Turning Barriers into Bridges: Improving Accessibility to Small Businesses in Vancouver

by

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Abstract

This study examines public policy approaches to improving accessibility to small businesses in Vancouver for people with mobility disabilities. It reviews the literature on aspects of accessibility to help determine what barriers there are. It also includes a jurisdictional scan of federal, provincial, and municipal initiatives to try to improve access to businesses. The study primarily relies on interview data since this is an emerging research topic. Based on these items, the study determines three policy options: a grant and certification program, a small business tax credit, and an education campaign. The policies are analyzed using key criteria based on the literature review and findings. I recommend starting with an education campaign in the short term to help change business attitudes about accessibility. However, all three policies can eventually be implemented.

Keywords: small businesses; accessibility; disability; public policy; Vancouver

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List of Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AODA	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
BC	British Columbia
C.A.N	Citizens for Accessible Neighborhoods
BIA	Business Improvement Area
EAF	Enabling Accessibility Fund
HRTC	Home Renovation Tax Credit
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
RHFAC	Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification
SFU	Simon Fraser University
UBC	University of British Columbia
UD	Universal Design
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Executive Summary

This study proposes and evaluates three policy options to increase accessibility to small businesses in Vancouver for people with mobility disabilities. Accessibility is defined as the quality that allows people with a wide range of abilities to access or use a space or product. People with mobility disabilities have much lower community participation rates than people without disabilities. A key factor in community participation is the environment which is composed of both physical and non-physical aspects.

Small businesses are a part of that environment and make up the vast majority of businesses in the province. However, there are not many incentives for them to improve accessibility. This project uses a literature review, a jurisdictional scan, and interviews to determine:

1) What types of barriers people with mobility disabilities face when visiting small businesses

2) What barriers small businesses face when trying to improve accessibility

The project's research and findings determined three policy options. Two options involved financial incentives. These were a grant and accessibility certification program and a small business tax credit for accessibility improvements. The other option was an education campaign. It combined a checklist of specific ways to improve accessibility and a resource for businesses to find professionals for more expensive changes. These policies are not mutually exclusive and can be implemented over time.

The literature review and findings determined four criteria for analysis: increase in accessibility, ease of implementation (for government and business), stakeholder acceptance (for government, small businesses, and people with mobility disabilities), and cost (for government and small businesses). Based on that analysis, this study recommends first starting with an education campaign. This will introduce small businesses to new perspectives on what accessibility means while also giving them specific, inexpensive ways to improve access.

Chapter 1.   Introduction

People with disabilities are one of Canada's largest minority groups, meaning they have distinct characteristics that differ from the majority. For example, the most recent survey in 2012 estimated that 3,775,920 Canadians have a disability, or 13.7% of the total population (Giesbrecht 2017). Worldwide, about one in seven people has a disability, but this figure is expected to rise to one in five in the next twenty years because of aging (Carss 2017). This project focused on mobility disabilities because they are among the most common in Canada (Statistics Canada 2012). Mobility disabilities are those that make walking difficult (Clarke 2009).

People with mobility disabilities are a largely unexamined group in terms of quality of life (Gibson 2011); (Holmgren 2014); (Garg, 2016); (Alriksson-Schmidt, 2007). There are lots of social issues to consider, but community participation is important because of its positive effect on quality of life. Research into participation of people with disabilities in their communities is relatively new, but already shows large differences between them and people without disabilities. In one study, older Canadian wheelchair users rated their physical activity participation at 8.3% compared to 88.9% for those who didn't have mobility challenges (Smith 2014). In another study, inactivity for Americans aged 18-64 with disabilities was 47.1% compared to 26.1% for people without disabilities; the majority of survey participants had mobility disabilities, and they had the highest rates of inactivity compared to other disabilities (including vision and cognitive) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014). This is important because low activity levels for people with mobility disabilities are also associated with low levels of community participation and lower levels of reintegration in society (Crawford 2008).

A key deciding factor in community participation is access to community services. The two to three blocks (about ¼ of a mile) in particular around a person's home have a strong influence on social participation (Chaudhury 2016); (Clarke 2009, 2011); (Cooper 2011). Making activities and services accessible, particularly those within close proximity to home, prevents negative social, emotional, and financial consequences like isolation, injury, pain, distress navigating obstacles, depression, and institutionalization (Rosso 2013); (Clarke 2014); (Tranter 1991); (McClain 2000); (Jette 1992); (Fomiatti 2014). Research has shown that people with mobility disabilities face significant barriers

navigating their environments and because of this, they have lower levels of physical activity (Eisenberg 2017).

In the community, access to small businesses in particular plays an important role. Small businesses serve many functions such as places to socialize or shop. They bring great value to their communities including providing unique goods and local, specialized services (Mehta 2011). In British Columbia, 98% of businesses are small businesses (The Government of British Columbia 2017). The vast majority of small businesses (61.7%) are in the Mainland/Southwest region (The Government of British Columbia 2017). There is a growing body of research documenting what barriers people with disabilities face in accessing businesses. However, there is extremely little research on what barriers small businesses face in improving accessibility.

We do know there are few incentives for small businesses to improve access. Under the *BC Human Rights Code*, restaurants and other service providers cannot discriminate against people with disabilities, and they have a duty to accommodate them (The Canadian Bar Association 2018). However, this is easy to avoid. For example, litigation to force businesses to comply can take years, and accessibility can only be improved one case at a time. Updated building codes are meant to improve access too but going above approved legal standards too much brings up fears of liability for businesses since designing for accessibility is not something they are familiar with (Carss 2017). Additionally, building codes do not require retrofitting even if accessibility would be improved, so existing building stock remains inaccessible. This means that even though people with disabilities are a growing market, the majority of businesses are meeting, rather than going above, minimal standards (Burnett and Baker 2001). The legal frameworks of the *BC Human Rights Code* and building codes strongly favor the status quo, and small businesses are not incentivized to improve accessibility. This is in addition to typical disincentives to improving access, such as cost. Improving physical accessibility often involves retrofitting, and this is more expensive than designing buildings to be accessible from the beginning. Factors like these together lead to the policy problem: Too many small businesses in the City of Vancouver are inaccessible for people with mobility disabilities.

