



NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUSINESS COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: June 8, 2022
TO: Board of Education
FROM: Shawn Johnston, Executive Director of HR
SUBJECT: Accessible British Columbia Act

Background

On April 14, 2022 an [Order in Council](#) made the provisions of the [BC Accessible British Columbia Act](#) (the "Act") applicable to the District starting September 1, 2022.

The District will be required to establish an accessibility committee (the "Committee") and consult with the Committee in developing an accessibility plan. An accessibility plan must be in place by September 1, 2023. The District will also have to identify or establish a tool to receive feedback on accessibility from the public.

Discussion

Objective and Approach

The government has identified the need to increase accessibility across the province by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to participation in important areas including schools. The legislation applies to specifically identified organizations in a phased approach. The first phase includes: school districts, independent schools, post-secondary education institutions, municipalities and municipal police departments, public libraries, and regional districts, who are required to be compliant by September 1, 2022.

The Act focuses on removing barriers to participation for persons with disabilities. Under the Act "Disability" is given a broad definition, as:

"disability" means an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier;

"Barrier" is also broadly defined, as "anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment", and "can be ... caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and ... affected by intersecting forms of discrimination."

Accessibility Committee

The work of the Committee is to assist the District in identifying barriers to individual within the District and those who interact with the District, as well as to advise the District on how to remove and prevent those barriers.

The Committee must be comprised of members from within the District as well as from other District stakeholder groups. At least half of the committee members must be persons with disabilities and/or persons representing disability-serving organizations. The committee must also, to the extent possible, reflect the diversity of the province and have Indigenous representation.

Accessibility Plan

The District is required to produce an accessibility plan that details how it will identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people within the organization and people interacting with the organization (in our case: students, employees, parents, the public, etc.).

The District must consult with the Committee in developing the plan and must consider the principles of: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.

Accessibility Plan Review

The Plan must be reviewed and updated at least every three years and the process must include consideration of comments provided through a public feedback mechanism.

Current Work and Next Steps:

The District is required to establish the Committee and start developing an Accessibility Plan by September 1, 2022.

Prior to the enactment of this legislation the District struck an ad-hoc committee comprised of members of the Department of Learning Services (DLS), Facilities, and the school aged therapy team contracted through the Child Development Centre team. This committee has developed a tool for an accessibility gap analysis which is planned to begin in September 2022. DLS and Facilities have also refined internal processes for accessibility requests to ensure an efficient response when specific requests are received. This work has been designed to align with interim guidance issued by government and will inform the work of the Committee when it commences its work this fall.

The government's [FAQ](#) also identifies that organizations can collaborate in this work, and the District should consider the possibility of doing so. Collaboration could be with other Public Sector employers in on the Island, or with other School Districts, possibly through BCPSEA.

The District should continue its current work, and ensure that it complies with the new requirements, identified above. For example, the District should consider the membership of the current committee for compliance with the Act, and make the necessary adjustments.

Conclusion:

The District has this work underway and will meet its requirements within the required timeline.