# Accessibility Action Plan

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Our offices are located on the traditional lands of the W̱SÁNEĆ and Lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples, the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (Hun'qumyi'num), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and Secwepemctsín (Shuswap)-speaking Peoples. Our work extends across the homelands of the Indigenous Peoples within what we now call British Columbia. We honour the many territorial keepers of the lands and waters where we work, both past and present.

# How to navigate this document

**Find a section in Word:** The Table of Contents lists the sections and their page numbers. In Word for Windows, hold down Ctrl and click a section name to open it.

**Use the keyboard in Word:** Press Ctrl+F to open the Navigation Pane. This panel helps you find sections in the document. Choose Headings to see the section titles. Use Tab to move between parts of the panel. Use the arrow keys to choose a title, then press Enter to open that section.

**Use a screen reader:** A screen reader reads text aloud or shows it in braille. Use its heading list or shortcuts to move between sections. Heading 1 marks the two main parts of this document: this guide and the plan itself. Heading 2 marks the main sections of the plan. Heading 3 marks the smaller sections, including the four priority areas. Shortcuts depend on your screen reader and reading mode.

**Find a section in a PDF:** Click a section name in the Table of Contents. Your PDF reader may also have a Bookmarks panel that lists the sections. To move between links with the keyboard, press Tab to move forward or Shift+Tab to move back. Press Enter to open the selected link.

**If navigation does not work:** Use the page numbers in the Table of Contents or search for a section title. A PDF needs accessibility tags for screen-reader heading navigation. These tags identify headings and other parts of the document. Your PDF reader must also support them. To report a problem, go to “How to give us feedback.”

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# Accessibility Action Plan

## Introduction

The *Accessible British Columbia Act* (ABCA) became law in 2021. It requires public bodies to set up an accessibility committee, create an accessibility plan and provide a way for the public to give input on accessibility.

This plan draws on guidance from the Government of British Columbia and Accessible Employers BC. It also includes input from our Accessibility Advisory Committee and other interest-holders. It guides our work to reduce and remove barriers and make Consumer Protection BC more inclusive.

The plan sets out actions in four key areas:

1. information, technology and communications
2. hiring and employment
3. identification of biases
4. the built environment

This plan will change over time. We will review and update it at least once every three years. Each Consumer Protection BC Annual Report will include a summary of our accessibility progress and key achievements.

## About us

Consumer Protection BC is a not-for-profit regulator. We oversee certain industries and specific consumer transactions in BC. We license and inspect regulated businesses, answer consumer questions and investigate possible breaches of consumer protection laws. We also classify all general release motion pictures. We help consumers and businesses learn about their rights and responsibilities. Learn more about Consumer Protection BC on our website.

## Our commitment to accessibility

Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility guide our work, education, interactions and workplace culture. We have the authority to regulate BC's consumer protection laws. We recognize our responsibility to all British Columbians and the role we can play in creating change across the province.

## Values and working environment

Our employees bring different experiences, skills and views to our work. Our values bring us together and guide us on how we deliver our services.

**Curiosity:** We seek information in a fair and balanced way. We make room for ongoing learning and different views.

**Integrity:** We take responsibility for our work. We treat others with respect and dignity.

**Impact:** We give others resources and education to help them act. We aim to make a positive difference.

Consumer Protection BC respects all aspects of diversity. These are part of who we are. We provide an equal opportunity workplace where everyone is supported in a safe environment. We are committed to ongoing learning and open discussion so we can be allies for change.

## Message from the board and leadership

As the board and leadership of Consumer Protection BC, we are committed to accessibility and inclusion in all our work. Everyone deserves equal chances to take part, contribute and thrive. Our policies, practices and actions aim to remove barriers and create a welcoming environment for all. The Accessibility Action Plan guides our work to improve access and make our organization inclusive and respectful of everyone.

## Acknowledgement of key contributors

We thank the Government of BC, Accessible Employers BC, Disability Alliance BC, our first Accessibility Working Group and our Accessibility Advisory Committee. Their support helped us create and improve this plan. Their guidance, resources and commitment helped shape a full plan to make our organization more inclusive and accessible.

## Definitions

These definitions come from the ABCA or have been adapted from other sources, as noted:

**"accessibility"** refers to the design of products, devices, services or environments for people who experience disabilities. [*source: www.accessibilitycanada.ca*]

**"accessibility committee"** means a committee under section 9. This committee must be set up to assist in identifying barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization and advise the organization on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

**"accessibility plan or accessibility action plan"** means a plan under section 11. The plan must identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

**"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 anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment and can be caused by environment, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

**"impairment"** includes physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

## Our accessibility story so far

We published our first Accessibility Action Plan in September 2024. Between 2021 and 2024, we did research and consulted others. We then put in place steps, best practices and programs to support diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. These included:

### Internal policy, practices and external communications:

- We updated our website to focus on plain language for users.
- We reviewed our website, social media channels, videos and images for diversity, equity and inclusion. We made changes where needed.
- We added guidance on inclusive and plain language to our corporate style guide.
- We updated the People and Culture Blog and our online job application portal. They now provide information on accessibility and how to ask for support during recruitment.

