



NEED FOR FIRST NATIONS ACCESSIBILITY (DISABILITY) SUPPORTS

OVERVIEW

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has been raising awareness and gathering the views of First Nations persons with disabilities (FNPWD), First Nations governments, and organizations, on topics related to accessibility needs and distinct legislation. This discussion links to the Canadians with Disabilities Act, now known as Federal Accessibility Legislation, and is expected to be introduced in Parliament by early summer 2018.

The AFN's work supports the implementation of several Chiefs-in-Assembly resolutions on disability related matters. These include AFN Resolution 55/2016, *First Nation Federal Accessibility Legislation*, which calls on the federal government to support a distinct First Nations engagement process, and AFN Resolution 105/2016, *Establish an Office of Disabilities Unit at the AFN*, which recommends dedicated policy supports and to develop a Regional Advisory Disability Task Force. Most recently, AFN Resolution 98/2017, *Distinct First Nations Accessibility Legislation*, directs the AFN to work with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to develop distinct legislation to support First Nations unique accessibility needs and to secure resources from the federal government to carry out this work.

More recently, AFN Resolution 8/2018, *Resources for Engagement on Distinct First*

Nations Accessibility Legislation, was passed at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) on Legislation on May 1 and 2, 2018 in Gatineau, Quebec.

AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly mandated the Chiefs Committee on Human Resources Development (CCHRD) to work with ESDC to secure long-term funding to support FNPWD and First Nations governments. This is in addition to advocating for regional level funding for capacity building to meaningfully inform distinct First Nations accessibility legislation and further policy work along with the inclusion of American Sign Language as part of the AFN future assemblies and conferences.

Budget 2016 allocated \$2 million over two years, starting in 2016–2017, to support the participation and input of Canadians with disabilities towards the proposed legislation. The AFN submitted proposals to ESDC to secure funding for two fiscal years, 2016-17 and 2017-2018; to receive input from FNPWD, First Nations governments, and organizations on varying disability related themes. The AFN has undertaken a number of activities to engage FNPWD and First Nations governments to inform this development; including three national webinars, several surveys, key informant interviews, and reports posted on the AFN website at www.afn.ca.

UPDATE

During the May 2018 SCA, the AFN coordinated a Strategy and Dialogue session on Accessibility Legislation. At the session, participants heard from FNPWD and from First Nations leaders regarding denials of essential disability services for First Nations citizens.

In January 2018, ESDC confirmed additional funding for the upcoming fiscal year (2018-2019) to support further activities.

NEXT STEPS

- The AFN Economic Sector is working with ESDC to secure funding for next steps in advancing engagement activities to inform distinct First Nations accessibility legislation.
- Continue advocacy efforts to secure resources from ESDC for the development of a Regional/ Advisory Task Force on Disabilities that will help to develop a Strategic Plan or National Strategy, and to establish a Centre of Excellence.
- The AFN is developing a policy paper that will serve to advocate for culturally safe programs and services for FNPWD.
- Continue to update to the CCHRD and First Nations leadership.

