

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

Board Members: Rosalind Penfound (Chair), Max Chauvin (Vice Chair), Birgit Elssner, Ellen Johnson, Melissa MacKenzie, Lewis Pope, Denise DiGiosia, Anne Sinclair

Regrets: Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Linda Campbell, Earl Muise,

Guests: Lisa Snider, Chair of Goods and Services Standard Development Committee; Christine Gibbons, Executive Director of Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives; Miranda Romkey, Policy Analyst of Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives; Ross Sampson, Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee

Staff: Dawn Stegen, Kristel vom Scheidt, Jordan Keddy, Cris Adams, Fola Adeleke, Amy Middleton, Meghan Murphy, Hannah MacDougall, Jordan Keddy, Laura Beth MacPherson

1. Welcome and Introductions

Roz Penfound, Chair welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement and noted that November is Indigenous Disability Awareness Month and Transgender Day of Remembrance was November 20. She also reminded the Board that this is the first part of a two-part meeting, with the second half next week.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The agenda as previously circulated was accepted.

b. Approval of Minutes from September 21, 2023

Roz recognized a spelling mistake to correct Amy's name.

Motion: A motion to accept the amended September 21, 2023 meeting minutes was moved by Birgit Elssner and seconded by Max Chauvin.

c. Outstanding Business

Dawn Stegen, Executive Director gave an update on outstanding items from previous meetings including an updated Board Work Plan.

At the last meeting, the Board expressed interest in raising the issue of the Vulnerable Persons Registry with the Minister Justice. If that is their wish, a letter should be drafted by the Board.

The Directorate staff recently attended the “Rebuilding Hope Conference 2023” organized by the Nova Scotia Disability Rights Coalition regarding the Human Rights Remedy decision. A recorded video from the Premier of Nova Scotia with an apology for the treatment and institutionalization of people with disabilities was released.

In the fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly proclamations were introduced to recognize and honor the contributions of Steven Estey and Jen Powley for their advocacy, leadership, and dedication to making meaningful change for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia.

For staffing updates Dawn introduced Meghan Murphy as the new Senior Policy Analyst leading the Education Standard work.

Dawn explained that staff have been heavily involved in education and awareness work this fall. Several conferences have been attended, including the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, Association of Nova Scotia Museums, Nova Scotia Library Association, Nova Scotia Building Officials Association.

The Board letter regarding the Act Review Response was advanced to the Minister.

3. Standards

a. Education Standard: Update

Meghan Murphy, Senior Policy Analyst has been meeting with the government departments impacted by the education recommendations, reviewing the recommendations for intent, and conducting project planning. An external consultant has been hired to provide leadership and expertise and a project plan for supporting the affected departments.

b. Standard Development Committees

i. Goods and Services: Update

Lisa Snider, Chair of the Goods and Services SDC gave an update to explain they continue to meet regularly and reviewed results of consultations in African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities. The SDC has approved their Terms of Reference and had a presentation from the Manitoba and Ontario standards. The next step is to break into subgroups in their priority areas.

There was a question from the Board regarding the consultations in the Indigenous communities, and Lisa responded to say these findings will be presented at a future meeting.

ii: Public Transportation: Membership Criteria and Recruitment

Fola Adeleke, Senior Policy Analyst provided an overview of the member criteria and recruitment plan for the Public Transportation SDC, based on the updated documents completed through the recent recruitment review. Board members Earl Muise and Ellen Johnson are representing the Board on the recruitment subcommittee. A timeline for recruitment was reviewed and the Board will be advised when the call for applications is ready.

A Board member asked if the applications will be available in French. Amy Middleton, Director of Policy and Standards noted this was not done in the past but would consider a request for translation if one was received.

iii: Information and Communication: Terms of Reference

Hannah MacDougall, Accessibility Capacity Building Program Specialist gave an overview of the research conducted to inform the scope of the upcoming Information and Communication Standard. This standard will focus on digital, technological, print, and in-person information and communications processes.

Motion: That the Accessibility Advisory Board approve the Terms of Reference for the Information and Communication Standard Development Committee, as presented, and the Terms of Reference be advanced to the Minister of Justice for approval.”

Motion was moved by Birgit Elssner seconded by Anne Sinclair, motion carried unanimously.

Roz noted that a call will be going out to the Board for members to sit on the recruitment subcommittee for the Communications and Information SDC.

4. Business

a. Office of Equity and Anti-Racism

Christine Gibbons, Executive Director and Miranda Romkey, Policy Analyst from the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism gave a presentation on the Nova Scotia Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy that was released earlier this year. Christine explained that the strategy was built on community feedback that was received during engagement on the Act. Christine also outlined the alignment of this work with Directorate priorities, including their plans to develop a network of first-voice community groups.

There was a question from the Board regarding if hate crimes would fall under this work of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism. Christine responded to say that the Public Safety Division at Justice would be responsible for hate crimes, but the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism is working with Justice and the N.S. Human Rights

Commission to address community concerns about how to handle hate motivated crimes, especially those that do not meet the criminal threshold.

A question was asked if the anti-racism toolkit they are developing would be available for other organizations to use. Christine responded that will be available on their website.

The Board asked if plain language will be used when communicating their work publicly, Christine responded to say this is something they endeavour to do with all their resources.

c. Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee

Ross Sampson, member of the Build Environment SDC and member of the Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee, who also represents the Board on this group gave an update of their work since his appointment.

A Board member informed the group of a webinar that the Fire Marshalls office is hosting in December.

d. Prescribed Public Sector Bodies (PPSB) Compliance Update

Laura Beth MacPherson, Manager gave an update on requirements for PPSBs, including creating an advisory committee, making their accessibility plans public, and updating this plan every three years. The compliance status for Cohort 1 and 2 is: 93% have completed plans and 7% are in progress, with 47% of PPSB's being part of a joint accessibility plan.

More resources are being developed to support PPSBs from Cohort 1 to update their accessibility plans and the AMANS Municipal Accessibility Capacity Building program will also continue to support municipalities and villages meet their commitments under both the Accessibility Act.

Laura Beth confirmed updated plans for Cohort 1s are due by April 1, 2025. This will be communicated widely to PPSBs.

Discussion followed on resources, funding and compliance.

e. Roundtable

Roz opened up the discussion for updates from individual members.

One member spoke about the recent open house hosted by the Halifax Regional Municipality on the Vulnerable Persons Registry, homelessness and how this intersects with issues of accessibility. Another spoke on attending an information session from the Canadian Mental Health Association regarding psychological

health and safety in the workplace. One member reflected on their experience at the Accessibility Confident Employers session held by CoLab SeaChange a few weeks ago and the interest and discussion amongst participants. Another gave an update on the work the Department of Seniors and Long Term is doing to upgrade their facilities to be accessible. Another member spoke about the recent announcement by Nova Scotia Community College regarding student housing.

4. Adjournment

Roz thanked everyone for their time and reminded Board members of the second half of the meeting next week where they will be consulted on the feedback received on the proposed Built Environment Standard, and engaged in a session on the draft recommendations prepared by the Employment SDC.