

Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities
March 17-18, 2016
Clovelly, 100 Golf Course Road, St. John's, NL
Meeting Notes

Attendees

Paul Walsh, Delia Connell, Don Connelly, Elizabeth Chaulk, Dennis Gill, Justin Mercer, Mackenzie Mitchell, Patricia Moores, Nancy Reid, Paula Corcoran-Jacobs

Regrets

Norman Austin, Lorna Gilbert, Phil Lundrigan, Bruce Oldford, Donna Piercey, Katarina Roxon

Opening Comments

Paul Walsh, Chair, welcomed members to the 21st meeting of the Council. The Assistive Technology Advice Paper is finalized and will be submitted to the Minister Responsible.

Tabled correspondence:

- Invitation to Community Sector Council Volunteerism Luncheon (Paul Walsh attended)
- Invitation to Opening of Harbour Grace Addictions Center (Phil Lundrigan attended)

Members' update:

Nancy Reid and Patricia Moores visited the Colonial Building with Jerry Dick (Department of Business, Tourism, Culture & Rural Development) to see its accessibility features. Members reported that the Colonial Building is still under construction and recognized that universal design is not always possible in historical buildings. Highlights included: the side entrance is now the primary public entrance and is accessible, the front entrance is only for symbolic purposes; compliance with the Buildings Accessibility Act and Regulations; elevator access to all floors, adequate space for maneuverability and exterior accessible routes.

The Learning

Presentations

- Mental Health – Paula Corcoran-Jacobs presented an overview of mental health, stigma, services and service gaps.
- Public Engagement - Jamie Lee Fitzpatrick, Office of Public Engagement presented on the Open Government Initiative and ways the public is engaged.
- Elections NL – Adrienne Luther and Kim White provided an update on accessibility successes and challenges of the 2015 Provincial Election. The issue of availability of large print ballots was discussed.
- DPO News – Highlights included: Throne Speech components; upcoming review for community core funding, revisions being made to appointment processes; Action Plan updates, physician-assisted dying reports, current projects (Universal

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Design, community partnerships) and upcoming conferences (Inclusive Communities Summit, NLACL 60th Anniversary and Family Conference).

The Work

Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities

The Hon. Minister Sherry Gambin-Walsh and Council discussed: inclusive and accessibility lens for school closures, green spaces in schools for wellness and activeness, and issues concerning blue zone parking (enforcement and consistency of fines). Council expressed appreciation that the Government was maintaining current levels of funding for community-based groups in 2016-17 and advised that budgets cuts should not further disadvantage persons with disabilities to access programs and services. Other issues raised by Council included:

- Disability lens in all government decision-making
- Coverage and access to mental health services to individuals who are Deaf
- Aging caregivers
- Mental health awareness, services and support access for parents and guardians
- Inclusion-based disabilities act
- Large print ballots availability in provincial elections

Work Plan

Council reviewed and updated the work plan.

Disability-Related Supports Session

Council discussed the delivery of disability-related supports with Interdepartmental Working Group representatives from Health and Community Services, Education and Early Childhood and Advanced Education and Skills. Discussion included: access to policy information on the home support program, access to education supports for Deaf students, access to mental health services, access to dental care, importance of meaningful community participation, need for community living supports instead of Long Term Care facilities, and transitioning supports for post-secondary students.

Inclusion-based Disabilities Act

Council reviewed a handout on disability legislation in Canada and other countries (Ireland, European Union, United States, New Zealand and Australia) and continued their discussion from last meeting about a provincial inclusion-based disabilities act. Discussion included having legislation that mandates Government departments and agencies to apply a disability lens and ensure services and internal practices are barrier-free and inclusive of persons with disabilities. This would include decisions, legislations, policies, programs, funding, grants, and procurements.

Actions

Council will:

- Submit Assistive Technology Advice Paper to the Minister Responsible

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- Write to Child, Youth and Family Services on access to mental health services and supports for parents/guardians
- Write to the Child and Youth Advocate regarding inclusion of children with autism in a service waitlist review being undertaken by this Advocate's office
- Write the Minister of Health and Community Services on counselling services in American Sign Language for patients/clients who are Deaf.
- Write to the Board of Trustees, English School District on accessibility priorities when considering school closures

Next Meeting

Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 9 and 10, 2016 in St. John's, NL.