

Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday May 16, 2024 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Board Members: Max Chauvin (Chair), Ellen Johnson (Vice-Chair), Birgit Elssner, Melissa MacKenzie, Earl Muise, Amy Lays, Louise Gillis, Sarah MacDonald, Shellene Sparks

Regrets: Denise DiGiosia, Linda Campbell

Staff: Dawn Stegen, Kristel vom Scheidt, Amy Middleton, Meghan Murphy, Ashley Gaudet, Lisa Jacobs

Guests: Charlie MacDonald, Chair of Employment Standard Development Committee; Alice Evans, Vice-Chair of Employment Standard Development, Lianne Sarson, Vice President of Research, Thinkwell Research

1. Welcome and Introductions

Max Chauvin, Chair welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board meeting and Ellen Johnson, Vice-Chair opened with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement.

Max also noted that May is Speech and Hearing and Asian Heritage month in Canada. He also brought attention to provincial Access Awareness Week, which runs from May 26 to June 1 and has been celebrated in Nova Scotia for 38 years. The theme this year is “Communities for All: Taking Action on Access Awareness” and several events are happening throughout the province Board members are encouraged to attend. The Accessibility Directorate is supporting prescribed public sector bodies by providing printed posters and postcards, as well as Access Awareness Week Flags through the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda

The agenda as previously circulated was accepted.

3. Standards

a. Public Transportation: Approval of Members

Max introduced Board Member, Melissa MacKenzie to review the recommendation of members for the Public Transportation Standard Development Committee (SDC). A subcommittee of the Board lead the recruitment and selection of members, and Melissa, Ellen and Earl were thanked for work on this sub-committee.

Melissa reviewed the scope of the SDC and composition of members recommended, including a minimum of half the members being persons with disabilities or from organizations representing persons with disabilities. The recruitment methods, timeline, and selection process was reviewed.

MOTION:

That the Accessibility Advisory Board approve the recommendations for the Public Transportation Standard Development Committee members as proposed by the selection sub-committee, and the membership recommendation be advanced to the Minister of Justice for approval.

Melissa MacKenzie moved the motion, seconded by Earl Muise, motion passed unanimously.

b. Employment SDC Draft Recommendations

Max explained that the discussion from the last meeting to review the remaining Employment SDC Recommendations will be today's focus. He reminded the Board that members were asked to submit feedback in advance, and they were provided with an updated version of the recommendations that incorporates the changes and outlines the edits made. Max explained they will use the consensus decision making model to seek support on sections of the recommendations reviewed, with the aim to make a motion to approve them to be submitted to the Minister of Justice.

Max welcomed back the Chair and Vice Chair of the Employment Standard Development Committee Charlie MacDonald and Alice Evans as well as Lianne Sarson, Vice President of Research with Thinkwell Research who is supporting the Employment SDC.

Lianne reviewed the changes from based on Board feedback including addition of real time accessibility services where applicable in some of the recommendations. There were additional conversations regarding proactive communication in all stages of the recruitment process and return to work policies.

A question arose from the Board about the resources that will be provided to small businesses, specifically in relation to drafting an organizational accessibility plan. The Board discussed clarifying some terms the wage subsidies section.

It was raised that the recommendations are focused mainly on permanent employees, and a change was made to clarify "employee" is any person undertaking work for an employer, which also includes temporary or contract employees.

At the end of each section Max used the consensus decision making model to determine how everyone feels about each section and if consensus has been reached.

Consensus was reached for each section and at the end of the review a motion was brought forward to accept the recommendations.

Motion:

“Move to accept the recommendations for an accessibility standard in employment and submit them to the Minister of Justice. These are recommendations developed by the Employment Standard Development Committee and reviewed by the Board on May 16, 2024.”

Birgit Elssner moved the motion and seconded by Louise Gillis. Motion passes unanimously.

Max explained staff will prepare the document for submission to the Minister on the Board’s behalf, and this work includes formatting, translation and design and ready for posting publicly. This will take 6-8 weeks. Max will include correspondence requesting the recommendations be released within 30 days of receipt. Max will also meet with the Employment SDC to give them an update and thank them for their work.

The Minister will provide direction to the Accessibility Directorate on the approach to reviewing the recommendations and drafting the standard.

4. Adjournment

Max thanked all Board members for their attention and feedback on moving through such an important piece of work. He explained the next Board meeting will be on June 21, and has been changed to two half day sessions virtually on Zoom with a break for lunch, and the in person meeting will be in the fall.