### People & Culture (Human Resources):

- We made Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) part of our annual reporting to the Human Resources & Compensation Committee.
- We changed how we recruit board directors. We introduced a screening process that removes identifying details from resumes.
- We added anti-discrimination and values language to our job descriptions.
- We removed mandatory post-secondary education requirements from job descriptions. We now allow equivalent education and experience.
- In our employee engagement assessment, we ask employees to share disability or cultural diversity information if they choose.

### Orientation and training practices:

- We invite all staff to add their pronouns to their email signatures. We also explain to staff why these matter.

- We provide training on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. This includes gender equity and intersectionality, which looks at how parts of a person's identity overlap. It also includes Indigenous cultural safety.

## Our approach and guiding framework

Three principles guide our Accessibility Action Plan:

- **Relevance:** The actions in this plan meet our organization's needs. This helps us make improvements in accessibility that we can measure.
- **Reasonableness:** Our actions must fit the size of our organization and the work we do. They must also fit the money and staff time we have.
- **Actionability:** We aim for actions that are realistic, can be completed within a set timeframe and make a difference.

## Accessible British Columbia Act principles

We will always consider these principles in this plan:

- **Inclusion:** We aim to help everyone feel they belong by providing fair access for all.
- **Adaptability:** We encourage flexibility and the ability to adjust during change. This helps us build a more inclusive and accessible workplace culture.
- **Diversity:** Ability and disability take many forms. People's accessibility needs can conflict. We may need more than one option for each accommodation.
- **Collaboration:** We work across teams with experts and people with lived experience to build inclusion. Nothing about us, without us.
- **Self-determination:** We recognize that the right to make their own choices is fundamental for people with disabilities.
- **Universal design:** We encourage design that allows as many people as possible to access, understand and use all our facilities and services.

## Other legislation

In addition to the ABCA, we considered these other laws and agreements:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- *Constitution Act, 1982* (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms)
- *Accessible Canada Act*
- *BC Human Rights Code*
- *BC Workers Compensation Act*
- *Business Practices Consumer Protection Authority Act*
- Administrative Agreement
- BC Building Code, 2024

We also considered these documents, which are not laws:

- Consumer Protection BC's Standards of Conduct
- BCGEU and Consumer Protection BC Collective Agreement (2025-2027)
- excluded staff employment agreements
- corporate policies, procedures and/or guidelines, where relevant

## About our Accessibility Advisory Committee

We set up our Accessibility Advisory Committee in May 2024. It helps identify, remove and prevent barriers for people who interact with our organization.

### Focus of the committee

Committee members will review accessibility feedback and recommend actions. They will help identify barriers to access and inclusion that employees and community members face, or may face, when they interact with us.

### Recruitment and appointment process

Committee members will aim to reflect the community's diversity. They will bring experience, knowledge and skills that support the committee's purpose.

The committee will have up to five employees. It will include at least one member from each office and no more than one member from any team or department. The chair will choose members from candidates who show:

- an interest in participating on the committee
- a desire to learn more about accessibility
- a willingness to act as a corporate accessibility advocate

The CEO will assign a Vice President to chair the committee. The People and Culture Coordinator will serve as committee secretary.

We will build and maintain informal links with relevant organizations. They can provide expert advice on accessibility to support the committee.

### Committee members

The Accessibility Advisory Committee members are:

- Tracy Wu, People and Culture Coordinator (Burnaby), committee secretary
- Joan Harmsworth, Manager of Business Solutions (Victoria)
- Louise Hartland, Director of Public Relations (Victoria)
- Caleigh Pratt, Licensing and Information Officer (Victoria)
- Dan Stefanson, Vice President (Victoria), committee chair
- Natalie Reid, Inspector (Burnaby)

## Consultations

We rely on guidance, training and advice from the Province of BC, Accessible Employers BC and the BC Disability Alliance to develop our plan's priorities. In 2023 and 2024, we also asked a

small group of employees about barriers in our workspace and services. We interviewed accessibility service providers and other public bodies covered by the *Accessible BC Act*.

In 2025, we surveyed employees about accessibility. Most found the workspace and technology generally accessible. They also noted barriers, such as heavy doors and limited tools to help people with disabilities. Most responses about communication and accommodation processes were positive. However, staff awareness and supervisor training could improve. Employees suggested better website access, plain language training and better physical access. The survey showed both strengths and areas where we can improve.

## Feedback mechanism

Our website has an accessibility page. It includes this plan, space for updates on our work and ways to give feedback. You can use the online form without giving your name. You can also give feedback by email, phone, fax or mail. The page explains how we protect personal information.