Research into social issues faced by people with disabilities and the importance of small businesses in their lives is admittedly scarce and sometimes dated. But even

with the evidence available, it is clear that access for people with mobility disabilities to the majority of businesses in Vancouver would be mutually beneficial. Access equals choices and opportunities for a range of activities, from working and shopping, to eating and entertainment. Making the environment more accessible helps the disabled, but it also benefits everyone else including people with strollers, children, and those with temporary injuries (Eisenberg 2017). Despite the stereotypes, people with mobility disabilities are just like everyone else, and they want to have the freedom to choose where to get a haircut, where to have lunch, and where to learn.

This chapter introduced the policy problem. Chapter 2 provides a brief overview about people with mobility disabilities and small businesses. This is followed by a discussion of what accessibility means, because it is made up of physical and non-physical barriers. Next, Chapter 3 presents the methodology for this project. Chapter 4 presents the findings which consist of a jurisdictional scan and interview results. Chapter 5 details the three proposed policy options for improving accessibility, the criteria for assessing them, and the analysis. Chapter 6 gives the final recommendation. The term "people with disabilities" is used throughout this project. Unless otherwise noted, this refers to people with mobility disabilities.

Chapter 2.   Literature Review

This chapter briefly overviews Canadians with disabilities and small businesses in BC. Each has some unique characteristics and needs that must be considered in any policy option. Next, accessibility is broken down into three parts: wayfinding, the built environment, and the social environment.

2.1. Canadians with Mobility Disabilities

People with disabilities are a diverse group, differing in terms of disability as well as their choice of assistive devices. As mentioned above, in 2012 an estimated 3,775,920 Canadians had a disability. To give some sense of size, this is approximately the same as the 2011 populations of the three biggest visible minority groups, South Asian, Chinese, and Black Canadians, combined (3,837,800 people) (Statistics Canada, 2013). It is also larger than the total 2011 population of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (1,889,400 people) (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Pain, flexibility, and mobility disabilities are the most prevalent in Canada, but these often overlap. For example, 66% of those with mobility disabilities reported having the other two, and 35% of Canadians with disabilities reported having all three (Statistics Canada, 2012). Assistive devices play an important role for people with disabilities. There are a wide variety of assistive devices, ranging from canes and crutches to wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Among people with disabilities, more than eight in ten use some type of assistive device (Giesbrecht et al, 2017). These devices help with navigating the environment, but they can also become a hinderance if the environment is not designed for them.

2.2. The Importance of Small Businesses

The province defines small businesses as those with less than 50 employees (The Government of British Columbia 2017). These businesses have distinct characteristics that policies must take into consideration. For example, 79% of small businesses in BC are micro-businesses made up of the self-employed (51%) and businesses with 1 to 4 employees (28%) (The Government of British Columbia 2017).

Another factor in operating a small business in BC is the commercial lease system. The majority of small businesses in Vancouver rent spaces, and high rents and property taxes make doing business difficult. Most business owners in Vancouver have a triple-net lease which means they pay the landlord a base rent, maintenance fees, and property taxes (Fumano 2017). Because the financial burden is shifted to a property owner's tenants, Vancouver's skyrocketing property values are forcing out even well-established businesses (Fumano 2017). These factors together affect how much human and financial capital small businesses have to improve accessibility.

There has not been a lot of research specifically exploring relationships between small businesses and people with disabilities because very few focus on them as consumers (Swaine 2014). But they are still people, and we do know the value small businesses bring to their communities. We know, for example, that shopping can greatly increase satisfaction in terms of a person's social, leisure, and community experience (Hedhli 2013). People also prefer small businesses to large ones because of the quality and variety of goods and services they provide, their uniqueness, ambiance, the diverse clientele they attract, the character they bring to the community, the friendliness of the staff, and the perceived extra effort they put into their businesses (Mehta 2011).

People can build a rapport with small business owners because there is less staff turnover, and they can enjoy a wider variety of goods and services (Mehta 2011). Besides this preference over large businesses, however, small businesses serve an important function in that they meet a lot of local needs, such as hairdressing, plumbing, or financial consulting. 80% of small businesses in BC provide services of some kind (The Government of British Columbia 2017). Without proper access, however, people with disabilities are cut off from these opportunities and are extremely limited in their choices as consumers.

2.3. Defining Accessibility

When people typically think of accessibility, they focus on elements like automatic doors. While helpful, that is just one part of navigating the environment as a person with a disability. In order to improve accessibility to small businesses, you first need to understand what it means. Accessibility is composed of different types of barriers which can be divided into three broad categories: wayfinding, the built

environment, and the social environment. These categories are based on the literature review, but other organizations have also created more comprehensive models of accessibility. Tools like the Human Development Model-Disability Creation Process (HDM-DCP) and the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) used by the World Health Organization include physical and non-physical barriers (World Health Organization 2001); (International Network on the Disability Creation Process 2010).

2.3.1. Wayfinding

Wayfinding is knowing where you are in an environment, determining a desired destination, and then knowing how to get there. It consists of things like maps, signage, and marked paths. For people with disabilities, wayfinding often begins before they leave home. Mobility device users make a habit of planning trips ahead of time to make sure there are no obstacles (Kylberg 2013).

