



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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January 5, 2026

Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members Bills
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Canada

Sent by email: PMBCommittee@leg.bc.ca

Re: City of Prince George Concerns with Bill M-216 (Professional Reliance Act)

To Whom It May Concern:

As Acting Mayor of the City of Prince George, and on behalf of City Council, I am writing to formally express our concerns regarding proposed Bill M-216 (the “Bill”).

While the City of Prince George utilizes a Professional Reliance and Design approach for Part 3 Building Permit applications, the Bill does not reflect the City’s established processes. If adopted in its current form, the Bill would introduce unnecessary risks to public health and safety and significantly undermine local government oversight and due diligence.

Intent of the Bill

The City of Prince George acknowledges that the fundamental intent of the Bill is to streamline approval processes. The Bill proposes that a local government must accept, as meeting permit or bylaw requirements, any submission certified by a professional governed under the *Professional Governance Act*, provided the submission is complete and no complaint has been made to the Superintendent.

Currently, the City’s process involves referring technical reports (including land use and building permit applications) to internal technical professionals for review. It is our understanding that the Bill would mandate acceptance of technical submissions at face value, thereby eliminating the ability for local governments to conduct internal technical review. This represents a significant departure from existing, well-established practices.

Authority to Request Technical Reporting

Sections 55 and 56 of the *Community Charter* authorize local governments to request certificates from a qualified professional to demonstrate compliance with applicable requirements. Depending on context, such professionals may include architects, professional engineers, or professional geoscientists.

The *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act* clearly allow local governments to use qualified professionals (internally and externally) to peer review, and to support local government approvals in bylaw applications and permitting decisions. This approach both expedites development approvals and reinforces public safety through professional expertise and municipal oversight.

The City of Prince George also has an established referral process for technical reporting on development applications. This process ensures that inaccuracies or omissions are identified prior to acceptance, protecting both the public and the local government.

Due Diligence and Liability

Mandating the acceptance of technical reporting without municipal review would significantly impact local government responsibilities and liability exposure. Professional judgment can vary widely, and the Bill would eliminate local government's ability for due diligence that currently safeguard public health, safety, environmental protection, and structural integrity.

This concern is particularly important given that much of today's development occurs on increasingly challenging sites, including floodplains, riparian areas, steep slopes, climate-affected zones, and wildfire interface areas. These conditions elevate risk and complexity.

Under this Bill, liability would also effectively shift to local government should deficiencies arise from professional submissions in development applications. Should the professional or their associated firm not be held accountable, the cost of remedying such deficiencies would ultimately fall to local taxpayers.

Inefficiencies and Time Delays

The Bill proposes that disputes between an applicant's retained professional and the local government be referred to the Superintendent of Professional Governance for resolution. However, this office does not employ technical experts capable of assessing the validity of complex engineering or geoscience reports. As a result, this process would likely introduce additional inefficiencies and delays, rather than streamlining approvals as intended.

Lack of Legislative Clarity

The Bill lacks clarity regarding its interaction with existing legislation. The *Local Government Act* permits local governments to obtain information for development approvals, while the *Land Title Act* authorizes approving officers to consider information at the subdivision stage. It remains unclear whether, and to what extent, the Bill would override or constrain these statutory authorities. This uncertainty creates risk and confusion for both local government and applicants.

Consultation with Local Government

It appears that local governments were not meaningfully consulted in the development of this Bill. This is deeply concerning given the Bill's significant implications for development oversight, land use decision-making, and municipal liability. While the Bill attempts to protect local governments from liability, it does not prevent municipalities from being named in legal actions. Cities would still be required to incur substantial legal costs to be removed from such proceedings.

Conclusion

The City of Prince George supports efforts to streamline processes between provincial and local governments. However, Bill M-216 would erode confidence in local government oversight, increase

risk and liability, and compromise public safety. For these reasons, the City does not support the Bill in its current form and believes it is not in the best interest of the public.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Scott', written in a cursive style.

Susan Scott
Acting Mayor
City of Prince George