

Accessibility Standards Advisory Board Annual Report 2023-24

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Chairperson's Message

Honourable Paul Pike

Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

P.O. Box 8700

St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Pike:

On behalf of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Board (the Board), I am pleased to submit this annual report, which covers the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. The Board has been identified as a Category 3 Provincial Government entity and has prepared this annual report in accordance with the requirements under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. This report reflects the activities for the first year of the 2023-26 Activity Plan.

The Board is primarily governed by the **Accessibility Act** and is committed to improving accessibility and inclusion in Newfoundland and Labrador by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating fully in society.

My signature below is on behalf of the Board and is indicative of the Board's accountability for the actual results reported.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Normore

Board Member

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Overview

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board (the Board) was established in June 2022, following the enactment of the **Accessibility Act** in December 2021. The Board is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities (Minister) regarding the establishment and content of accessibility standards and the time-periods for their implementation. The Board is also responsible for making recommendations regarding measures, policies and practices implemented by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to improve accessibility.

Board composition may range from a minimum of seven members to a maximum of nine members, including a chairperson and vice-chairperson. Members are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister and comply with the following requirements: at least one half of members are either persons with disabilities, or representatives from organizations of or for persons with disabilities; and at least one member shall be an Indigenous person. No less than half of the Board's members are appointed for a two-year term, with the remainder appointed for a three-year term. Members are eligible to be re-appointed but shall not serve for longer than two consecutive terms. All subsequent appointments of Board members are for a three-year term. Members are appointed from the general public through the merit-based process through the Public Service Commission.

As of March 31, 2024, there were six members and two vacancies, including the Chair and Vice-Chair. The following individuals comprised the Board:

- Trisha Rose, Member (Mount Pearl)
- Jeffrey Normore, Member (St. John's)
- Juanita Ford, Member (Mount Pearl)
- Joshua Menchions, Member (St. John's)
- Leslie Gilholme, Member (Newman's Cove)
- Camille Rose, Member (Come By Chance)

The Board holds at least four regular meetings each year and meets with the Minister at least once per year. Board member remuneration and travel expenses are covered within the budget of the Disability Policy Office (DPO), a division of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD). DPO also provides secretariat support to the Board. Costs associated with the Board for 2023-24 were \$19,492 (see Table 1 for more details).

Table 1: Accessibility Standards Advisory Board Expenditures 2023-24

The travel expenses and costs associated with the work of the Board are covered by DPO and are included in the CSSD departmental budget.

Category	Expenditures
Remuneration	\$3,595
Travel	\$839
Purchased Services	\$15,058
Fiscal Year Total	\$19,492

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board is not required to submit audited financial statements.

Vision

Newfoundland and Labrador will be a province that is committed to improving accessibility and inclusion for all persons, and to ensure equity, respect, and the prevention and removal of barriers impacting persons living with a disability.

Mandate

The Board advises and makes recommendations to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities on:

- a) Priorities for the establishment of accessibility standards, the content of accessibility standards, and the time periods for their implementation;
- b) Measures, policies, practices, and other requirements that may be implemented by the Government to improve accessibility;
- c) Long-term accessibility objectives for furthering the purpose of the **Accessibility Act**; and
- d) Any other matter relating to accessibility on which the Minister seeks the Board's advice.

Highlights and Partnerships

2023-24 provided opportunities for the Board to inform and advise the Provincial Government on ways to improve accessibility, and foster relationships with key stakeholders. The Board also learned a great deal regarding the **Accessibility Act** and standards development, while navigating various other roles and responsibilities. Through its learnings, the Board expanded their insight to advise and recommend accessibility improvements.

Key activities included:

- Advertised, screened, and selected members for the first Accessibility Standards Advisory Committee between August 2023 and December 2023.
 - Potential candidates for the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee were put forward for recommendation. Membership was subsequently approved by CSSD Executive in December 2023. This process has been delayed due to vacancies on the Board. It is anticipated this work will resume in 2024-25.
- Drafted a Terms of Reference in December 2023 for the first Standard Development Committee.
- During Board meetings in April 2023 and September 2023, the Board provided insight and feedback regarding accessibility plan guidelines and educational materials. This resulted in successful training sessions with public entities, including agencies, boards, and commissions, that were coordinated and facilitated by DPO.
- Board members participated in the “Building Accessibility Confidence” presentation by Empower NL and the “Disability Awareness” presentation by the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL. This fostered connections with disability organizations and expanded the Board’s knowledge. The Board can apply this knowledge when making future recommendations.
- Board members met with the Chair of Accessibility Standards Canada, who provided an overview on its mandate and progress regarding federal standards development. This informative dialogue relating to accessibility will result in future partnership opportunities between provincial and federal governments in the sharing of information and collaboration on standards development and implementation.

