



# Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

## **REPORT OF THE ACCESSIBILITY FORUM OF CHHA-BC**

This report incorporates feedback from an on-line webinar held on November 29, 2019, as well as subsequent feedback obtained through drafts of the report shared via email contact with our Board and with community members. It also builds on work already done by our national organization for the federal accessibility consultative process.

The format of the report follows the specific reporting requirements established by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

### **What's important: Our Feedback**

An accessible built environment with acoustical standards, assistive technology and captioning

Public education and awareness of the nature of hearing loss and means for individuals to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential.

Hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive technology and captioning are essential access means for hard of hearing persons. Rehabilitation services from professionals and peer support are also paramount.

Employment access and opportunities for hard of hearing persons.

## Proposed model for legislation and standards

*The Government of British Columbia envisions a broad alignment between federal and provincial accessibility legislation. It may provide people with disabilities, businesses and members of the community greater clarity about how the legislation works and what to expect. This would entail moving forward with enabling legislation that outlines objectives regarding accessibility and inclusion in British Columbia.*

*The legislation would then provide the authority and tools necessary to achieve those objectives. Subsequently, accessibility standards and regulations would be developed in conjunction with persons with disabilities, experts and other stakeholders.*

## Our Feedback

Alignment in legislation at all levels of government is supported.

Important to articulate the relationship of the legislation to other bills and acts and to define which supersedes the other. Accessibility should be considered as a fundamental human right.

Captioning access is currently not understood as an important form of access for hard of hearing people.

Standards alone are not enough; funding to provide for accessibility and to meet the standards are required.

## Service delivery: Our Feedback

Provide education and outreach to expand understanding about communication in order to remove the physical and attitudinal barriers that the hard of hearing community face,

Provide captioning services and ensure classrooms are acoustically accessible.

Provide funding for training programs for captionists, interpreters and other supports

Provide funding for teachers specializing in services for hard of hearing persons and other support staff as necessary.

Ensure that there is early detection, identification and rehabilitation of hearing loss.

Integrated hearing healthcare into the public education health system.

### **Employment: Our Feedback**

Provide skills development and support for employees who are hard of hearing persons so that they may obtain and retain employment.

Provide an accommodation fund for employers for devices, technology and training.

Ensure hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive technology and captioning are available for employees in the workplace as an accessibility requirement.

Educate employers about the possibilities, not the limitations, of persons with disabilities including hard of hearing persons and encourage them to share their experiences.

Support the employment expertise of specialists on hearing loss, and their agencies.

Develop procurement incentives for government contracts if the vendor hires people with non-visible disabilities including those with hearing loss.

Ensure the government is leading by example through hiring people with non-visible disabilities; providing education and training about accommodations to all its employees/ Be sure to involve people with disabilities in all discussions on policy change to ensure accessibility is appropriate, relevant and built-in from the start.

Invest in employer education campaigns to reduce stigma and raise awareness of diverse employment needs and supports.

### **The built environment : Our Feedback**

Ensure rooms are acoustically accessible.

Support barrier-free access to the built environment, education and resource supports, program delivery and service, procurement of goods and services, elections, courts, tribunals and administrative decision-making processes, information and telecommunications, and transportation.

Take a proactive approach to accessibility and build it in from the start. (For example, build closed captioning into web-based programs from the beginning.)

Modernize the Building Code to include considerations for visual alarms, low ambient noise, sight lines, looping, etc. Recognize that the Building Code can set out best practices, particularly as provinces and territories use the Code as the standard for building accessible classrooms, hospitals, etc.

Provide and fund universal CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) accessibility services.

Ensure acoustically accessible environments with visual alarms, loop systems and accessible architectural design.

### **Information and communication : Our feedback**

Ensure captioning is available in all-web-based programs.

Provide captioning as an access form in all contexts as required by the hard of hearing person.

Develop greater awareness of the needs of hard of hearing persons and generate an understanding of their issues and needs.

Develop an inclusive education policy framework.

Develop educational resources for teachers and educators to use in classrooms throughout primary and secondary education that tackle stigmas around non-visible disabilities.

Integrate this material in curricula across provinces and territories.

Develop sensitivity training for all public service employees to understand non-visible disabilities and common support requirements.

### **Transportation : Our Feedback**

Develop public transit systems have emergency protocols and provisions for hard of hearing persons.

Ensure that public transit systems have a combination of flashing lights, visual displays and significantly loud enough audio systems for safety.

Ensure for compatibility with hearing loops for audio communications on public transits such as ferry announcements.

Provide captioning for audio communications.

### **Additional Feedback**

Provide for hearing access including affordable hearing aids and assistive technology for hard of hearing persons of all ages.

Provide cochlear implants (two ears, not just one for adults).

Provide aural rehabilitation programs that complement and enhance the use of technology.

Ensure legislation is flexible to incorporate new technologies. Provide funding for such developments.

Integrate technology into accessible design and building codes for buildings.  
(Example: Frequency induction loop system)

### **Potential Measures to Ensure Compliance: Our Feedback**

Develop small grants programs.

Ensure that hard of hearing persons are consulted on their issues.

Educate, promote and publicize.

Develop greater awareness of hard of hearing people's needs and ways to resolve them.  
Share best practices and reward progress.