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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee  
CC: Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO  
FROM: Annie Sherry, Legislative Assistant; Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor  
DATE: November 14, 2022  
**SUBJECT: 2022 Accessibility Advisory Committee Town Hall**

Attention Chair and Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee,

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a final update to the Committee on the status of event planning and confirm Committee roles for the event ahead of the November 17, 2022 Annual Town Hall.

### **Event Planning:**

Following the October 24 special meeting of the Committee, the Accessibility Advisor and Legislative Assistant worked with other HRM staff, Halifax Public Libraries, and the livestreaming vendor to finalize much of the logistics for the Town Hall. This includes:

- Invitations to and materials received from Business Unit panelists
  - Launching communications materials
    - Internal materials: Memorandum to the Mayor and members of Regional Council; 2 Employee Bulletin updates; posters sent to HRM libraries, customer service centres, and recreation facilities; FAQ page provided to 311
    - Webpage, Facebook event, and social media campaign launched on October 28, 2022
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- Materials sent to members for distribution on November 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Digital screens throughout HRM facilities and Halifax Public Libraries
- Solidifying additional staff support for the Town Hall
- Agenda page launched on November 10, 2022

The Accessibility Advisor and Legislative Assistant will continue working with staff, Committee members, and partners throughout the week to ensure everyone is prepared to support a successful event on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Roles for Committee Members:**

Following the October 24 special meeting, members of the Committee have been placed into supporting roles based on their expressed interest. The final supporting roles are outlined in Attachment A.

The Chair and Vice-Chair will be in Paul O'Regan Hall for a 5:30 technical run-through.

All other Committee members are asked to arrive at Paul O'Regan Hall by 6:00 p.m. on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

Members who are acting as sighted guides for the Town Hall will find CNIB Guidelines in Attachment B.

The Legislative Assistant is working with Halifax Public Library staff to secure parking passes for those who may need them. If you require a parking pass, please indicate to the Legislative Assistant during discussion on this item.

### **Agenda:**

The agenda was distributed to the Committee and posted online on November 10, 2022.

The public agenda page can be found here: [2022 Accessibility Advisory Committee Annual Town Hall | Halifax](#)

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The open floor visioning session will be facilitated by Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO. The Chair will remain at the front table with Tracey for the duration of this session. Members of the Committee are not expected to answer questions from the public during this session, as this will be an opportunity for the public to provide feedback and comments that will inform planning of future Town Halls, and the 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee workplan. Public comments and direction will be included in the minutes from the Town Hall and discussed at a future meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The finalized agenda can be found in Attachment C. The Legislative Assistant will review the agenda, timing, and expectations of supporting roles with the members during the November 14<sup>th</sup> special meeting.

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### Accessibility Advisory Committee 2022 Town Hall Committee Roles and Responsibilities Outline

#### Moderator:

The moderator of the Town Hall will provide an overview of the event, introduce each speaker, and monitor time for the duration of the event. The moderator will help to facilitate the Q&A session by directing to questions from the floor and to the support staff responsible for asking questions submitted virtually.

- Andrew Taylor, Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee
  - Back Up = Jacki Purcell, Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

#### Sighted Guides:

Using the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's sighted guide technique (guides to be provided), these Committee members will be available to assist residents who require assistance with moving throughout Paul O'Regan Hall during the event. These positions will be most active at the beginning and end of the Town Hall but be available throughout the event as needed.

- 2 HRM Staff Members

#### Mic Runners:

Two members will be provided with wireless microphones and move to individuals throughout Paul O'Regan Hall during the Q&A session. The Mic Runners will be responsible for holding the microphones for each resident as they ask their questions.

- 2 positions
  - Councillor Deagle Gammon
  - Eric Bowdridge from the Clerk's Office

### Virtual Q&A Facilitator:

A staff member will be responsible for gathering the questions that are being submitted through the Q&A function in Zoom. The Committee member will be responsible for asking questions on behalf of residents into a dedicated mic throughout the Q&A session and will be stationed at the Q&A table.

- Jacki Purcell
- Annie to transfer questions from Zoom to Google Sheet for Jacki

### Q&A Table:

Stationed near the entrance/exit to the room, 2 Committee members will have question sheets and pens/pencils so that residents who may not be comfortable in asking their questions live are able to submit them in writing. These positions will be joined at the table by one of the virtual Q&A facilitators who can ask the written questions on behalf of residents.