Report on Performance

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board identified the two objectives below to assist in monitoring and evaluating the success of the 2023-26 Activity Plan. Both objectives are the focus for all three fiscal years of the Activity Plan. Throughout the past year, the Board met to discuss and determine recommendations regarding accessibility and accessibility standards.

Issue One: Accessibility Recommendations

Accessibility standards are building blocks for making effective improvements to accessibility. They require individuals, private organizations and public entities to

identify, prevent and remove barriers to improve accessibility. The Board is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the Minister regarding proposed accessibility standards.

When making these recommendations, consideration is given to the following:

- content related to the accessibility standard in question;
- how, and who, should implement measures, policies, and practices;
- time periods for implementation; and
- alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2023-24 Objective:

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board will have provided accessibility recommendations to the Minister, as required.

Indicator	Report on Activities
Met to discuss accessibility issues at least four times per year.	The Board met three times throughout the year to discuss accessibility issues, once virtually and twice in-person. Due to Board vacancies, the Board did not meet a fourth time as quorum would not have been met.
Provided accessibility recommendations to the Minister, as required.	There were no accessibility recommendations provided to the Minister for fiscal year 2023-24. Due to vacancies, the Board was not able to meet and put forward recommendations. Board vacancies are currently being addressed and the work of the Board will continue in 2024-25.

Issue Two: Accessibility Standards

When the Minister determines that an accessibility standard will be developed, the Board will be directed to establish a standard development committee of technical experts. This committee will assist in making recommendations regarding the content and implementation of the accessibility standard, in accordance with sections 11 and 12 of the **Accessibility Act**. At least one half of committee members will be persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities, and members will also represent organizations, public bodies and departments that will be affected or responsible for matters relating to the standard being developed.

2023-24 Objective:

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board will make recommendations regarding the content and implementation of the accessibility standard, as required.

Indicator	Report on Activities
Upon Ministerial direction, the Board will establish a standard development committee.	<p>During 2023-24, the Minister advised the Board that Accessible Customer Service was the first standard for development. Once the Accessible Customer Service standard is complete, the second standard for development will be Information and Communication.</p> <p>The Board discussed the establishment of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee, including expression of interest, selection process, committee support, and coordination.</p> <p>The selection process for the Committee was completed and recommended candidates were approved. Due to several vacancies on the Board, there was a delay appointing the candidates. It is anticipated that the candidates will be appointed in the 2024-25 fiscal year.</p>
Upon Ministerial direction, the Board will develop the terms of reference for Ministerial approval.	<p>Through meetings and email correspondence, the Board developed the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee Terms of Reference in December 2023. This document included mandate, structure of committee, roles and responsibilities, meeting attendance and support, and confidentiality. The Committee selection and completion of the Terms of Reference was delayed due to vacancies on the Board. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed with the Committee, once established, prior to seeking ministerial approval. This work is anticipated to resume in 2024-25.</p>

Objectives for 2024-25

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board will report on the same objectives and indicators for all three years covered by its 2023-26 Activity Plan.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities:

- The 2023-24 fiscal year provided the Board with various opportunities for continuous learning. The Board obtained insight and knowledge regarding accessibility and inclusion by building relationships with valued partners, such as the disability community and Federal Government.
- The Board met with Accessibility Standards Canada regarding progress the Federal Government has made toward the development of accessibility standards, as per the **Accessible Canada Act**. This will open future collaboration opportunities between provincial and federal governments.
- There has been ongoing analysis and feedback regarding standards development and implementation during 2023-24. This feedback has provided opportunities for the Board to consider when developing current and future standards.

Challenges:

- In October 2023, the vice-chairperson of the Board resigned, followed by the resignation of the chairperson in February 2024. These resignations resulted in two vacancies, which posed challenges for the Board by hindering decision making efforts and delaying timeliness of routine business, such as the development and implementation of Accessibility Standards.