

Accessibility legislation plain language summary

Last updated: **June 17, 2021**

The Accessible British Columbia Act makes B.C. more inclusive for people with disabilities.

View the legislation overview as an [ASL video](#).

On this page

Definitions

- [What is accessibility?](#)
- [Why isn't my disability listed in the definitions?](#)
- [Will the new law include people whose disability is related to learning or communications?](#)

Activities

- [What will the law do?](#)
- [What types of barriers does the law address?](#)
- [What are accessibility standards?](#)
- [Does the law recognize sign language?](#)
- [How does the law promote accessibility?](#)

Involvement of people with disabilities

- [How does the law involve people with disabilities?](#)
- [Who will develop standards?](#)
- [How will you ensure that the Provincial Accessibility Committee represents all people with disabilities?](#)

Impact

- [Who is impacted by the law?](#)
- [Why does the law apply to government-only at first?](#)

Compliance and enforcement

- [Who enforces the law?](#)
- [What happens if government and organizations do not obey the law?](#)
- [Will the fines be used to increase accessibility?](#)
- [Does the law deal with complaints?](#)

[Check out our new site](#)

Timelines

- [Why doesn't the law include deadlines?](#)

Accountability

- [How is the B.C. government accountable for progress?](#)

Other

- [What is a regulation and how is it different than the law?](#)
 - [Why doesn't the law mention the Human Rights Code?](#)
 - [Does the law create new organizations or positions?](#)
-

What is accessibility?

Accessibility means that all people can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities.

Accessibility is important for everyone, especially people with disabilities.

Accessibility is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone.

Why isn't my disability listed in the definitions?

We know that the disability community is diverse since people experience barriers differently. That's why the definition of disability is broad to try to include everyone.

This legislation is aimed at removing barriers for all British Columbians.

Will the new law include people whose disability is related to learning or communications?

Yes. We know that barriers related to learning and communication have a major impact on people's ability to enjoy full and equal participation in their communities.

The new law will help government to address barriers related to learning and communication as well as other barriers.

What will the law do?

The law will create new rules to make government and organizations more accessible, and will remove barriers people with disabilities face.

[Check out our new site](#)

What types of barriers does the law address?

This law aims to remove all types of barriers.

A barrier can be anything that stops people with disabilities from being included.

For example, some barriers can stop people from independently accessing buildings or using computer programs.

Sometimes people's attitudes towards disability can be a barrier.

What are accessibility standards?

Accessibility standards will outline the rules government and organizations must follow to remove barriers in different areas. Some examples of areas are:

- Employment (hiring, workplace standards, etc.)
- Service delivery (getting goods, services, or programs)
- Built environment (buildings, places, and spaces)
- Information and communications (human communication such as the way people interact and communicate in the way that works for them, and technical communication such as websites and documents)
- Transportation (buses, ferries, trains, etc.)
- Health (hospitals, clinics, services)
- Education (early childhood education, kindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary education, etc.)
- Procurement (buying services)

The Provincial Accessibility Committee will provide advice on which standards should be developed, and in what order.

Does the law recognize sign language?

The proposed law recognizes that Deaf people use sign language as the main way to communicate.

How does the law promote accessibility?

In the law, the minister must promote accessibility.

The law recognizes AccessAbility week each year. In 2021, AccessAbility Week was May 30 to June 5.

How does the law involve people with disabilities?

People with disabilities will be involved in many ways:

[Check out our new site](#)

- People with disabilities (or people from disability-serving organizations) must make up half of the new Provincial Accessibility Committee
- People with disabilities will be consulted when standards are being made
- People with disabilities can give their feedback through a new online tool
- People with disabilities will be asked for their feedback when the law is reviewed in 5 years

To support inclusion, government will provide accessibility plans, standards and reports in accessible formats.

Who will develop standards?

A committee, appointed by the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, will help make the standards. If government chooses, it can turn the committee's recommended standards into laws called regulations.

The committee will be called the Provincial Accessibility Committee and at least half of its members will be people with disabilities or disability advocates.

When needed, they will get support from technical committees.

A technical committee is a group of people who are experts in a particular area. For example, builders may be on a technical committee for standards about buildings.

