**Final Report**

**Seeking Cultural Change:**

**A Community Forum on the Development of Accessibility Legislation for BC**

**Prepared for**

**SPARC BC**

**And the Province of British Columbia**

**By the**

**Sidney Access Awareness Committee**

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**November 15, 2015**

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**A Community Forum on Accessibility Legislation**

***Introduction***

On November 5, 2019, The Sidney Access Awareness Committee hosted a Community Forum at the SHOAL Centre in Sidney to consider and discuss the development of Accessibility Legislation for British Columbia. The session was two hours long, followed the Agenda included in Appendix A, and reflected all of the Key Areas of Focus as laid out in the BC Government’s Framework for Accessibility Legislation.

The Forum attracted 37 attendees. These represented just under 40% of all those invited to attend. The participants reflected the disability community, municipal government (staff and elected officials), not-for-profit and advocacy organizations, and residents from the three local municipalities: Sidney, North Saanich and Central Saanich.

The session was professionally facilitated by Susan Simosko, a local business owner and resident. Members of the Access Awareness Committee served as table hosts and facilitators at each of the seven tables.

The evening began with an informal reception, during which coffee and light snacks were available. This helped to set a relaxed tone to the evening. The actual session began at 6:30 p.m.

In the weeks prior to the Community Forum, the planning committee created three useful tools:

1. A fun, warm-up exercise called “Put on your Thinking Cap” (Appendix B)
2. An easy-to use questionnaire that reflected all of the Key Areas included in the material (Appendix C)
3. A comprehensive set of PowerPoint slides that were drawn from the materials provided by SPARC BC and the BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation.

In addition, we prepared tips for the Table Hosts (Appendix D) to maximize consistency during the session.

Each participant received a copy of the warm-up exercise and the slides. One questionnaire was used at each table to capture as much information as possible in keeping with the requested feedback. This information is provided in the Results section below.

In the latter third of the evening, participants also completed in pairs the worksheets provided in the package regarding Principles, Accessibility Standards, Measure to Ensure Compliance and Looking Beyond Legislation—Seeking Culture Change. The responses to these questions provided additional detail and are also included in the Results section. In her opening remarks, the facilitator provided an overview of the purpose, process and guiding principles of the evening:

The **purpose** of the Community Forum was to:

* Gather community feedback on the Key Areas and principles of the Accessibility Framework
* Begin to shift the culture in our own communities
* Create and broaden the network of people who share a common vision of what might be possible

The **process** was described as:

* Informal but focused
* Featuring facilitated discussion
* Using small group work based on the Framework
* Providing an opportunity to identify key points and make recommendations

The **guiding principles** were:

* Everyone has something to contribute
* Everyone has something to learn
* As a community, we have a unique opportunity to make a difference here and provincially

The Forum began promptly at 6:30 and ended at 8:30 with many people voicing positive thoughts about the evening and expressing a desire to stay abreast of the legislation’s development and to keep in touch with one another as the work progresses, locally and provincially.

***Results***

The results of our Community Forum are given under each of the questions used in the Community Response Questionnaire.[[1]](#footnote-1) Those highlighted in **bold** were points emphasized by the group. Additional results, derived from several of the questionnaires in the package, are provided at the end of this section.

1. What is most important to you about accessibility legislation for B.C.? *(reference slides 8 & 9)*

*May help to:*

* + ***Reduce perceived barriers, especially in employment***
  + ***Bring about significant change in the physical environment***
  + *Provide an opportunity to broaden the impact*
  + *Enhance dignity, quality of life and respect*
  + *Create awareness and focus*
  + ***Enhance the fabric of society, not just treat accessibility as an afterthought***
  + *Create baseline data for monitoring and evaluation*
  + *Help to put accessibility parking standards into provincial parking code*
  + *Help to ensure that there is consistency between provincial and national standards*
  + *Emphasize that inclusion creates community connectedness and promotes better health*
  + *Support self-determination regarding funding for personal support*
  + *Give people with disabilities more control of their choices*
  + *Lead to more disability advocates*

1. What do you think about the suggested model for legislation and scope of legislation? *(reference slides 10, 12, 13, 14)*

* ***Will require on-going collaboration. Are we up to it?***
* *It will need to address local building codes and laws*
* *A lot of education and common sense will be required!*
* *Standards should be adaptable*
* *Focus first on incentives; then on penalties*

