

DATE: November 23, 2022

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Walter Babicz, City Manager

SUBJECT: Accessible British Columbia Act – City of Prince George Implications

ATTACHMENT(S): None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated November 23, 2022, from the City Manager, titled “Accessible British Columbia Act – City of Prince George Implications”.

PURPOSE:

In June of 2021, the *Accessible British Columbia Act* became law. Municipalities must meet requirements of the [Accessible British Columbia Act \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca) outlined in Part 3 – Accessible Organizations by September 2023. This report is intended to provide Council with an overview of these requirements, and to identify potential resource implications.

BACKGROUND:

Part 3 of the Act identifies requires municipalities to:

- establish an accessibility committee,
- develop a plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization and,
- implement a process for receiving feedback.

For the purposes of the Act, accessibility is defined as having programs, services and environments that enable everyone to participate fully in society, without barriers. Barriers are hinderances and can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies.

The City does have an Advisory Committee on Accessibility and with some minor modifications to its Terms of Reference, it will be compliant with the Act. The development of a plan is a much larger undertaking given the broad definition of the terms “accessibility plan” and “barrier”. It will involve the input and collaboration of every City department. Our built environment, service design and delivery, human resources, information technologies, communications and engagement, and procurement practices are just a few areas that will need to consider accessibility through the lens of the Act.

Administration is ensuring relevant staff are apprised of the Act’s requirements and asking that related reports, plans, policies, procedures, etc. that may support the City’s compliance with this

legislation be inventoried. Once a baseline is established, Administration will be able to confirm required next steps including the identification of the level/type of resourcing that may be required. At present, the Province of BC has not earmarked funding that municipalities can directly access to assist with plan development. Instead, \$3 million has been made available to the Disability Alliance of BC to help organizations comply with legislated requirements. The details of how that funding will be allocated has not yet been determined.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

While Council has identified the ongoing implementation of continuous improvement processes to advance efficiency and effective service delivery as a priority, meeting requirements set out in the the *Accessible British Columbia Act* is not yet noted as a work plan activity in the 2022/23 Corporate Work Plan.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The scope of work and associated resources to comply with requirements set out in the *Accessible British Columbia Act* have not yet been determined. In addition, the degree to which the Disability Alliance of BC is able to help organizations comply with legislated requirements is also unknown. During upcoming budget deliberations, Administration will determine if it will be necessary to seek Council authorization for a budget enhancement to enable completion of the new work required to ensure compliance with the Act.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

In June of 2021, the *Accessible British Columbia Act* became law. Municipalities must meet requirements of the Act outlined in Part 3 – Accessible Organizations by September 2023. These requirements include establishing an accessibility committee, developing a plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization and, implementing a process for receiving feedback. Administration is ensuring relevant staff are apprised of the Act's requirements and asking that related reports, plans, policies, procedures, etc. that may support the City's compliance with this legislation be inventoried. Once a baseline is established Administration will be able to confirm required next steps including the identification of the level/type of resourcing that may be required.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Chris Bone, Senior Manager – Civic Initiatives & Partnerships

Meeting Date: 2022/12/05