Part of the problem is that people with disabilities already face the mobility burden: users of mobility scooters and other assistive devices may need to travel considerably farther to reach the same destination (Mortenson 2016). For example, generally only one accessible entrance is required in buildings, and this may be difficult to find. In addition, people might have a limited amount of strength or battery power. Unexpected barriers like indoor steps, narrow aisles, or slippery floors can take a toll physically and emotionally. Factors like these can affect people's willingness to do activities if they know they will have to overcome multiple barriers (Eisenberg 2017).

2.3.2. The Built Environment

The built environment is one created by people, such as sidewalks or buildings (Saelens 2008). It regularly ranks as a high concern for people with disabilities. When the Federal government asked the public about priority areas for accessibility legislation, the "built environment" was among the top six, getting 32% of the vote (The Government of Canada 2017). In an American study, barriers related to the built environment played a role in more than half of participants with mobility disabilities responding that they did not engage in leisure-time physical activities (Clarke 2011).

Accessibility goes beyond the entrance of a building. A study of an urban neighborhood in Chicago found that while 46% of food store entrances were accessible for people with mobility limitations, only 27% were actually accessible inside (Eisenberg 2017). The indoor environment is made up of both temporary and more fixed barriers. In an American study of adults with disabilities, things that improved access to food destinations included "wide and unobstructed aisles, elevators or single level stores, accessible entryways with automatic doors, having seating and accessible restrooms, and helpful employees" (Eisenberg 2017).

2.3.3. The Social Environment

In addition to the physical environment, the social environment also adds a layer of complexity and potential for barriers. A 2004 project commissioned by the Canadian federal government revealed that although people thought of themselves as being open to people with disabilities and that they wanted to be kind, they were uncomfortable developing relationships with or talking to them. Ironically, people believed that widespread discrimination still exists, but believed that they themselves were not biased (Prince, 2009). Similarly, a British study found that 26% of Britons avoided conversations with people with disabilities because they were afraid of offending them (30%), they felt uncomfortable (20%), or they did not know what to talk about (17%) (Treherne, 2017). Only 52% of those surveyed thought they had much in common with people with disabilities (Treherne, 2017). These complex attitudes follow people into their work lives and affect their perceptions of customers with disabilities.

The social environment can become a barrier in of itself because of these attitudes as shown by studies in various countries. One study in Macao, China identified poor staff service in casinos as a barrier for people with disabilities (Wan 2013). Another in Charleston, South Carolina concluded that social barriers were in fact even more important than physical ones for people with mobility disabilities (Newman 2010). These social barriers can manifest in different ways, such as ignoring people with disabilities or refusing to fulfill someone's requests while shopping. A study of people with mobility disabilities at a shopping mall in Quebec found that the most common and frequent suggestions to improve access were not eliminating physical barriers, but to train staff in better customer service (Swaine 2014). The study mentioned how employees often felt

stressed or uncomfortable helping people with disabilities. They were not always sure how to give proper service.

Chapter 3.   Methodology

This project's goal was to provide policy recommendations to improve accessibility among small businesses in Vancouver for people with mobility disabilities. To achieve this, the project needed to include the status quo, stakeholder viewpoints, and policies implemented in other jurisdictions. This project relied mainly on qualitative research methods because this is a relatively new research area. We simply do not know a lot about the variety of barriers there are for customers with disabilities who visit small businesses, and we know next to nothing about why small businesses are not improving accessibility. The first method was a jurisdictional scan of federal, provincial, and municipal policies. The second method was semi-structured interviews. The third method was a survey of business owners in Vancouver. SFU ethics approval was sought and received for these methods.

The jurisdictional scan initially looked at many different jurisdictions worldwide. The focus narrowed to Canada and the U.S. because they have some of the most creative and progressive policies to improve access. The scan looked at the federal, provincial (or state), and municipal levels because different policies can be adapted to fit different scales. In particular, the scan focused on American federal tax credits and education campaigns in New Westminster, BC. For the second method, 11 interviews were conducted (see *Appendix A: Interview Details*). The project focused on business owners and managers because that is where there is a severe lack of research, however researchers who have studied disability and members of the disabled community were also interviewed. Government officials were contacted for interviews, but none were willing to go on record. Business interviewees were contacted via Vancouver's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) This was extremely challenging, so the study also relied on information about businesses provided indirectly by other interviewees. Most of the other interviewees were people met through a co-op at the Canadian Disability Participation Project.

Most interviews were done by phone to fit interviewees' schedules. Interviews were also conducted in person at the downtown SFU campus. All interviews were recorded, but some recordings could not be transcribed because of quality issues. In those cases, field notes were used. Business interviewees were confidential and

identifying information was removed to prevent possible negative impacts to their businesses. Additionally, one disability representative wanted to be confidential. To analyze the interview data, individual interviews were looked at and themes related to the two main research questions were found. The two main research questions were:

1) What types of barriers do people with mobility disabilities face when visiting small businesses?

2) What barriers do small businesses face when trying to improve accessibility?

Next, overlapping themes among all of the interviews were determined. This process resulted in three interview theme groups: common themes, non-business interviewee themes, and business interviewee themes.

To get as much input from business owners as possible, a survey was created for the third method. Cooperating BIAs distributed it. Unfortunately, out of a goal of thirty responses only nine were received, so it was left out of this report. Those few responses, however, did reflect the trends and preferences found in the business interviews. In the future, researchers should get a firmer commitment from BIAs about how a survey will be distributed, particularly how often invites will be re-sent. If possible, research involving small businesses should not be done in November or December. BIA contacts stressed that those are particularly busy months for small businesses, and this possibly affected how many business interviewees and survey respondents were received.