When the Provincial Accessibility Committee is making the standards, they must talk with:

- People with disabilities
 - People and organizations that support people with disabilities
 - Indigenous peoples (First Nation, Métis and Inuit)
 - Organizations that may be impacted by the standard
 - B.C. government ministries that may be impacted by the standard
-

How will you ensure that the Provincial Accessibility Committee represents all people with disabilities?

The committee must represent the diversity of British Columbia and will be required to consult with British Columbians in the development of each standard.

Dan Coulter, Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility, will engage with advocates, communities and businesses to ensure the legislation is effective and well-understood.

Who is impacted by the law?

The law will impact the B.C. Government first. Government will lead the way in becoming more accessible.

Regulations will be made to identify organizations that will also need to follow the new law. These organizations will be engaged during the development of these regulations.

[Check out our new site](#)

The lives of all British Columbians, especially people with disabilities, will be impacted by improved accessibility.

Why does the law apply to government-only at first?

We learned during the consultation that people wanted government to lead the way.

This will allow us to:

- Build momentum
- Share lessons learned
- Ensure organizations are supported to follow the law

Other organizations will be determined based on their size and their impact on people with disabilities.

Engagement will occur with these organizations, people with disabilities and other government ministries.

Who enforces the law?

The law allows for a director and inspectors to be hired to ensure organizations follow the law.

What happens if government and organizations do not obey the law?

To ensure they understand the law, government will work with organizations by:

- Providing education
- Sharing best practices and new resources

Organizations that do not follow the rules can be fined up to \$250,000.

Inspectors will be hired, as required, to ensure organizations follow the law.

Will the fines be used to increase accessibility?

In other provinces that have an accessibility law, there are not many fines and they do not bring in a lot of money.

In B.C., fines collected will go into government's general revenue fund.

Government spends money on many different programs and services to improve accessibility. We will continue to look at new areas where money needs to be spent.

Does the law deal with complaints?

Government will set up a feedback tool that people can use to provide feedback on barriers they are experiencing and this information will help government to improve accessibility.

[Check out our new site](#)

Depending on the type of complaint a person has, there may be other places where they can make their complaint.

These include:

- [BC Human Rights Tribunal](#)
 - [BC Ombudsperson](#)
 - [Residential Tenancy Branch](#)
 - [Employment Standards Branch](#)
-

Why doesn't the law include deadlines?

We've seen from other provinces that deadlines did not speed up the removal of barriers.

This legislation ensures accessibility will be an ongoing government priority.

The first steps government will take include:

- Building a tool to provide feedback to government
- Developing an accessibility plan
- Establishing the [Provincial Accessibility Committee](#)
- Developing initial regulations prescribing organizations

As new barriers are identified, we will take action to remove them.

You can find out more about the timelines for the law by looking at the [Implementation Timeline document \(PDF, 87KB\)](#).

How is the B.C. government accountable for progress?

Government will issue an annual report each year on progress and success in making B.C. more accessible.

The law commits to an independent review once every 5 years for the first 10 years, then every 10 years after that.

The timing of independent reviews in the federal legislation and other provinces' legislation ranges from 3 years to 10 years.

We want to make sure that there is enough time between reviews to implement any recommendations received from the reviews.

What is a regulation and how is it different than the law?

Regulations are considered part of the law.

The law needs to be in place first, then the regulations can be created to provide more details on how certain things are done.

[Check out our new site](#)

Different regulations will happen at different times.

For example, the regulations will say which organizations need to follow the law.

Other regulations will establish accessibility standards and identify who must follow them.

Why doesn't the law mention the Human Rights Code?

In British Columbia, the Human Rights Code prevails over all other laws. This is written in the Human Rights Code.

Repeating this in the proposed law would not change this and may cause further confusion.

Does the law create new organizations or positions?

The law allows government to create:

- a [Provincial Accessibility Committee](#)
- Technical committees

The law allows for a director and inspectors to be hired for compliance and enforcement.

Learn more

- [News release](#)
- [Video from Parliamentary Secretary Dan Coulter](#)

[view the legislation timeline](#)

[Check out our new site](#)