations.

Business (continued)

b. Rick Hansen Foundation

Doramy Ehling, Chief Executive Officer and Brad McCannell, Vice President of Access and Inclusion of the Rick Hansen Foundation gave an overview of their key

programs and initiatives over the past 35 years, including their school programs, public awareness campaign, research initiatives, and their renown accessibility certification training.

There was time for questions and the Board was glad to hear that the Rick Hansen Foundation is changing their certification to recognize the mobility bias and that the cost of the certification itself can be a barrier.

The Board asked the presenters about pan-Canadian issues and opportunities. The need to create a better alignment between provinces and federal government accessibility work was raised.

b. Roundtable

Roz opened up the floor to discuss accessibility issues Board members are working on or affecting their communities. The Board is interested in meeting with the Nova Scotia Seniors Advisory Council and the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

ACTION: Directorate will follow up with the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and add to the Board's workplan.

The problem that the Deaf and Deaf blind community have accessing mental health care, specifically those who suffer from depression and can't access qualified interpreters was raised. Discussion on this issue was recommended.

In response to this the Board raised the connection between mental health and housing. Losing housing because someone is unable to access mental health support is an important issue to discuss further.

ACTION: Staff will invite Office of Mental Health and Addictions to speak to these issues at a future Board meeting.

4. Adjournment

The next full day in person meeting is planned for September 21st in Halifax. Roz adjourned the meeting.