After gathering the research, policy options were analyzed using multi-criteria analysis. Rather than trying to identify one unrealistic ideal solution, this study formed three options based on input from the data sources. Progress in this policy area highly depends on political will, and so this study presents options that are flexible enough so that one or more could be pitched to officials with different ideologies.

Chapter 4.   Results

4.1. Jurisdictional Scan

4.1.1. Federal Initiatives in Canada and the United States

Federal policies addressing businesses and accessibility for customers is limited. People with disabilities are protected from discrimination in *The Charter* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act,* but they do not address businesses in particular. The government is expected to introduce legislation addressing accessibility in 2018, but it is unclear what types of policies will be included (McQuigge 2017).

Besides legislation, there is the Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) which provides money for projects improving accessibility to businesses, non-profits, First Nations, and municipalities (The Government of Canada 2017). Starting in 2018, it has an annual budget of $20.65 million after the 2017 federal budget provided $77 million over 10 years to expand the fund's activities; previously, it had a budget of $15 million (Employment and Social Development Canada 2018). Businesses with up to 99 full-time employees are eligible for grants of up to $50,000 (The Government of Canada 2017). Business applicants must pay for at least 35% of project costs (The Government of Canada 2017). This is one of the few accessibility funding programs businesses are eligible for, but take-up among them is low. An evaluation of the EAF showed that only 2.7% of funded projects were for the private sector; the largest share, 72.5%, were for non-profits and non-governmental organizations (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012).

Outside of Canada, most federal jurisdictions rely on anti-discrimination legislation to improve accessibility. Most of these include clauses about "reasonable accommodation" or "unjustifiable hardship" which protects businesses from having to implement expensive changes. This means that small businesses are often exempt from improving accessibility because of their limited resources. Discrimination disputes are resolved on a case-by-case basis. Examples of legislation include the *Equality Act 2010* (United Kingdom) and the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act* (Australia).

The United States has the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) which allows for discrimination if improving accessibility imposes financial hardship on an organization (ADA National Network). Besides the ADA, the US targets businesses with tax incentives. The Disabled Access Credit is for businesses which earn $1 million or less in gross receipts and employ no more than 30 full-time individuals. It pays for up to 50% of eligible expenditures up to a maximum credit of $5,000 (U.S. Department of Justice 2005). Expenses can include widening doorways, providing accessible services, modifying or installing equipment, or making information accessible. All businesses are also eligible for a business expense deduction of up to $15,000 per year to cover the costs of removing barriers in buildings or vehicles. These tax incentives can be combined (U.S. Department of Justice 2005).

4.1.2. Provincial Initiatives

Only Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Manitoba have comprehensive legislation addressing accessibility. Ontario has the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2005* (AODA) which seeks to develop, implement, and enforce accessibility standards for both consumers and employees before 2025 (Government of Ontario 2015). The AODA applies to the government, businesses, non-profits, and public-sector organizations. Businesses of all sizes have obligations like establishing practices for serving people with disabilities (Birenbaum, 2013). Businesses are not required to retrofit their facilities, however; new building code regulations only apply to newly constructed buildings or those undergoing extensive renovations (Moran 2014). Instead, businesses are required to find creative ways to serve customers with disabilities, such as getting a portable ramp (Government of Ontario 2014).

In British Columbia, as mentioned above, customers with disabilities are protected from discrimination under the *BC Human Rights Code*. Like many federal legislation examples, disputes are resolved on a case-by-case basis. Besides this legislation, the provincial government partnered with the Rick Hansen Foundation to address accessibility. In 2017, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation gave the Rick Hansen Foundation $9 million (The Government of British Columbia 2017). $5 million dollars was for an accessibility certification program, and the other $4 million was for an accessibility grant program. Businesses, non-profits, and municipalities can apply to the BC Accessibility Grant program for up to $20,000 in

funding. Businesses must make a matching contribution (Carss 2017). To be eligible for the grant, businesses first need a rating from the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program (RHFAC). Grant projects must "result in tangible and permanent improvements for people with disabilities in the built environment" (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). This includes automatic doors and lifts.

4.1.3. Municipal Initiatives

Municipalities have mainly used two methods to improve accessibility in businesses: education or engagement initiatives and building codes. Education campaigns for accessibility targeting businesses are rare and are usually focused on accessibility issues for seniors. For example, the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce and the city's senior advisory committee worked together to educate businesses about being accessible in their Age Friendly Business Initiative in 2013 (Rick Hansen Foundation 2015). The campaign had tips like keeping aisles uncluttered, having seating in line-up areas, and training staff in customer service (New Westminster Chamber of Commerce 2013). New Westminster's Access-Ability Advisory Committee also produced a series of educational videos outlining some of the city's accessible features and tips for individuals on how to keep things accessible (The City of New Westminster 2016).

In Vancouver, there have been engagement initiatives with people with mobility disabilities, but these have been for improving public areas, not access to businesses. For example, the city and the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility consulted people with disabilities and seniors about accessibility for the Comox-Helmcken Greenway development project (Centre for Hip Health and Mobility 2016). They discovered the importance of seating for resting and smooth sidewalks to prevent tripping and uncomfortable bumping while using wheeled mobility devices.

Besides education or engagement, municipalities use building codes to improve accessibility. The federal government has building codes, but they only apply to federal lands; usually these areas do not have small businesses. In British Columbia, *The Building Act of 2015* recently gave the province the authority to set building requirements everywhere except in Vancouver (The Government of British Columbia 2015). Important

to note, however, is that building codes with improved accessibility regulations are only implemented when there is new construction or extensive renovations.

