

**Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes**
Thursday, September 25, 2025 – 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Board Members: Max Chauvin (Chair), Ellen Johnson (Vice-Chair) Earl Muise, Linda Campbell, Amy Lays, Louise Gillis, Shellene Sparks, Denise Pictou Maloney, Rob Patey.

Regrets: Sarah Moore, Melissa MacKenzie, Birgit Elssner

Staff: Sumona Sonda, Lisa Jacobs, Terri Lynn Almeda, Jenny Thornhill, Meghan Murphy, Maddi Adams, Brigit Beswick-Escanlar, Sherri Aikenhead.

Guests: Joe Rogers, Department of Growth and Development, Kristina King and Shawn Mosher, Executive Council Office, Julia Spence, Department of Justice

1. Welcome and Introductions

Max Chauvin, Board Chair welcomed everyone to the Accessibility Advisory Board (Board) meeting and opened with a Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian land acknowledgement. Max highlighted the importance of Pride Month, National Indigenous History Month, and the intersections of accessibility, pride, and indigenous resurgence and reviewed meeting protocols and practices.

2. Board Operations

a. Review of Agenda: The agenda as previously circulated was accepted.

b. Minutes Review: The June 12, 2025, minutes were reviewed and were approved with one minor change.

c. Outstanding Board Business (Dawn)

Terri Lynn Almeda, Acting Executive Director, provided several updates.

Welcomed Sherri Aikenhead as Board Coordinator and Terri Lynn as Acting Executive Director.

The Board's recommendations for an accessibility standard

in goods and services was released publicly July 6 and social media was used to promote them widely. The Board's annual report is being drafted and will be circulated for approval.

There were several correspondence updates with the Justice Minister throughout the summer. The Board's wrote to the Justice Minister June 24 on the importance of having a diverse and knowledgeable Board with the recommendations that members who have completed their first term be reappointed and that the next vacancy be filled with a deaf person. The Board Chair received a letter from the Minister acknowledging the Board's recent letter in support of government funding for the Disability Partnership. The Chair wrote to the Minister on behalf of the Board recommending people with disabilities be included on the government's new gender-based violence table. The Board provided feedback on the proposed amendments to the Nova Scotia Building Code regulations. The Board Chair received a letter from the Associate Deputy Minister to further define the criteria for people applying to the Accessibility Advisory Board.

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d. Communications and Engagement Update

Working Group Chair Rob Patey shared an Information Presentation developed by the group to be used in promoting education about the Accessibility Advisory Board.

It was well received. Max proposed a motion *“that the Information Presentation be used to engage Nova Scotians to learn about making Nova Scotians accessible and the work of the Board and how Nova Scotians can be involved.”* The motion was approved by Shellene Sparks and seconded by Rob. The motion was passed unanimously.

Rob also sought feedback on a draft youth engagement plan to increase the involvement of youth with disabilities in the Board's work. Board members suggested that the concepts in the plan be shared with youth with disabilities and their input be included in the proposed plan before approving it.

Action: Chair recommended the working group meet with youth registered with First Roster to discuss the plan and the barriers they face before returning to the Board in December with learnings and recommendations on the plan considering the capacity to implement.

3. Business

a. National Building Code Process.

Joe Rogers, an engineer and Senior Advisor at the Department of Growth and Development, gave a presentation on the development of the national codes and the process for persons with disabilities to get involved. He highlighted the dates when the national accessibility committee is meeting and emphasized that consultation on the 2030 code changes is underway and a public session hosted by The Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes in Montreal on October 23, 2025. The public can join virtually.

He said Nova Scotia is leading the country in the built environment with building adaptations (such as grab bar installation in washrooms). He also updated the board on the participation of Ross Sampson who represents the Board on the Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee.

Action: Sherri to share link to The Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes will meet publicly in Montreal on October 23, 2025 contacts that were included in the presentation. CBHCCSecretary-SecrétaireCCHCC@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca

A member requested that the Accessibility Directorate include building code media coverage in its regular scan.

Lunch Break

d. Compliance

Maddi Adam, Manager of Compliance and Enforcement with the Accessibility Directorate, gave a presentation on how the Board members would like to give feedback on compliance as the accessibility standards are enacted. They highlighted the Accessibility Act requires First Voice feedback and asked the Board what type of input they want to provide and how often

Members indicated they want to have input on the education tools and resources for the public on enforcement of the standards. They would like frequent updates on compliance, especially after the first accessibility standard for the built environment comes into effect April 1, 2026.

Action: Consensus was to include as a standing item at future board meetings.

e. Board Recruitment

Kristina King, member of the Governance and Accountability Unit in the Executive Council Office and Julia Spence from the Department of Justice Policy, Information and Management Division, gave a presentation on how the process works to screen candidates who apply to be on the Accessibility Advisory Board through the government's Agencies, Boards and Commission website. The objective of the presentation was to provide members with an understanding of the current board profile as they suggest updates to the Board's on-line profile to make sure the Board composition meets the operational needs of future work.