Our public documents, such as the Business Plan and Annual Report, link to the accessibility page and ask for feedback. The Accessibility Advisory Committee reviews and discusses all feedback. It checks the plan's impact and suggests actions to address barriers. Our annual accessibility updates will summarize the feedback and list actions taken to address all concerns.

## Barriers

We mostly connect with the public, licensed and regulated businesses and other interest-holders through social media, our website, written messages and phone calls. This plan focuses on making these channels more accessible. We are committed to meeting the minimum Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). These are voluntary international standards for websites, documents and software. We will keep consulting employees, consumers, businesses and other interest-holders to find more barriers to address in future years.

# Our three-year plan

## Summary of the three-year plan priorities

Our Accessibility Working Group reviewed ABCA and used guidance from Accessible Employers BC. It recommended priority areas in February 2024. We then consulted our Accessibility Advisory Committee, gathered employee feedback and attended sessions with accessibility service professionals. We refined the priorities and received leadership approval. In November 2025, the Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed, confirmed and updated the priorities below.

## Priority Area 1: Information, technology and communications

We are committed to a digital environment without barriers for people inside and outside our organization. We will work towards meeting the WCAG Level AA requirements for our corporate website. This includes:

- providing text alternatives for any non-text content
- text and images of text will have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1
- the website will be compatible with assistive technology tools such as allowing content to be operable through a keyboard

All communication and marketing materials, including corporate documents and social media posts, will:

- follow the high-contrast ratio best practices for design and colours, using a contrast checker
- include imagery that depicts a diversity of people with varied abilities

## Priority Area 2: Hiring and employment

To help people feel safe sharing information about their needs, we will:

- strengthen our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility by clearly defining our accessibility principles

- measure the aggregated diversity and intersectionality metrics of our job applicants by collecting voluntary and confidential self-identification demographic data
- encourage job applicants to provide self-disclosures confidentially and/or requests for accommodation throughout our recruitment and selection processes
- inform employees during orientation of their right to self-disclose and be reasonably accommodated and routinely provide reminders throughout the employee journey

Our culture will welcome and support diverse candidates and employees. We will:

- document, track and respond to accommodation requests to provide applicants and employees with timely and reasonable accommodation support
- regularly review our corporate policies and procedures for opportunities to reduce barriers that affect workplace accessibility at all levels (individual, relational and organizational)
- use our website, recruitment materials (job advertisements) and the People and Culture Blog to talk about our commitment to workplace accessibility and diversity

## Priority Area 3: Board member and employee bias identification

Biases are views or assumptions that can affect how we treat others. To identify and reduce accessibility barriers caused by possible board member or employee biases, we will:

- support employee-initiated requests for sponsored training and development related to inclusion, equity, diversity and accessibility (IDEA) topics
- provide regular training about identifying implicit biases to improve our collective ability to support the recruitment of diverse, qualified individuals, increase our awareness of intersectionality, and influence the identification of equity barriers/gaps
- use our internal engagement platforms to share IDEA information and educational resources with all employees, with a new focus on accessibility to raise awareness and foster an accessible workplace and culture

### Priority Area 4: Built environment

Changes to the BC Building Code took effect in March 2024. They included updated accessibility standards. The changes aim to make sure buildings are designed and built so everyone can:

- approach, enter and move throughout
- use the facilities and services
- exit buildings

We have two offices: one in Burnaby and one in Victoria. Employees and board directors use them for hybrid work, which combines office work and work elsewhere. The public and licensed business representatives rarely visit them. Our office accessibility actions will therefore focus mainly on employees and board directors.

To make sure our offices are accessible, we will:

- ensure our Employee Handbook continues to provide clear support for workplace physical accommodation and to remove any process barriers to accommodation requests
- maintain our Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee safety inspection checklists to reflect any accessibility issues
- seek guidance from the accessibility service sector and our employees and address any noted barriers in our Victoria and Burnaby office locations
- ensure that any office construction or renovations meet the accessibility requirements of the updated BC Building Code

## Pledge to measure

As a member of the BC Accessible Employers network, we have made and will fulfill the pledge to measure. We will use our annual employee engagement survey to invite employees to share whether they have a disability and other demographic information. Sharing this information is voluntary.

## Monitoring and evaluation

### Monitor

We will prepare annual accessibility progress reports with input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee. We will summarize progress in our corporate Annual Report, which is published in June.

### Evaluate

We will fully review and update this Accessibility Plan at least once every three years, as required by the ABCA.

### Iterate

We will republish this plan whenever we make material updates, meaning important changes. These may include new provincial standards, more feedback from interest-holders or new actions considered by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

## How to give us feedback

We want to hear from you. Tell us about any accessibility problems you have had while reading this document, using our services or communicating with us. Email your feedback to accessibility@consumerprotectionbc.ca or share it through our accessibility webpage.