4.2. Interview Results

Interviewees brought up different issues and ideas concerning access to small businesses. Despite these differences, there emerged some distinct themes. Not all groups of interviewees had the same concerns, so results are separated into common themes and those unique to certain groups in the analysis.

4.2.1. Common Theme: The Value of Accessibility

Interviewees were asked about the value of accessibility and why people without disabilities should care about it. Oftentimes, views on the issue came up unprompted. The majority of interviewees saw accessibility as good and important. Dr. Atiyah Mahmood from SFU provided the following account describing the multiple benefits of accessibility:

> "(A student) lived in North Vancouver, and she would help older adults…shop…She found out grocery shopping was such an important, integral part of people's lives because it was something they have always done. But (suddenly) they were not able to do it because they had issues getting into the shop, getting things together, and bringing them back home. (Grocery shopping) was not just about food; it was about the social part too. They met people, they talked to people, but (because of barriers) that was taken out of their lives. (Inaccessibility) was not only affecting their eating habits, it was also contributing to their social isolation; so, it was important for them to have access."

Apart from direct impacts, inaccessibility has indirect consequences. Dr. Ben Mortenson from UBC explained, "People with disabilities tend to have family and friends, and so if you exclude them from a space, you are also likely excluding twice as many." Inaccessibility creates daily burdens as well. Dr. Delphine Labbé from UBC noted, "When we (have no limitations) we do not think about the environment. But as soon as something (like an injury) happens… the relationship with the environment totally transforms…Imagine having to think about every step you take to make sure that you can go somewhere, all the energy you need to plan that."

All non-business interviewees thought that accessibility did not just help people with disabilities, but everyone else in society. Interviewees stressed this as a reason for why people should care about access. Heather McCain from Citizens for Accessible Neighborhoods (C.A.N.) said, "I have never seen an accessibility improvement that has not benefited more than just people with a disability." She gave the example of larger changing rooms built for wheelchair access benefiting the obese who do not have the same political power. Similarly, Dr. Mortenson (UBC) commented, "the classic example is people who push babies around in carriages. If you make a space that a person in a wheelchair cannot get into, it is very (likely) that a woman or a man pushing a carriage will have the same problem. So now you are …excluding new parents…from spaces."

Eric Molendyk from the Tetra Society of North America (Tetra) said people may not realize they benefit from accessibility because they naturally look for the easiest route when walking. He said people think accessibility is done for a special group, but they prefer the things it requires like wider hallways. Dr. Labbé (UBC) had similar thoughts and commented, "(People) do not realize they can become disabled tomorrow morning… We are still in a society where people do not want to think about themselves as disabled…But it is important, because (if you design) for the extreme, it is always easier for everyone."

Business interviewees had different views about the value of improving access but generally viewed it as a positive goal. One business interviewee said, "It is fine to give funding to businesses (to improve accessibility), but I think it is going to be a bad investment…whatever has been (built) in the past is done… I would (use funding for) training designers, architects, engineers… because they are the ones building the new buildings." Other business interviewees had different views. For two interviewees, being socially conscious was part of the work culture. One commented, "We are a social impact focused space…and we have a philosophy of putting people above profit. (That) includes those with diverse needs." The other interviewee agreed improving accessibility was a part of the work culture and commented, "We (also) look at accessibility a little differently. We have kept menu items at acceptable rates for our neighborhood…(because) our neighborhood is in the poorest postal code in Canada."

Three interviewees discussed how customers made them aware of the value of access. For example, one business interviewee commented on needing a lift and said,

"There are…steep stairs seniors find difficult to navigate, and not just if you have mobility issues. Even if you have breathing or heart issues (it is a problem)." Another interviewee talked about not having an automatic door. "We have (many) people with a variety of challenges," he said, "but they (do not) have a physical disability. They (lack) strength. Accessibility at the door becomes a factor (for them too)."

So, with very few exceptions, interviewees saw improving accessibility as a good thing, not just for people with mobility disabilities, but for everyone else in society as well.

4.2.2. Common Theme: Cost

Interviewees were asked what they thought the biggest barriers were for businesses that wanted to improve accessibility. All of them talked about cost or the need for funding. Dr. Atiya Mahmood (SFU) said in reference to her research, "(When participants talked with owners) they said (improving accessibility) is a financial burden, or that there was not enough space to build a ramp. Some buildings are very old and were not built with accessibility in mind." In a similar vein, Heather McCain (C.A.N.) said, "The number one (barrier) we hear is cost. Space is valuable. They do not want to have wider aisles when they could have…additional merchandise." According to Dr. Labbé (UBC), "For some (businesses) it is just about cost. Some businesses (in our study) said, 'I will not invest in that; it is not worth my money.' They justify their inaccessibility with economic reasons."

Business interviewees agreed that money was a barrier and something they need to consider if they want to improve access. One interviewee noted, "Entrepreneurs need to spend money, time, (and) effort, developing access." She was concerned about the duty to accommodate (as outlined in the *BC Human Rights Code*), saying, "You need to serve (people with disabilities) … and you need to provide accessibility. But sometimes I (think) that there are no limits to their rights…What if (making it accessible) is not realistic? Where, as an entrepreneur, do my rights start?" Another interviewee said, "I think access to funds (makes it easier to improve accessibility). We would not worry about the landlord if someone made it free for us."