Julia explained the criteria currently posted on the website are used to ensure people applying possess required skills/backgrounds that can execute the board's mandate and contribute to a full board complement. The Board Chair can offer the Minister advice on posted criteria, skills, or backgrounds for consideration when a vacancy occurs. When the Board Chair highlights specific skill sets and/or backgrounds, it can help match candidates with gaps in skills/backgrounds needed on the board to fulfill the board's complement.

Board Vice-Chair Ellen Johnson (who chaired the discussion as Max stepped out temporarily) thanked the guests who departed the meeting. Members then discussed the selection criteria and whether it could be refined to better align the qualifications with the work ahead on the accessibility standards over the next four years. Members agreed the descriptions of a disability be included in the profile go forward but there was no consensus on other proposed changes. The matter was deferred to the afternoon for further discussion.

4. Standard Development Committee Overview

a. Information and Communications

Jeff Overmars (SDC Chair) provided an update on the Information and Communication SDC, including the use of a working group model to

maximize use of committee members' expertise. Three groups have met three times to identify barriers and recommendations in their subject matter area. The full committee will share draft recommendations with the Board in December before going out to public consultation in early 2026. Two members have resigned however the Board Chair accepted the recommendation not to fill the vacancies as the work is far along and established to recruit new members.

b. Public Transportation –

Ellen Johnson (Vice Chair) of the Public Transportation SDC is meeting monthly and they have come to consensus on 40 of the 48 recommendations. They will share these with the Board in December before going out for public consultation in early 2026.

c. Joint Public Consultation Plan

Jenny Thornhill, Senior Policy Analyst, presented on behalf of the Comms and Information and Public Transportation SDCs. After receiving approval in June to do a joint public consultation on the two standards, they have developed a consultation plan for the public. They will seek input from the impacted sector through written submissions, on-line surveys, and some open engagement sessions. There will be a Deaf only forum with the Deaf community. A plain language writer will be hired to develop summaries of the feedback which will be translated into ASL language. Municipalities, community transportation networks, and private transportation providers will also be consulted. The promotion of the public consultation is scheduled for January with the actual consultation happening in February and March.

d. Education Standard and Goods and Services

Meghan Murphy, Senior Policy Analyst, provided an update on the draft of the education standard. The solicitors for government have completed the drafting of the proposed standard which is being shared with government departments. Once that is complete it will be shared with Office of the Registrar of Regulations Regulatory Affairs this fall. The public review will be in early 2026.

The Board's recommendations for a Goods and Services Standard were published in July on the Board's website, and the public was notified. Feedback is being gathered from across government departments and be advanced to the Office of the Registrar of Regulations this winter. A joint consultation with the Employment Standard is recommended for public review in 2026.

e. Employment Standard –

Bridget Beswick-Escanlar said the Interdepartmental Working Group for the standard development met during the summer to review the Board's recommendations.

The working group consists of subject matter experts from the Public Service Commission, Labour Skills and Immigration, Opportunities and Social Development, Executive Council Office (Labour Relations) and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism.

Once the internal government review is complete, the draft standard is expected to advance to the Office of the Registrar of Regulations before the draft is published for public review and input in 2026.

5. Round Table Discussion

Vice-Chair Ellen Johnson resumed the discussion on the Board's profile criteria. Earl shared a screenshot of the current profile requirements and members provided comments on what could be added to the description or changed.

Chair Max returned to the meeting. There was a robust discussion and it was agreed that several members could take the suggestions away to form a recommendation.

Action: Members Rob, Earl and Denise will meet in October to compare the current profile with other potential changes, including re-ordering the qualifications to reflect priorities and update the Board on its recommendation to the Chair recognizing that the Chair can only advise the Minister on criteria changes.

During the roundtable, many of the members expressed disappointment at not being able to meet in person for this September meeting as has been

the tradition. In-person meetings enhance one another's understanding of the barriers members with disabilities face every day.

Linda shared updates that September is Sign Language Awareness Month and many events were held to recognize what it means to be part of the signing community including a movie night locally with an auction that attracted 90 people.

The next meeting of the Board was scheduled for November 6 but is being moved to mid-December at the request of the Chairs of the Information and Communication SDC and Public Transportation SDC when they will be ready to present the consultation specifics. It will be a virtual meeting and dates are being circulated. Minister Druhan will also be invited to attend.

Max thanked Melissa and Denise for completing their first terms with the Board in mid-October. They, along with Max, are awaiting word on reappointment for a second term but checked with the Minister's office and can continue serving until they receive word on the reappointments.

6. Meeting Adjourned 4:00 p.m.

Board Chair Max Chauvin thanked the participants for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.