

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: October 19, 2023  
Author: Dawn Ibey, Director, Central Library & Public Service  
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Meeting Date: October 25, 2023

TO: Library Board  
FROM: Tim Bottomer, Chair, SFHR Committee  
**SUBJECT: Accessible BC Act Update**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on VPL's progress towards compliance with the *Accessible BC Act* and gives updates on some recently completed work that includes accessibility improvements.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Board receive the report for information.

### **POLICY**

The [Vancouver Public Library Cards](#) policy outlines eligibility for Vancouver Public Library cards, and describes the roles and responsibilities for VPL patrons related to lending services. Relevant legislation includes the *Accessible BC Act* and *BC Human Rights Code*.

### **INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

To ensure that Indigenous considerations are embedded in organizational planning for improved accessibility, Indigenous representation is a requirement of the accessibility committee mandated under the *Accessible BC Regulation*. VPL's Indigenous Planner has provided guidance on how to best seek a representative given the geographical reach of the planned committee.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

This work aligns with Strategic Pillar 2: Shared Spaces and Experiences, Goal 2.2: Develop welcoming, accessible, and sustainable facilities that meet current and future needs and expectations; and Pillar 3: Belonging and Connection, Goal 3.1 Reduce social isolation and provide affordable access.

## **BACKGROUND**

An overview of VPL's history of ensuring accessible access to our services and a detailed description of the three requirements of the *Act* can be found in the November 23, 2022 report [Accessible BC Update](#).

### **Accessible BC Act**

In June 2021, the *Accessible BC Act* received royal assent from the Government of British Columbia. The legislation reinforces the need to identify, remove, and pre-empt barriers that prevent full participation of individuals with disabilities in the province. Under the legislation, public bodies are required to take certain actions towards this goal. The steps that VPL is required to take were outlined in the *Accessible BC Regulation*, which came into effect September 1, 2022. It originally stated that governments and other prescribed organizations, including public libraries, should establish the following by September 1, 2023.

1. An accessibility committee;
2. An accessibility plan; and
3. A feedback mechanism.

### **Public Library Accessibility Work Group**

The Public Library Accessibility Work Group was formed in 2022 by BC libraries, to support the sector in the implementation of the *Accessible BC Act*. The Public Library Accessibility Work Group includes representatives from the Association of BC Public Library Directors (ABCPLD), BCLA, InterLINK, and the BC Libraries Cooperative, and is working closely with Disability Alliance BC and liaising with the provincial government. The Public Library Accessibility Work Group is providing advice and resources to assist in the development of the required deliverables under the act.

## **DISCUSSION**

The provincial government has recommended that organizations collaborate with one another to meet the requirements of the *Accessible BC Act* in order to lessen the impact on community members with disabilities. The provincial government has advised that organizations identified in phase 1 in the *Accessible BC regulation*, which includes public libraries, need to have started

their compliance work by September 2023, but are not required to have everything completed as originally indicated.

### **InterLINK Accessibility Steering Committee (IASC)**

Following several discussions by library directors at InterLINK meetings in 2022 and early 2023 about options for collaboration, InterLINK reached out to its members in June 2023, offering to facilitate an InterLINK-wide approach to compliance with the *Act*. Many InterLINK libraries chose to engage with their own municipalities on compliance requirements. VPL management decided that working with other InterLINK libraries would result in a more meaningful outcome for people with disabilities who use libraries, given the scope of the City of Vancouver's responsibilities. In particular, this would facilitate an approach that would go beyond facilities issues and be better able to address the full scope of services provided by libraries, including collections and technology access.

Member libraries participating in the InterLINK Accessibility Steering Committee and joint Accessibility Committee include Fraser Valley Regional Library, Coquitlam Public Library, Port Moody Public Library, Lillooet Area Library Association, and Vancouver Public Library. VPL's Director, Central Library & Public Service sits on the InterLINK Accessibility Steering Committee. Other member libraries have indicated that they would like to stay informed of the progress of this work.

To date, the InterLINK Accessibility Steering Committee has developed terms of reference, drafted a call for volunteers, decided on the size of the accessibility committee, and has begun reviewing accessibility plans from other organizations. The InterLINK Accessibility Steering Committee is currently seeking a consultant to assist with the work going forward to ensure best practices are incorporated.

### **Accessibility Enhancements at VPL**

Accessibility enhancements are introduced at VPL where feasible as part of ongoing operations and facilities improvements through capital projects. Since the last Board update, accessibility features were built into the new West Point Grey branch, and service improvements were introduced for Accessible Services patrons. The Children's Library is still in the early stages of design development; however, accessibility is a core consideration in the design.

#### *West Point Grey Branch*

Universal Design principles guided the retrofitting of the new West Point Grey branch with a goal of reducing barriers and creating an inclusive and accessible space. Numerous enhancements were made through signage and graphic design, making use of high contrast, pictograms, visual glazing, and braille and tactile lettering. Additional key features include: accessible parking, power-operated doors, stable slip-resistant floor finishes, universal washrooms with emergency

call buttons, accessible height workstations, and the availability of a portable hearing loop system at the service desk that can be moved around the branch as needed. The branch is certified as accessible by the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program, with a final rating of 89%.

### *Accessible Services Department*

The move of Accessible Services from the upper floor office space adjacent to the atrium into the main body of the Central Library was completed in January 2023. The new location has increased the visibility of the service, allows for improved access to the broader VPL collection, and aligns with our strategic priority of creating more welcoming and inclusive spaces. In March 2023, VPL directors approved a plan to streamline Accessible Services' patron accounts by moving from a complex two card system for Accessible Services patrons who use both materials restricted to individuals with a disability and regular borrowing services, to an approach that requires only one card for people who use both Accessible Services and regular borrowing. Additionally, directors approved an 8 week lending period for all materials borrowed by Accessible Services patrons, whether these are from restricted or regular collections, to allow for alignment of loan periods with home delivery schedules.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Costs associated with work of the InterLINK Accessibility Steering Committee and for the first year of the joint Accessibility Committee are being funded through InterLINK. The InterLINK Board, with the recommendation of the Administrators' Advisory Group, will review and approve the budget. The VPL Board approved funding from the Provincial Enhancement Grant to implement the Accessible BC action plan at the September 27, 2023 Board meeting.