- 2 positions
  - Nicole McDonald
  - Rachele Manett

### Time Keeping Role:

Stationed at the back of Paul O'Regan Hall, this position will provide visual cues for the moderator to help keep track of time. This role will keep the time on their phone, resetting 3 minutes for each new speaker for the duration of the question and answer session and the visioning session, and use two pieces of cardstock to signify 30 seconds left (yellow paper), and time end (red paper).

- Jordan Waterbury

### Masks at Front Entry:

This position will be at a table at the front entrance from 6-6:30/6:45 to provide masks to attendees, equipped with a sign stating that masks are encouraged.

- 1 staff position

Legislative Support:

This position will create the official record of the 2022 Annual Town Hall by taking minutes for the event.

- Alicia Wall

## Vision Loss Etiquette 101

So you've just met someone with vision loss – perhaps at work, through a friend or out in the community. It's only natural to feel unsure about how to behave and to want to avoid doing something inappropriate. Here are a few simple tips to help you be more comfortable and supportive around a person with vision loss.

The first thing you need to keep in mind is that people with vision loss are only different from the rest of us with respect to their vision. They have interests, thoughts and feelings and do most of the same things all of us do, from shovelling snow to playing sports to doing crosswords (they may just do them a bit differently).

In fact, people with vision loss often find other people's beliefs about their abilities to be a much a bigger barrier than vision loss itself.

If you know this, you've already gone a long way towards a better understanding of how someone with vision loss might like to be treated. But here are some tips for specific situations.

### **Introductions**

- When being introduced to someone with vision loss, say hello and wait for them to offer their hand to be shaken. When introducing yourself, simply say something such as “Hi, my name is Michael Somers. Great to meet you. Let's shake hands.”
- Speak clearly using your natural voice and volume.

### **Day-to-day situations**

- Try to avoid asking questions about how the person lost their vision. It can be very frustrating for a person with vision loss to have to explain their situation over and over again.
- Use everyday language. Don't worry about using terms such as “see” and “look” when talking about your favourite TV show or the latest blockbuster flick. People with vision loss use these terms (and watch TV and go to the movies) too.
- Always identify yourself by name. For example. “Hi Lucy; it's David.” Don't assume that the person will recognize your voice. After all, that person might be meeting dozens of people in a day. Unless you are a



very close friend, they will need to know who you are each time you come across them.

- If the person has a guide dog, do not pet it while it is in harness (as tempting as this may be!). Guide dogs are working animals, and distracting them can be hazardous for the people they are guiding. If the dog is out of its harness, you can ask its handler for permission to pat it, but be prepared to respect the answer either way.
- If you are visiting the home of a person with vision loss, remember to put things back exactly as you found them. Moving things around without letting the person know may cause unnecessary inconvenience or accidents. You should also close cupboards after you use them, and leave doors all the way open or closed. A half-open door can be dangerous.

### Offering assistance



- Ask first before you read aloud any printed material, or offer assistance of any kind. This will avoid unwanted over-protectiveness. Remember to be discreet and maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the person with vision loss. But do offer assistance if you think it is needed. For example, if you go into a restaurant or café, many people with vision loss may appreciate an offer to read a menu to them if none are available in their format of choice.
- If you run into someone with vision loss on the street, assess the situation before offering help. If they are walking along confidently, chances are they do not need help. But if they look unsure, do not



hesitate to offer assistance. Check out [Guiding Someone with Vision Loss](#) to learn more.

- If you are giving directions, don't say things like "It's over there." Be as specific as you can. Try "the second door on your right, about twenty feet down the hallway" or "that store is located north in the direction you're already going, about two blocks away."
- If you are a friend or family member of someone newly diagnosed with vision loss, that person may appreciate an offer to help adjust their home or another environment so it better fits their needs. They may, for example, appreciate your help installing extra lighting, securing carpets or rearranging furniture. Consult with the person who has vision loss and decide together how things should be organized, labelled or adapted. You can also contact CNIB for assistance, or read [I Can't See as Well as I Used To](#).

### **In the workplace**

- If you are handing out materials in a meeting, make sure you have copies available for someone with vision loss in their preferred format. If this is not possible, send the person your materials well in advance electronically. When in doubt, ask the person what they need and when they need it in order to participate.
- If any presentations are taking place (videos, PowerPoint's, etc.), the presenter should describe what is on the screen, blackboard or flipchart for the benefit of a participant with vision loss.
- For more information, see [Making Meetings and Seminars Accessible](#).