Some of the business interviewees had done major projects to improve accessibility and discussed the direct and indirect costs. One said, "For us, cost was

definitely a factor; we could not have done (our project) without a huge amount of fundraising, which was probably over 100 hours of staff time…and the grants…so time and money is a huge factor (in improving accessibility)." Another interviewee worked on a lift project for a heritage building. She commented, "I think there might have been a lot of bias in local grants when looking at where (the lift) was being installed. The organization was very misunderstood, and (grant organizations) did not realize (members) were not spending 20 years applying for grants because they were bored and did not want to shell (money) out themselves." She commented that the CRA had very strict guidelines about funding for heritage buildings. The business raised the money needed to pay for direct costs, but construction revealed foundation issues which doubled the cost of the project. The lift still does not work all of the time which has led to ongoing repair costs.

Other interviewees discussed how improvements could be very expensive not only because of unrelated renovation costs, but because of regulations. One interviewee discussed how a bathroom renovation brought up conflicting regulations, with one requiring an accessible bathroom and another requiring a certain number of stalls. Because of space, the business could not physically do both at the same time. In addition, an accessible bathroom renovation meant the business would need to pay for an entirely new plumbing system. The business had its project re-classified to avoid the accessibility requirements. She discussed how loopholes and getting grandfathered in were ways to avoid new building code requirements.

Another interviewee discussed how two regulations in their renovation also opposed one another: "If I followed the law… (people with disabilities) need access to the washroom. (But) I looked at the floor plan, and if I did that, that person is actually going to have more problems (entering the building)." She felt regulations were complicated and risky. She said, "I feel there is a big risk that a small business might not be able to comply with the law and might not be able to open."

Many non-business interviewees acknowledged that renovations could be expensive. However, they also discussed how part of the reason people see cost as a barrier is because of a misconception about what accessibility means. They said businesses tend to only think of people in wheelchairs and physical access, ignoring other types of mobility disability and other types of accessibility. Business interviewees

often referenced wheelchair accessibility and physical access as their points of reference for what accessibility meant to them. For example, one business interviewee said, "Definitely the first thing that comes to mind…is physical accessibility." Another noted, "(Inaccessibility) is when a normal person can walk (inside)…but not really people who are in wheelchairs."

One disability representative commented that there were both real and perceived costs. He said that accessibility is often thought of as costly and invasive, but that usually it is not. Because ideas of accessibility are so narrow, businesses do not always realize there are inexpensive ways to improve access. Other interviewees echoed these thoughts and gave examples of inexpensive ways to improve access. For example, Dr. Labbé (UBC) commented, "…We did an accessibility walk (in Montreal), ….and we realized that often there is small stuff that (shopkeepers) can do, but they do not know about it." She continued, "It is true, often they do not have the money to renovate… but they do not know that if they keep the aisles (clear) it will make it easier. Or they could have an employee help (the customer) with shopping."

Another example came from Dr. Mortenson (UBC) who commented, "Businesses love putting sandwich boards where they encroach on the sidewalk, and that can mean the difference between someone with a disability being able to use the sidewalk or not. Obviously, you are never going to be able to keep up with (enforcing) all the private spaces that exist. So (education) might be something to do, just to raise people's awareness." Many non-business interviewees said that education about inexpensive ways to improve access was important. Dr. Mahmood (SFU) noted, "(Businesses) might think they cannot (improve accessibility). Education might (include) a site… that shows you if you have $5,000 to spend or $2,000-3,000 this is what you can do. You can come up with different levels of solutions, and (businesses) can pick and choose from that. It might make it much more doable, or they might be more receptive."

4.2.3. Non-Business Interviewee Theme: The Limitations of the Concept of Accessibility

When interviewees were asked about the value of accessibility, another theme that emerged was that current thinking about accessibility was limiting or counterproductive. Many interviewees mentioned that within the subgroup of mobility

disabilities there was a lot of variety; even people with the same condition or mobility device can have very different abilities and accessibility needs. One disability representative commented that what is accessible is different for everyone, so it is simply not possible to make any place "fully accessible." Dr. Mortenson (UBC) commented on the pitfalls of claiming to be fully accessible, noting

> "When people say, 'Oh, I went to this thing, and it was totally accessible.' What does that mean? Who are you? Are you a C6 spinal cord injury, or are you someone with…MS who walks with a cane? … I think it would be better for people to know more specifics about a site, (like) this place has a ramp, but it is this angle, or this place has an automatic door, but you have to push a button. It would be better to give people objective data about places. Then they can make an informed decision based on their abilities about whether that place is accessible or not."

Eric Molendyk (Tetra) said that accessibility can be hard to define or standardize, but it may be easier for people in wheelchairs because those needs are more familiar. He suggested that having a site to get simple information about a business or a rating system would be helpful for everyday life. The perceived need to be "fully accessible" can also be counterproductive. One disability representative commented that there are a variety of disabilities, creating an endless list of requirements and solutions which cannot possibly be implemented by one business. He commented that you need to be selective about what to accommodate out of necessity. Heather McCain (C.A.N.) voiced similar thoughts. "(Accessibility) is overwhelming for people with disabilities who deal with this on a daily basis. So, trying to awaken people to this reality when they have not been aware of it before can be overwhelming...because they feel like no matter how much they do, it is still never going to be fully accessible."

Dr. Mahmood (SFU) gave an example of how accessibility standards could be limiting. "The US ADA standards were for (Vietnam) war veterans…and who were these people? They were young men who had better upper body strength and not so much lower body (strength). So the standards were set, and some of those things do not work for elders, like (wheelchair) transfers." Even though accessibility might be hard to standardize, Heather McCain (C.A.N.) noted that it was still important to talk about. "Once you get accessibility into people's heads, once you educate them… it is a skill set that they tend not to lose…Once you (are) aware of it, it is very hard to go back to not seeing it again."