1. Do you have other ideas for the model for legislation and scope of legislation you would like considered?
   * + *Institute a similar mechanism like “Section 57”. Notice on title to allow non-noncompliant properties to be identified to potential buyers. Make non-compliant properties a liability.*
2. What do you think about the suggested purposes and principles for legislation? (reference slides 10, 11)
   * + *Challenge will be in the implementation*
     + *Need to ensure that children with disabilities are included*
     + *Think that education should be an additional principle or purpose to help society as a whole understand what’s at issue*
     + *What about the issue of resources, provincially and locally?*
     + *Can people with disabilities fully participate in this effort?*
     + *Need to ensure that access to medical services, including transportation to those services, is inherent in the purpose and principles*
3. Do you have other ideas about the purposes and principles that should guide accessibility legislation?
   * + ***Need to ensure consistent support for people with disabilities and their families, regardless of where they live or move to***
     + ***Need to ensure******focus in implementation, especially with employers and industry to make sure they are compliant***
     + ***We need assurances that fiscal and human resources will actually be in place to guide and implement the accessibility legislation***
     + *Need to increase accessibility more generally*
4. What do you think about the suggested approach to accessibility standards?

(reference slides 13, 14, 16)

* *Proposed three-part structure is a good place to begin*
* *Must have alignment with federal legislation*
* ***Will need to develop a communication strategy to ensure that information is shared with other provinces so that reciprocal agreements are put in place***

1. Do you have other ideas about the development of accessibility standards?
   * + ***Access should be normalized, not made the exception!***
     + *Use plain language*
     + *Make sure the disability community is* ***actively*** *involved*
     + ***Standards must reflect the needs of families not just the person with disabilities***
     + *Time is of the essence but need to ensure it is done right!*
     + *Can we learn from best practices around the world and connect with those locations?*
     + *End of life care for people with disabilities must be included in the legislations*
2. What do you think about the suggested approach to governance for accessibility legislation? (reference slide 13)
   * + ***Need all to be put in place: the Directorate, Standards Development and Commissioner; all need to work together. We don’t want silos!***
     + *Must include all types of disabilities, including those that fall through the cracks like many invisible disabilities*
     + *All service dogs should be recognized, not just seeing eye dogs*
3. Do you have other ideas about governance for accessibility legislation?
   * + **Employ people with disabilities to help others**
     + Should have regional office in addition to the “headquarters”
     + Current forms seem to be set up for refusal; as part of the new legislation, all forms should be simpler to complete, with or without an advocate
     + **Use plain language**
     + Must be local enough to accommodate local needs; should be easy to access regional/local offices
     + Legislation needs to be part of BC’s existing health and welfare structure, not a separate entity
     + Emphasize that accessibility needs be part of our culture, not some separate “thing”
4. What do you think about the suggested approach to incentives, compliance, and enforcement for accessibility legislation? (reference slides 14, 15)
   * + **All three need to be used!**
     + **Municipal infrastructures should be encouraged/supported to incorporate the standards, e.g., sloped curbs, no sharp corners, bylaws, expectations of developers, etc.**
     + Carrot and sticks are both effective!
     + Education will be key!
5. Do you have other ideas about how to achieve the right mix of incentives and compliance/enforcement tools for accessibility legislation?
   * + ***Develop a check list so employers and others can audit their own premises, policies and procedures; create a system in which non-compliant organizations can receive help to work towards full compliance***
     + ***Develop a system whereby municipalities could report non-compliant organizations/businesses to a provincial overseer for action***
     + *Need to clarify exactly who will enforce standards and policies (federal, provincial, local) and who will pay*
     + *Each community could establish a local committee to explore local incentive and enforcement policies*
     + *Scooter users need to take training and get certified at no cost*
     + *Fines should be applied to those that take up parking spaces designed for people with disabilities*
6. What do you think about having reviews of accessibility legislation?

