

Research Topic:

Lack of awareness of public / owners that barrier free minimum requirements exist in Alberta

Barrier Free Sub-Council

October 1, 2019

1. What is the issue you are trying to solve?

We are trying to raise the profile of the Barrier Free Sub-Council (BFSC) as well as the overall awareness of the Safety Codes Council (SCC) here in Alberta to ensure that the general public and the owners of buildings/properties are aware of the requirements of the current [Barrier Free Design Guide 2017](#) (Guide). The fact that the document is now free and accessible to all will hopefully make a difference in time.

2. Does the potential issue align with the BFSC terms of reference objectives and the Safety Codes Act?

Definitely, the more that Albertans are made aware of the Barrier Free Sub-Council and all it does the better off everyone will be in this province.

3. Is this a technical requirement, social policy change, or education?

This particular question definitely falls under the guise of education. There is a strong need to educate the people who are targeted to use the document (owners, builders, designers and the like). Plus we must also ensure that the future users of these buildings, places and spaces are adequately informed of these requirements so they could assist in advocating for changes to make these places easier to use for people of all ages and abilities.

4. What would be a positive impact on the lives of persons living with disabilities in Alberta?

Improved awareness of all Albertans on this issue will assist in helping to elevate the importance of designing spaces and places for people of all ages and abilities. In time, this will ensure that everyone in Alberta is able to meaningfully participate in all aspects of society.

5. How does this issue impact Albertans, specifically? Is there data and/or research to support this claim? If so, please provide.

Broadening of the awareness of the barrier free minimum requirements will potentially have a strong impact for Albertans. According to recent [StatsCan information](#), 12.5 % of Albertans (roughly 540,000 people), have some form of a disability (including pain-related, flexibility, mobility and many other forms) which means that making our built environment more accessible to people of all ages and abilities could have a profound impact on the existing and future population of our

province. This idea of designing spaces and places for the most vulnerable groups will have a net positive impact to all users in terms of comfort, safety and navigation.

6. In what ways could this issue be addressed?

Raise awareness of this information to the following groups:

- Encourage all professional organizations ([Alberta Professional Planners Institute](#), [Alberta Association of Architects](#), [Alberta Association of Landscape Architects](#) and many more...) to be made aware of and utilize the Guide to ensure that all projects are as accessible as possible;
- Work with municipalities within Alberta to ensure they are fully aware of the document and are trained adequately to interpret all elements within; and
- Provide opportunities for municipalities to feed information to the [Safety Codes Council](#) (SCC) to further improve upon the Guide to make it even more usable for all municipalities be they large or small.
- Suggest the formation of universal access committees or working groups in municipalities across the province. These groups could provide an effective tool, regardless of the size or type of community. It would be interesting to have a terms of reference template or similar resource that could be co-developed between SCC and APPI, that could then be distributed to AUMA/RMA as a resource that any municipality in the province could use to build and run such a committee/working group.

7. Are you aware of any other jurisdictions that have successfully addressed this issue? If so, how? Are there existing organizations working to address this issue?

Yes, since 2001 in New Zealand they have provided an “Acceptable Solution” document entitled [Access Standard NZS4121:2001](#) which is generally similar to the SCC Barrier Free Design Guide. This document has been free to download for some time and has significantly raised the awareness of barrier free design to the entire design community in NZ and of course has raised the public conscience as well.

8. What is the overall cost of addressing this issue? Both from a financial and resourcing perspective. What will be required to address it?

While some of the changes suggested above may have some significant costs both from a financial and resource perspective related to their implementation (eg. public advertisement, training of professionals and the like), there are a few possibilities that could be progressed in the interim that might be relatively easy to implement. For instance, the SCC could provide some low cost advertising via emails to professional groups and to municipalities, community leagues and the like that the Guide is now free for all to access and that there are other resources on the SCC website that are equally valuable.

9. If we address this issue, how can we measure if it was successful?

There will be a number of ways to measure whether or not we will be successful in raising awareness of the barrier free minimum requirements - some would include the following:

- We will hopefully see an increase in the use and application of the Guide by professionals as they design within our built environment;
- A rise in the use of the Guide by the general public to assist in educating themselves and others to advocate for change to the built environment to ensure it is more accessible to people of all ages and abilities; and
- Working with the Alberta Health, we may be able to gauge whether or not these improvements within our built environment have assisted in reducing accidents or injuries to Albertans.