

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

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BILL 6, THE ACCESSIBLE BRITISH COLUMBIA ACT

On May 10, 2021, Bill 6, *The Accessible British Columbia Act* ('the Act'), received second reading. The legislation proposes to allow government to establish accessibility standards and regulations aimed at identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility and inclusion. The government will also establish a provincial accessibility committee and an accessibility plan, and will create tools for public feedback. If passed, these same requirements will be extended to "prescribed entities." While not confirmed, it is possible that accessibility regulations may be extended to local government.

Accessibility Standards and Regulations

The Act proposes to establish a Provincial Accessibility Committee, appointed by the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. The committee will be comprised of eleven members and will develop accessibility standards, which the government may make into regulations. These accessibility regulations may relate to any of the following:

- (a) employment;
- (b) delivery of services;
- (c) the built environment (buildings, places and spaces);
- (d) information and communications;
- (e) transportation;
- (f) health;
- (g) education;
- (h) procurement.

In addition to creating the framework for enacting accessibility regulations, the Act enables extension of accessibility committees and other accessibility requirements to "prescribed entities."

Prescribed Entities

While the proposed law will impact the B.C. government first, regulations will identify other organizations that will also need to follow the new law. The Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Hon. N Simons, stated the accessibility regulations could exist "not just in government space but in other organizations that are prescribed by government as well. These could be institutes of higher learning. They could be government agencies. They could be businesses and corporations." Following an interview with the Hon. N Simons, the [Coast Reporter](#) published that "preference would be to start with standards for accessibility within government and Crown corporations, as well as local government."

The Act also proposes that both the government and “prescribed entities” must establish accessibility committees and develop accessibility plans.

Accessibility Committee: The purpose of the committee is to (a) assist the organization to identify barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization, and (b) advise the organization on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in, or interacting with, the organization. The committee composition, to the extent possible, should select members with the following goals in mind:

- At least half the members are persons with disabilities or individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities
- Membership reflects the diversity of persons with disabilities within British Columbia
- At least one member is an Indigenous person
- Membership reflects the diversity of persons in British Columbia

Accessibility Plan: With respect to the accessibility plan, it must address how to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in, or interacting with, the organization. It must be reviewed and updated at least every three years and must consider comments received from public feedback and from the accessibility committee.

What are the next steps?

Bill 6 has been referred to a Committee of the Whole House for discussion. The Bill must be read a third time in provincial legislature before it is eligible to receive Royal Assent.

LINKS

Bill 6 – 2021: Accessible British Columbia Act, 2nd Session, 42nd Parliament (2021) FIRST READING ([here](#)).

British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation (2019) ([here](#)).

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Second Session, 42nd Parliament (2021) Official Report of Debates (Hansard). Monday, May 10, 2021. Issue No. 65 ([here](#)).

Woodrooffe, Sophie. “With Accessibility Act introduced at legislation, Simons wants standards in place by end of 2022”. Coast Reporter. May 4, 2021. ([here](#))

NOTE: The proposed legislation would complement the federal accessibility legislation, which applies to sectors or organizations under federal jurisdiction. See our previous Legislative Briefing, [Accessible Canada Act Receives Royal Assent](#), for information.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any comments or questions about this update, please e-mail RES360@metrovancover.org or call 604-451-6558.