Generally, interviewees thought that trying to be fully accessible was not possible given the variety of disabilities and access needs. For some interviewees, the solution was to move away from saying things are "accessible" and instead strive to incorporate the principles of universal design. Universal design seeks to make things accessible to the broadest segment of the population possible, including people with disabilities.

Dr. Mahmood (SFU) commented, "Personally, I always try to say universal design or inclusive design rather than accessibility design because accessibility only addresses a certain aspect. (Universal design) goes much more beyond that, which is a much better strategy (because) more diverse groups are accommodated." However, universal design differs from typical concepts of "accessibility" because access is viewed as being on a continuum. Dr. Mortenson (UBC) talked about this difference. "I am not convinced dichotomization works for accessibility at all...(with) universal design you are trying to design to be as inclusive as possible, while realizing that you will probably still exclude some people." He continued, "with dichotomization …you penalize the people who fail...(but) if you imagine (accessibility) on a continuum, then you can improve…Better to get a bronze or a fourth place than have a metric saying you are going to fail."

Dr. Mahmood (SFU) offered some examples of universal design:

> "Universal design…tries hard to make (accessibility) look seamless. What I always use as examples in class are the appliance and plumbing industries. The hot items in the market, like front open washer/dryers, are the high-end items. They all are universally designed, but nobody says, 'Oh, it is universally designed.' They say, 'This is what I want.'"

She also gave the example of people preferring big, flat switches or ones with sliding mechanisms instead of flap switches which require a lot of pressure to turn on. She continued, "(sliding and flat switches) are all universally-designed. They are a lot easier for people with less strength or arthritis. Those are issues of accessibility, and it is made so it does not (stand out) ...I think that the plumbing and the appliance industries have done a great job because those things have become coveted items rather than being seen as disability items."

4.2.4. Non-Business Interviewee Theme: The Importance of Social Barriers to Accessibility

Interviewees were asked about what barriers people with disabilities faced when they visited businesses. Many talked about physical barriers like steps and cluttered aisles. However, many interviewees emphasized that social barriers were just as important, if not more important, than physical ones. Dr. Labbé (UBC) commented, "a lot of people (in our research) would say, 'the number one factor for me to come back or not (to a business) is the attitude of the clerk or manager.' Some people said that they go back to a place because the person is really kind. She asked good questions, she talked directly to the person with a disability instead of talking to the (able-bodied) person …with them."

She commented that bad service has an effect on choices for people with disabilities. "(Other customers experience rudeness) but what is different for someone with a disability is that sometimes there is just one or two stores that are physically accessible for them. If it is physically accessible…but the employees are awful …you restrict their choices even more." Heather McCain (C.A.N.) felt that social factors were important and said, "(People) might be able to physically get into a store, but if the staff is disrespectful or treats you in an improper way … that is a huge barrier." Similarly, Dr. Mahmood (SFU) discussed how in her research people with disabilities valued good service. She said, "In Vancouver… participants mentioned there were some stores that they would return to multiple times because they were so good to people with mobility disabilities. They were welcoming, and they made them feel as if they were like everybody else. Occasionally, they would feel (in other places) that they were…invisible."

Interviewees gave other examples of social barriers. Heather McCain (C.A.N.) said, "We often hear that people (with disabilities) will happen to be with someone, and people in the store will only deal with the person who looks able-bodied." Dr. Mahmood (SFU) gave more examples of poor service: "There was one example (of) a thrift store. (Participants in the study) said, '(the business) is fine when we give donations, but when we go as customers, if we have issues, they will not address them; it is almost like we are invisible. If we have problems manoeuvring within the store…or need help… we are not supported.'"

Some interviewees discussed how businesses did not value people with disabilities as customers, leading to poor service. Dr. Labbé (UBC) commented, "Some clients would ask for specific things (to improve access), and ask the (employee) for them…but then they would get reactions like, 'why would I need that? There is only one client with a disability coming in, why do I need to make any changes?'" She added, "(Businesses)…also said 'I never see a client with a disability.'"

This belief about having few customers with disabilities can keep businesses from improving accessibility, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Dr. Mortenson (UBC) said, "It is a negative feedback loop in a way. If they had an accessible business, it might be positive feedback, because then they would actually encounter people with disabilities on a more regular basis and in fact realize that they are just like you and me." Heather McCain (C.A.N.) agreed and said, "I have been told (by businesses), 'we do not have people with disabilities here,' and I say, 'you do; you just do not see them because it is not accessible.' But then they do not understand why they should be accessible because they do not see them; it is a huge catch 22." She added that the misconception that all disabilities are visible also made changing attitudes difficult. "People think that unless you can see the disability, someone does not have a disability… they assume that they know how many people come to their business who actually have disabilities and what accessibility adjustments are needed."

Businesses may not always think they have many customers with disabilities, and this can affect their willingness to improve access. However, many interviewees added that employees felt uncertain or uncomfortable around customers with disabilities. Heather McCain (C.A.N.) said, "(Staff) often (want) to run and hide when they see someone with a disability because they do not want to do the wrong thing; they would rather not deal with the person with the disability at all." Dr. Labbé (UBC) felt fear was part of the problem and commented, "I think businesses are afraid to ask (what people need), and the best question to ask (people with a disability) is 'what do you need from me? What can I do to make your experience as easy as possible?'"

Eric Molendyk (Tetra) said an important message for businesses was that employees did not need to feel uncomfortable or stressed about helping customers with disabilities. Heather McCain (C.A.N.) offered an explanation for why employees might be uncomfortable. She said, "For a long time, people with disabilities have been seen as a

special needs group. A lot of people do not think they have the skills or abilities to deal with people with disabilities… they think to the extreme and do not necessarily just think of them as people."

