



REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: ADM-BRD-399

From: Shawn Dahlen, Chief Administrative Officer

Date: April 20, 2023

Subject: Accessibility Requirements – Collaborative Approach

RECOMMENDATION: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board authorize the PRRD to engage in a collaborative Accessibility Strategy with regional partners to develop accessibility standards compliant with the *Accessible British Columbia Act*; further, that the Regional Board authorize a letter to be sent to Peace River Regional District member municipalities and the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality to invite them to participate.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The [Accessible B.C. Act](#) is a new provincial law passed in June 2021 that establishes a legal framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in B.C. by enabling the development of accessibility standards and introducing new accessibility requirements for government and prescribed organizations.

There are three requirements coming into force on September 1, 2023:

1. An Accessibility Committee.
2. An Accessibility Plan.
3. A Mechanism for Feedback on Accessibility.

1. Accessibility Committees

Accessibility committees are intended to help accessible organizations identify barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization, and to advise the organizations on how to remove and prevent these barriers.

These committees should:

- have at least half of their members be persons with disabilities or individuals who represent a disability-serving organization;
- have a membership which reflects the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia; and
- have at least one member who is an Indigenous person.

Regional collaboration is an opportunity for an equitable approach to accessibility in the Region; therefore, staff is proposing to contact member municipalities and the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality to work together to pool accessibility resources to ensure the issues and concerns of people with disabilities are addressed in North-Eastern BC.

2. Accessibility Plans

Accessibility plans must outline how accessible organizations will identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in the organization or interacting with it. An accessibility plan does not need to be complete or comprehensive at the start. It is intended to be a developing and evolving plan. The plans must be reviewed and updated at least once every three years.

In developing and updating an accessibility plan, accessible organizations must consult with their accessibility committee and consider the following principles:

- inclusion;
- adaptability;
- diversity;
- collaboration;
- self-determination; and
- universal design.

The plan, and its focus, will likely be relatively unique to the organization and dependent on its mandate. Accessible organizations do not have to submit their accessibility plans to the provincial government for review or approval, but organizations should make their plans available to the public (i.e. by publishing it on their website).

3. Feedback Tool

Accessible organizations are also required to establish a process for receiving public comments on their accessibility plan, as well as barriers to people in or interacting with the organizations. Feedback received through this tool should be used in reviewing and updating accessibility plans in the future.

Staff have reached out to Urban Matters to provide a Work Plan to ensure compliance with the *Accessible BC Act* by the required deadline of September 1, 2023. Urban Systems proposed four main components within their work Plan that include:

1. Convening regional meetings to create shared understanding of goals, needs, and strategies for ensuring compliance.
2. Recruiting and establishing an Accessibility Committee.
3. Communicating the strategy, promoting accessibility and inviting feedback.
4. Identifying and planning for the next steps.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

- Not Applicable to Strategic Plan

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

Urban Matters has provided a cost estimate based on the collaboration of nine local governments in north east British Columbia. Some local governments have started works on the accessibility legislation and may be further ahead than others. Estimated costs will be distributed accordingly based on works done to date and additional works required in alignment with a 2021 census based formula.

Urban Matters has currently provided a four phase approach at a cost of: \$77,700.

Based on 2021 census the follow estimates have been provide if all nine local governments were to participate:

| Local Government | 2021 Census | Estimated Cost |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Chetwynd | 2302 | \$2,797 |
| Dawson Creek | 12,323 | \$14,918 |
| Fort Nelson | 2,611 | \$3,186 |
| Fort St. John | 21,465 | \$26,030 |
| Hudson's Hope | 841 | \$1,010 |
| Peace River Regional District | 20,123 | \$24,398 |
| Pouce Coupe | 762 | \$932 |
| Taylor | 1,317 | \$1,632 |
| Tumbler Ridge | 2,399 | \$2,875 |
| Total | 64,143 | \$77,700 |

If local governments choose not to participate, cost estimates will be adjusted accordingly.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

If the Regional Board authorizes the collaborative approach, staff will draft a letter to member municipalities inviting them to participate.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

None.

Attachments:

1. Urban Matters – Collaborative Accessibility Strategy Work Plan Proposal