### **Social situations**

- Be inclusive. Initiating visits and including a family member or acquaintance who has vision loss in your regular events and activities – such as going for a night on the town – demonstrates that you see them as a valued person with interests first. Just because someone has vision loss doesn't mean that they can't participate – and be the life of the party!
- At an event or social gathering, let someone who has vision loss know when someone else has entered a room or circle of conversation. You should also tell them when you are leaving a conversation or room. Not only is this the polite thing to do, it will also avoid having the person tell an amazing story to... the wall.

- Take the time to help someone with vision loss mingle by offering to connect them to people they may know or introduce them to new people in a social gathering.
- If you are talking one-on-one with a person with vision loss, never leave them stranded. If you have to leave, introduce them to someone else, or offer to guide them to a reference point, such as a seating area or even a wall so they know where they are.
- If you are having lunch or dinner with someone with vision loss, use the clock method to describe where certain foods are located on a plate when dinner arrives. For example, “Jim, your rice is at three o'clock and your steak is at seven o'clock.”
- In fact, most people with significant vision loss will appreciate it if you describe points of interest in the surroundings.

# Sighted Guide Techniques

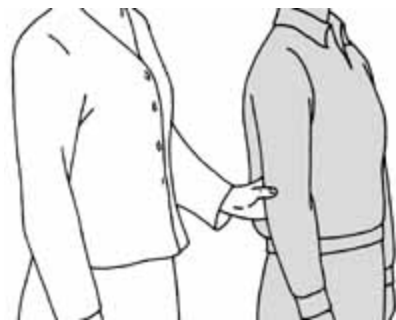


## **Getting started**

Ask the person if they need assistance. If they do need assistance, contact the back of their hand with the back of of yours.



They can then hold your arm just above the elbow.



## **Walking**

When you start walking, make sure the person is half a step behind you and slightly to the side. Walk at a pace that is comfortable for both of you. Look ahead for obstacles at foot level, head height and to the side.



## **Narrow spaces**

Tell the person you are guiding that a narrow space is ahead. Move your guiding arm towards the center of your back to indicate that they need to walk behind you. The person should step in behind you while still holding your arm. When you have passed through the narrow space bring your arm back to its usual position by your side.



## **Changing sides**

If you need to change sides with the person you are guiding it is important they do not lose contact with you. This is easiest to achieve if you remain stationary. Allow the person to hold your guiding arm with both of their hands. They can then move one hand to reach your other arm without losing contact.



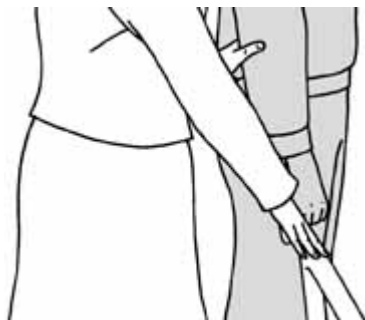
## **Doorways**

When passing through a doorway, ensure the person who is blind or vision impaired is on the hinged side of the door. As you get close to the door, explain which way it opens. Open the door and walk through, allowing the person you are guiding to catch the door using their free hand.



## **Steps and staircases**

Stop at the first step and tell the person you are guiding whether the steps go up or down. Change sides if necessary to ensure the person you are guiding can use the handrail. Start walking when the person is ready, remaining one step ahead of them. Stop when you reach the end of the stairs and tell the person you are at the top or bottom.

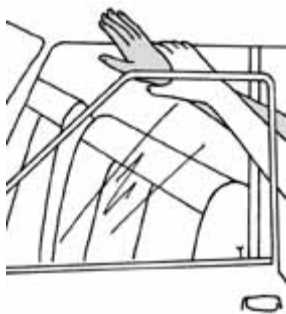


## **Seating**

Explain which way the chair is facing and where it is placed in relation to the rest of the room. Then walk up and place your guiding arm on the chair and explain which part of the chair you are touching. The person you are guiding can then move their hand down your arm to locate the chair to seat themselves.

## **Getting into a car**

Tell the person you are guiding which way the car is facing and which door they will be getting into. Place your guiding arm onto the door handle and ask the person to move their hand down your arm. Allow the person being guided to open the door, seat themselves, and close the door.



If it is necessary and/or the car is unfamiliar to them, place your arm inside on the roof so they can follow it and avoid bumping their head. Once seated, allow the person to close the car door.

## **Reversing Direction**

This procedure is used to complete a 180-degree turn in a limited space, such as an elevator. Also called an “about-face” turn, the guide and person being guided turn and face each other. The person being guided lets go of the guide’s elbow and then re-establishes contact by taking hold of the guide’s opposite elbow. The team then completes the turn to face the opposite direction they were originally walking.

