

Autism Council Nova Scotia

Terms of Reference

1. Background/Context

The Autism Council of Nova Scotia was formed in November 2008 in response to an identified need for Autism Groups and Organizations across the province to collaborate and share resources to better serve individuals and families living with autism.

By working together, the Council acknowledges a united voice for certain advocacy issues and best practice approaches, strengthening provincial support and awareness efforts.

The Council is a collaborative and inclusive group that unites Nova Scotians on a provincial level, while maintaining individual visions and missions to support people living with autism in their communities.

2. Mission of the Autism Council Nova Scotia

The mission of the Autism Council Nova Scotia is:

- To be Provincial leaders in autism awareness
- To unite together autism organizations across Nova Scotia
- To come together as one voice to educate, increase awareness and understanding for Nova Scotians living with autism so that they may be respected, appreciated, and reach their full potential in the communities in which they live.

Our **Vision** is uniting Nova Scotians to support the quality of life for people living with autism.

3. Role of individual Council Members

The role of the individual members of the Autism Council Nova Scotia includes:

- Speaking on behalf of their own groups and organizations
- Bringing forth issues from your community for discussion
- Reaching consensus on province-wide issues
- Recognizing that quality of life begins at birth and continues throughout the lifespan

4. General

4.1 Membership

The Autism Council Nova Scotia shall be comprised of representatives from the following:

- Autism Centre Society of the South Shore (2)
- Autism Society of Cape Breton (2)
- Autism Society of Nova Scotia (2)
- Bedford Sackville Support Group (1)
- Just Parents (1)
- Provincial Autism Centre (2)
- Valley Autism Support Team (2)
- Piece By Piece (2)

Each organization or group only has one vote. Membership will not be extended to include professional treatment agencies or services. Membership criteria includes; an organization currently serving, supporting, and/or advocating for an autistic population whether it is parent-run, community-based or geographically driven.

The Council reserves the right to expand membership representation based on the established criteria above.

Special Advisors to the Council include:

- Dr. Susan Bryson
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Council of Nova Scotia (ASAC-NS)

5.0 Chair

The Chair convenes the Autism Council meetings. The Chair shall be selected from the membership serving a one-year term with no more than two consecutive years running concurrently. Also, if the Chair is from the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Vice-Chair must represent an area outside HRM.

If the designated Chair is not available, then the selected vice-Chair will be responsible for convening and conducting that meeting. The vice-Chair is responsible for informing the Chair as to the points/decisions raised or agreed to at that meeting.

5.1 Agenda Items

All Autism Council agenda items must be forwarded to the Chair by close of business (C.O.B.) 7 working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The Autism Council agenda, with attached meeting papers will be distributed at least five working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The Chair has the right to refuse to list an item on the formal agenda, but members may raise an item under 'Other Business' if necessary and as time permits.

5.2 Minutes & Meeting Papers

The minutes of each Autism Council Nova Scotia meeting will be prepared by the Secretary and approved by the Chair.

Full copies of the minutes, including attachments, shall be provided to all members of the Autism Council no later than 14 working days following each meeting.

The minutes of each Autism Council Meeting will be monitored and maintained by the Chair as a complete record. Full disclosure of minutes and meeting papers will be placed in a binder located at the PAC for 2009/2010.

5.3. Frequency of Meetings

The Autism Council of Nova Scotia shall meet monthly, until November 2009 with dates and times to be determined by the Chair. Meetings will not be held in July or August.

Further meetings may be necessary if the Chair and a quorum of Council members agree to schedule. Conference calls are also an acceptable means of communication in this situation, as is e-mail.

5.4. Proxies to Meetings

Proxy votes will be accepted if members of the Autism Council are unable to attend meetings involving a vote; however, there are no proxy members permitted to attend Council Meetings. Proxies votes however must be sent to the chair.

Membership representation can change annually.

5.5 Quorum Requirements

Quorum requires 60% of Council members to be in attendance for the meetings to be recognized as an authorized meeting and for recommendations or resolutions to be valid. Members must attend 70% of scheduled meetings to remain on the Council and if less will be decided at the Chair's discretion.

5.5 Governance

The committee will work on a consensus basis. In the event a consensus is not reached, the Council will hold a vote. Majority vote passes the motion with opposed voted noted

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in the minutes. The Chair will only vote in the event of a tie. In the event of a conflict of interest surrounding a vote, members may abstain from the vote, with reasons noted in the minutes.

Date Terms of Reference Approved: _____