

**BC Articulation – Disability Services response to consultation on BC Accessibility Legislation
Submitted by Myriam Spencer and Ruth Fraser, Co-Chairs**

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback to BC's Accessibility Legislation. We are a provincial group of Disability/Accessibility service providers in higher education with representation from each public college and university in BC. We work everyday to support learners with disabilities through individualized accommodations and supports.

We welcome development of accessibility legislation and standards that will improve access and ease of access in post-secondary for students with disabilities.

Every semester, we see an increase in the number of students requiring accommodations to remove or mitigate barriers in the built environment, technology, systems, and attitudes they navigate during their academic and campus experiences. Among this increase are students looking for assistance with barriers relevant to mental health and autism. Not only are numbers increasing, but the complexity of accommodation needs are also increasing. Emerging symptoms and co-morbid diagnoses often require time-intensive planning, collaboration, and evaluation to ensure access.

We see accessibility standards as a way to increase shared responsibility for access in higher education. It will help put the emphasis on proactive planning across a variety of departments – helping to reduce the pressure on individual retrofits to meet institutions' access needs. We hear from our colleagues in colleges and universities in provinces with accessibility legislation that standards focused on built environment, customer services, information and communication, and service delivery have been the catalyst for important changes on their campuses. Ontario also has a committee currently developing post-secondary accessibility standards to contribute to AODA legislation.

We would like to recommend that post-secondary students with disabilities experiencing barriers to access be included as an important stakeholder group in both legislation feedback and standards development. Not only do they have valuable lived experience to contribute to this work; they are the employers, designers, communicators, and leaders of the more inclusive future BC this legislation is working towards.

We'd like to propose the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework be considered in standards development. This framework, while specific to learning environments, has well-researched and well-resourced guidelines and applications to many areas where accessibility standards are being proposed – such as service delivery, information, and communication.

When the time comes, we would like to offer our expertise and efforts to opportunities for standards development, championing implementation, and sharing resources and best practices. We believe post-secondary has an important role to play in building a more accessible and inclusive province.

Thank you.