## **Parting Ways**

When parting you should inform the person being guided your intention to leave and ensure that the person is left in contact with a tangible object in the environment (e.g., a wall, a table, a chair). This will eliminate the uncomfortable feeling of standing alone in an open space and not having a reference point.



## Attachment C



### ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TOWN HALL AGENDA

November 17, 2022

6:30 p.m.

Paul O'Regan Hall, Halifax Central Library, 5440 Spring Garden Road  
+ Livestreamed to YouTube

**1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks** – Andrew Taylor, Chair,  
Accessibility Advisory Committee

**2. Staff Overview of Accessibility Successes, Challenges and Updates**

- Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office
- Darren Young, Manager of Building Infrastructure, Property, Fleet & Environment
- Victoria Horne, Director of Parking, Public Works
- Lindsay Mullin, Outreach and Engagement Specialist, Halifax Transit Services
- Dave Nantau, Supervisor of Bus Operations, Access-A-Bus
- Pat McGrath, Manager of Aquatic & Inclusion Services, Parks and Recreation

**3. Feedback, Input, Questions and Comments from the Public**

Ground Rules:

- 1 speaker at a time
- Please keep comments limited to 3 minutes or less if attending from Paul O'Regan Hall
- Speaker to provide name and community/organization for the record

- If attending from Paul O'Regan Hall, please use the microphone so all attendees can hear
- Questions submitted virtually in Zoom will be asked on residents' behalf by a committee member at Paul O'Regan Hall
- Respect all points of view and opinions expressed
- If you wish to be contacted by staff for follow up after the meeting, leave your name and contact information on a contact sheet at the side table of Paul O'Regan Hall
- Questions submitted virtually requiring follow up will be addressed by email

#### **4. Envisioning a More Accessible Future – Open Floor**

- What are the biggest accessibility concerns facing municipal government in 2023?
- What should the 2023 Accessibility Town Hall look like?
  - Is there a different structure?
  - Does it occur in a different space?
  - How would you like to be engaged?

#### **Ground Rules:**

- 1 speaker at a time
- Please keep comments limited to 3 minutes or less if attending from Paul O'Regan Hall
- Speaker to provide name and community/organization for the record
- If attending from Paul O'Regan Hall, please use the microphone so all attendees can hear
- Comments submitted virtually in Zoom will be shared on residents' behalf by a committee member at Paul O'Regan Hall
- Respect all points of view and opinions expressed

- Comments provided will inform the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee in the year ahead

**5. Closing Comments** - Andrew Taylor, Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

**6. Adjournment** – 8:30 p.m.

## **NOTES:**

Sighted guides will be available at Paul O'Regan Hall. ASL Interpretation and CART Captioning Services will be available at Paul O'Regan Hall and livestreamed to Zoom and YouTube.

During the public participation portion of the event, questions from the audience will be facilitated both from the floor of Paul O'Regan Hall and virtually in Zoom. To attend this event virtually and submit your questions live, registration is required [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

### **Attending at Paul O'Regan Hall:**

If you wish to speak during the public participation portion of the meeting, please keep your comments to 3 minutes or less, so that everyone has an opportunity to have a turn. If you do not wish to speak during the meeting, you can write down your questions or comments to be read aloud by a member of the Committee. A volunteer at the side table can assist with writing if needed. If you wish to be contacted by staff for follow up after the meeting, leave your name and contact information at the side table so they can get in touch with you.

### **Attending Virtually in Zoom:**

If you wish to join the Town Hall virtually and ask a question during the public participation portion of the meeting, please register to attend the event in Zoom. Please include your name at the beginning of your question. Instructions for submitting your question in the Q&A function in Zoom will be provided on the day of the Town Hall. A member of the Committee will ask your question on your behalf from the floor at Paul O'Regan Hall. While residents can ask more than one question, preference will be given to those who are asking a question for the first time.

Minutes are being taken from this meeting and will be available online next month after approval from the Committee. The information being collected will inform a future report from the Accessibility Advisory Committee to the Executive Standing Committee.

The meeting will end promptly at 8:30 p.m. to meet Access-A-Bus bookings. As many people suffer from allergies to scented products, meeting participants should avoid wearing strongly scented perfumes.

For further information please visit the [Accessibility Town Hall Webpage](#), or contact Annie Sherry, Legislative Assistant, at [sherryan@halifax.ca](mailto:sherryan@halifax.ca).