(reference slide 15)

* *This will be very important*
* ***Timing will be critical, suggest every three to five years***
* ***Need to gather feedback directly from those who are affected by legislation***
* *Opportunity to catch up to and learn from other jurisdictions*
* *Need to share success stories that stem from the reviews*
* *Given rapid change in technology, review might be more easily handled*

1. If you support legislative reviews, how often should they occur?

* ***Every three to five years***

1. What other initiatives or actions would you recommend to promote a culture of accessibility? (reference slide 16)
   * + ***Share best practices, success stories, and benefits***
     + ***Support the active recruitment of people who have one or more challenges into employment, volunteer positions, community leadership roles, etc.***
     + *Help local communities to promote sign language and other initiatives that can augment communication*
     + *Begin education programs when children are young*
     + *Promote inclusion and diversity in public media campaigns*
     + *Showcase the idea that disability is a shared responsibility*
     + ***Provide free training and workshops about how we can all work towards a culture of accessibility***
2. How else can accessibility legislation support cultural change and vice-versa? (reference slides 16, 17)
   * ***Government at all levels should be encouraged and supported to recruit and hire people with disabilities***
   * *Make the outcomes of legislative reviews public*
   * *Provide the necessary resources (fiscal and human) for training and orientation to raise awareness and instill confidence in broad areas of society*
   * ***Support municipalities to become “Welcoming Communities” and demonstrate how Official Community Plans can integrate the accessibility legislation***
   * *Begin diversity education early!*
   * *Educate people about “invisible disabilities”*
   * *Support the updating of building codes and other city-planning tools*

**Review of the Principles:** While many participants at the Community Forum felt that all the Principles were equally important, a slight majority rated these four as somewhat more important**: Inclusion, Adaptability, Self-Determination and Collaboration**

**Review of Accessibility Standards:** The majority of participants said that the accessibility standards would be “very important” to **services delivery, employment, the physical/built environment, information/communication** and **transportation.** There was no consistency in the rating of the top three.

**Review of measures to ensure compliance:** While there was no consistency in the rating of the mix of measures to ensure compliance, four areas were identified as most important: **Funding programs and financial incentives to improve accessibility; Community hubs offering resources, tools, training and support; Accessibility plans and progress reports; and Mandatory standards.**

**Looking Beyond Legislation—Seeking Cultural Change:** Participants offered a range of ideas:

* Embed accessibility and inclusiveness in the work of local government, including staff reports
* Establish an Accessibility Working Group (like the City of Victoria)
* Work towards equity and justice rather than “equality”
* The Netherlands and Denmark have policies and procedures worth investigating
* Use all vehicles of education, workshops, films, etc. to show what living with a disability is like

**Summary and Key Messages**

This Community Forum actively addressed all Key Areas recommended for review and discussion. Throughout the Forum a number of key themes emerged:

* The need to **include families and communities** in all discussions of the legislation. The group noted that the disabled person is not alone in making his/her way in society; like everyone, they are in need of accessible opportunities and resources.
* **Education** will be key to the success of the legislation and while compliance measures need to be in place, as a province we need to work towards greater understanding so that organizations and individuals regularly, as a matter of course, **embed accessibility into the fabric of our lives**.
* Without doubt, **self-determination should be central to the legislation** toempower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

**Key messages/reflections:**

* + The provincial government needs to spell out the role and expectations for municipalities in embedding and monitoring the implementation of the standards.
  + Government must acknowledge that accessibility means different things to different people and work over time to develop a more common understanding.
  + As a society, we need to cease labeling people.
  + People with disabilities generally live below the poverty line. This is unacceptable. Strategies must be found to ameliorate the situation.
  + It’s essential to remember that accessibility is not just for individuals; it’s for whole families and communities.
  + Plain language will be critical to the successful implementation of the legislation.
  + Accessibility should be normalized, not be an exception.
  + Federal, provincial and local accessibility standards need be aligned.
  + The government, itself, should work vigorously to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities.

**Appendix A: Agenda**

1. Welcome, introductions and review of purpose
2. The Access Awareness Committee: what is it and what does it do?
3. Put on your thinking cap! (Brief warm-up exercise)
4. Overview of elements of Provincial Framework
5. Small group work
6. Open forum
7. Wrap up and close

**Appendix B: Warm-up Exercise**

Put on Your Thinking Cap!

