



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 other organizations, on topics related to accessibility needs and distinct legislation. This discussion links to Bill C-81, *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada, (Accessible Canada Act)* which received First Reading on June 20, 2018. The Bill will be debated in the fall of 2018 in Parliament before receiving Royal Assent. The Act would apply, generally, to groups under federal responsibility, including banking and financial sectors, government departments, Parliament, federal funded organizations, and others. The Act is expected, if passed, to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards, and monitor outcomes in priority areas. These accessibility standards include: employment; procurement of goods and services; program and service delivery; transportation; the built environment; and information, communications and technology.

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. 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 24/2018, *Increased Focus on Disabilities Centered on Human Rights*, and AFN Resolution 38/2018, *Ensuring Accessibility at the Assembly of First Nations*, were passed at the AFN Annual General Assembly in Vancouver, July 24 to 26, 2018. 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

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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

- In January 2018, ESDC confirmed additional funding for fiscal year (2018-2019) to support further engagement with FNPWD and First Nations governments.
- The activities mandated by AFN resolutions are: to develop distinct First Nations accessibility legislation; to establish a Regional Task Force on Disabilities to support and build a national framework; identify regionalized funding for regional capacity building; advocate for culturally safe programs/ services; and to set up a centre of excellence, and other directives.
- Continue to work with ESDC as a lead department toward implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2030 - *leaving no one behind*.

NEXT STEPS

- The AFN Economic Sector continues to work with ESDC to ensure mandated disability related work receives the necessary attention and investments to inform distinct First Nations accessibility legislation and other activities.
- The AFN Economic Sector continues to update the Chiefs Committee on Human Resources Development (CCHRD), along with AFN leadership opportunities to meet with Minister Carla Qualtrough, the Minister responsible for the accessibility portfolio; and leadership opportunities to present to the House of Commons and/or Senate of Canada on Bill C-81 being debated in the fall of 2018.