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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2014PREM0058-000821  
June 16, 2014

Office of the Premier  
Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation

### **Premier unveils made-in-B.C. accessibility strategy**

VANCOUVER – Premier Christy Clark has unveiled Accessibility 2024, a 10-year plan that responds to the voices of thousands of British Columbians who took part in a three-month long public consultation on making B.C. the most progressive place in Canada for people with disabilities.

“This is more than a plan,” said Premier Clark. “It’s a shared commitment between government, businesses and communities to make our province a place where disabilities are no barrier to living full lives, contributing to communities, and where no British Columbian is ever told their goals and dreams aren’t realistic because of their disability.”

Today’s announcement, held at a summit in Vancouver, follows an extensive provincewide consultation led by government, alongside leaders in the business and disability communities.

To move the accessibility plan forward, Boundary-Similkameen MLA Linda Larson has been appointed as parliamentary secretary for accessibility to the Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation. Larson will work closely with the business and disability communities and a new BC Accessibility Secretariat to open in the fall.

“We knew from the outset we could not do this alone, and now we have a shared vision to improve the lives of nearly 550,000 people in B.C. living with a disability, many of whom offered ideas that have helped us shape the plan and drive policies of the future,” said Don McRae, Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation.

Accessibility 2024 is designed around 12 building blocks – ranging from employment to accessible service delivery – which reflect themes that emerged from the public consultation. Proposed outcomes, measures and early actions are outlined under each building block.

Other actions government is undertaking now include:

- Consultation on options for a made-in-B.C. approach to accessibility legislation.
- Committing to address income-assistance issues raised in the disability consultation through policy reforms, including separating disability assistance from income assistance to recognize the requirement for longer-term financial support.
- Improving supports leading to increased employment opportunities:
  - \$3 million annually for assistive technologies that support employment goals.
  - \$1.5 million for an innovative public post-secondary training pilot in trades, technical or high labour-demand programs.
  - Up to \$1 million annually for research and innovation projects aimed at improving employment outcomes.
  - \$2 million in one-time funding provided for the University of Victoria’s CanAssist

program to develop new devices and technologies that help enhance independence.

“We believe business and employers play a very important role in breaking down barriers and opening up opportunities for increased diversity in the workplace,” said Tamara Vrooman, CEO of Vancity and co-chair of the Presidents Group. “We need to work together to create meaningful opportunities for people with disabilities so they can contribute to the workforce and help build strong, healthy communities.”

“We all place value on accessibility and employment opportunities in terms of supporting increased well-being for people with disabilities in B.C.,” said Carla Qualtrough, lawyer, two-time Paralympian and chair of the Minister's Council on Employment and Accessibility. “This is something to be supported and respected as we build towards a more accessible B.C.”

To view Accessibility 2024 or the Disability Consultation Report: Moving Together Toward an Accessible B.C., visit:

[http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/downloads/Accessibility\\_Summit.pdf](http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/downloads/Accessibility_Summit.pdf)

View a [list of cross-government services](#) for people with disabilities in B.C.

A backgrounder follows.

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## BACKGROUND

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### **Twelve Building Blocks for Accessibility 2024**

From Dec. 3, 2013 to March 11, 2014, the Province held a public consultation to provide British Columbians with a disability, their families and members of the public the opportunity to share their thoughts on what government, businesses and communities can do to reduce barriers and increase accessibility for people living with disabilities.

Twelve building blocks are the foundation for Accessibility 2024 and the goals for building the most accessible province in Canada:

#### **Inclusive Government**

The Inclusive Government building block focuses on how the structure of government in B.C. includes and affects the daily life of people with disabilities.

#### **Accessible Service Delivery**

The Accessible Service Delivery building block is about how the B.C. government delivers services to persons with disabilities.

#### **Accessible Internet**

The Accessible Internet building block focuses on how both public and private internet services in B.C. serve people with disabilities.

#### **Accessible Built Environment**

The Accessible Built Environment building block looks at how public spaces in B.C. communities are designed, and how that design impacts and supports people with disabilities to move around and enjoy public life.

#### **Accessible Housing**

The Accessible Housing building block is about how both the public and private housing stock in B.C. supports people with disabilities, both in terms of living space and being able to visit people.

#### **Accessible Transportation**

The Accessible Transportation building block focuses on how public transit and other forms of transportation, such as taxis and ferries, support people with disabilities to travel in and around their B.C. communities.

#### **Income Support**

The Income Support building block is about disability assistance payments and supports delivered by the B.C. government.

### **Employment**

The Employment building block includes both private sector and public sector employment for people with disabilities in B.C.

### **Financial Security**

The Financial Security building block is about different forms of financial income for people with disabilities, including the Registered Disabilities Savings Plan.

### **Inclusive Communities**

The Inclusive Communities building block looks at how people with disabilities live their daily lives at the local community level in B.C., and about how local governments and the Province can work together to make community amenities more accessible.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

The Emergency Preparedness building block is about how B.C. communities incorporate the needs of people with disabilities in their emergency planning, and how those needs are met during an emergency response.

### **Consumer Experience**

The Consumer Experience building block focuses on how the private sector provides goods and services to people with disabilities who live and travel to B.C.

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