Circle the best answer and give yourself one point for each correct answer

1. What percent of the BC population has one or more disabilities?
2. 10%
3. 25%
4. 15%
5. 20%
6. What percent of disabilities are “visible?”
   1. 50%
   2. 20%
   3. 30%
   4. 10%
7. Which of the following conditions is NOT considered a disability?
   1. Arthritis
   2. Scabies
   3. Diabetes
   4. Stroke
8. Which organization says the following: *“People with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in the world. People are disabled by society, not just their bodies.”*
   1. The Canadian Government
   2. The United Nations
   3. The Canadian Medical Association
   4. The World Health Organization
9. What percent of people worldwide live with some form of disability?
   1. 10%
   2. 15%
   3. 20%
   4. 25%
10. Which of the following is NOT a major barrier to health care?
    1. Cost
    2. Availability of Service
    3. Inadequate skills and knowledge of health care workers
    4. Policies and legislation
11. Which organization advocates for people with disabilities by stating that: *“Persons with disabilities (should not be) excluded from the general education system on the basis of disabilities and that children with disabilities (should not be) excluded from free and compulsory primary education or from secondary education, on the basis of disability.”*
    1. BC government
    2. Canadian Education Association
    3. United Nations
    4. Vancouver Island Dyslexia Association
12. In the context of disability legislation, “governance” refers to entities (people or organizations) who would ensure the effective implementation, compliance and enforcement of accessibility legislation and standards.
    1. True
    2. False
13. Which of the following is NOT an intended purpose of the accessibility legislation for BC?
    1. To support Canada’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
    2. To ensure RCMP staff are properly trained on the needs of people with disabilities
    3. To identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities in their daily lives
    4. To promote compatibility with the Accessible Canada Act and between federal and provincial accessibility standards
14. Which of the following is not yet mentioned in the principles related to accessibility legislation:
    1. Inclusion
    2. Adaptability
    3. Adequate resourcing
    4. Diversity
    5. Collaboration
    6. Self-determination

**Appendix C: British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation: The Community Response Questionnaire**

Below are the questions contained in the Questionnaire:

* What is most important to you about accessibility legislation for B.C.? *(reference slides 8 & 9)*
* What do you think about the suggested model for legislation and scope of legislation? *(reference slides 10, 12, 13, 14)*
* Do you have other ideas for the model for legislation and scope of legislation you would like considered?
* What do you think about the suggested purposes and principles for legislation? (reference slides 10, 11)
* Do you have other ideas about the purposes and principles that should guide accessibility legislation?
* What do you think about the suggested approach to accessibility standards?
* (reference slides 13, 14, 16)
* Do you have other ideas about the development of accessibility standards?
* What do you think about the suggested approach to governance for accessibility legislation? (reference slide 13)
* Do you have other ideas about governance for accessibility legislation?
* What do you think about the suggested approach to incentives, compliance, and enforcement for accessibility legislation? (reference slides 14, 15)
* Do you have other ideas about how to achieve the right mix of incentives and compliance/enforcement tools for accessibility legislation?
* What do you think about having reviews of accessibility legislation?
* (reference slide 15)
* If you support legislative reviews, how often should they occur?
* What other initiatives or actions would you recommend to promote a culture of accessibility? (reference slide 16)
* How else can accessibility legislation support cultural change and vice-versa? (reference slides 16, 17)

**Appendix D**

**Notes for Table Host/Facilitator**

Thanks for agreeing to host a table at the Community Forum. Your role is very important to the success of this event so we’ve put together a few points to make the job a bit easier:

1. Please **keep the group on track** as much as possible during the discussion periods. This may mean asking people to keep their remarks concise.
2. We’ll do a short warm-up exercise called **“Put on your thinking caps.”** For this exercise, please distribute the short questionnaire of the same title and ask each person to complete it individually. They will only have four minutes!
3. When we come to the main portion of the evening, **completing the** **Community Response Questionnaire**, please note that:
   1. Each Table will begin with a different question (see below). Susan will ask each table to appoint a recorder and a timekeeper. You may wish to do the recording as well as the facilitating or you may want to have a separate recorder. You can decide this with your group. Once your group has responded to the starting question, please move on to the next one, **keeping ALL RESPONSES on the Questionnaire**. It’s certainly o.k. to use the back of the page; just make sure that the numbering and handwriting are clear. The starting point for each table is as follows:

Table 1 Begin with question 1

Table 2 Begin with question 4

Table 3 Begin with question 6

Table 5 Begin with question 8

Table 6 Begin with question 10

Table 7 Begin with question 12

1. The last activity of the evening will be to complete two separate questionnaires that are stapled together on coloured paper. People will be asked to complete these with a partner (three people are certainly o.k. too).
2. At the end of the evening, please make sure **to give Susan the complete Community** **Response Forum Questionnaire and the two other completed questionnaires.**
3. Thank everyone for coming and for their input!

**Thanks very much for your help with this Community Forum. We are very grateful for your assistance!**

1. This questionnaire concisely covered all of the topics/areas identified by SPARC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)