The social aspect is important because good customer service can help people overcome physical barriers. Interviewees gave a lot of examples. Dr. Mahmood (SFU) said, "One of the places (a study participant) mentioned was a restaurant. The people in the restaurant physically helped (customers), they carried them up steps..…I read that in Toronto and other places they have temporary ramps…(This) might be a solution for those kinds of places."

Dr. Labbé (UBC) noted that friendly staff can make a big difference for customers. "Some people would say 'I go to this shop even if it is not accessible because the (employee is helpful) …the employee brings me clothing and shows it to me.'" Eric Molendyk (Tetra) said that most people had good experiences with staff. He talked about how some restaurants are not accessible by wheelchair, but this barrier could be overcome by calling ahead and getting the food to go. The solution was not perfect, but it was a way to get some kind of access. Heather McCain (C.A.N.) gave another example of how the human factor can help overcome physical barriers:

> "There is a deli in Maple Ridge, a small business, and they certainly cannot afford to have an accessible door, but they wanted to help their customers. They put up a doorbell, and that way if anyone… could not handle the door by themselves… they could ring the doorbell and either staff or customers would get up and open the door for them. It was an inexpensive way to address the problem, and it was really because they had the attitude of wanting to help."

Overall, interviewees believed that the social factor played a large role in accessibility. This builds on the existing literature of the importance of social barriers. Businesses may not think they have a lot of customers with disabilities, or they might be unsure of how to serve them. However, interviewees felt that education and awareness could make a difference.

4.2.5. Business Interviewee Theme: Lack of Practical Support and Resources

When business interviewees were asked about what difficulties they had improving access, most talked about cost or time. However, follow-up questions

revealed that a lack of resources giving practical information about paying for and completing physical improvements is problematic. Three business interviewees had done major voluntary accessibility improvement projects, each involving retrofitting. The first step was to figure out how to pay for them. Simply getting information about funding was a major issue for one. She said, "It is a heritage building, which normally gets supports, but for some reason, because of perceptions (that the members were rich) there was no way to get grants; we were rejected every time." The interviewee commented that despite having government contacts, no one helped with getting information about funding: "I approached (the city) a couple of times and…they directed me to people in the heritage (department). They would listen at first, but then they would pull that ghosting thing."

The second step was to find the necessary people and products. Some had an easier time than others, but all three talked about having to rely on their own social networks. One interviewee said, "There are some local companies that are go-to's for (lifts); they were not bad to work with, but they were not…as timely as we would have liked." Another interviewee had a general manager who had taken care of accessibility improvements in the past. For a future door project, he said, "I never thought it would be hard (to find a contractor). I would Google (it). (But) we got this door guy, and he would probably do it."

The third interviewee also used personal contacts and said, "We have…an architect helping with navigating permits and…the system…We also have someone who's sister is a structural engineer." They did the work for free, and she said, "If I did not have (those contacts) I would have been going in blind and stumbling around trying to figure out who I hire and for what." She also discussed how her landlord wanted her to only hire his contractors, but this was not in her best interests. She said, "I could contact the landlord and deal with their construction crew, which is probably going to be overpriced and incompetent based on other repairs they have done, or I could get my guy and have him do it, hoping (the landlord) does not notice (the renovation)."

From talking with interviewees, it was obvious that some spent a lot of time and effort finding the people and products they needed. One interviewee said, "Turns out raising the money was not the hard part!" She added, "I am still bewildered by the (lift) installation process…I had this illusion that I would call the guy who installs the lift, and

he would come in and install a lift. What I did not realize is he would install (it) only if I knew that the stairs would hold it, and that I would need an electrician to help wire it and…a separate guy fix the drywall. I was like, 'what do you mean you are not going to just come in and do what I am paying for?'" She thought other businesses would benefit from knowing ahead of time exactly what professionals and services were needed for different projects.

In terms of products, there were also differences in how easily businesses could find items. One business interviewee said his general manager got the right hardware for an accessible bathroom and had not told him there were any problems finding it. Another interviewee, however, said, "Finding a grab bar...that met building code standards was almost impossible…I could not find the recommended one…I must have looked at twenty websites (for the right size and shape)."

Discussions with business interviewees showed that the ability to carry out more permanent accessibility projects depended largely on who they knew. Even with help, some of them had a difficult time finding the required experts or hardware. These were very motivated interviewees who did see the value of improving accessibility. Some expressed concern that without practical information about what was required for installing an automatic door or an accessible bathroom, other businesses would not put in the effort to do those kinds of projects. This is one barrier that is not addressed in existing literature.

4.2.6. Business Interviewee Theme: The Challenges of Renting Property

Like access to information, follow-up questions revealed that renting business space was a barrier to improving accessibility. Three business interviewees rented their properties, and they all talked about landlords or management being an obstacle to changes. Without their permission, businesses cannot legally do a lot of retrofitting projects.

One issue was being able to communicate with property owners. One interviewee said, "One of the problems is we never speak directly to our landlord; we speak to building management, so I am assuming they are accurately relaying our messages." The landlord and management were barriers to improving access in more

direct ways. The interviewee said, "They have been a bit of a pain when it comes to the lift, which surprises me because it is to their massive benefit, and we are the ones paying for it. (For example) trying to get permission letters (for construction permits) has always been a slow process."

Another interviewee talked about the difficulties of needing to communicate with and get the permission of the rest of the strata. The strata votes on changes, so businessowners have to convince multiple people to approve a project. She said, "If I would like to change one door, first I need the permission of the strata. It is sometimes not in the power of the entrepreneur (to change things)."

Another obstacle was that property owners did not always seem to see the value of improving accessibility. One interviewee noted, "We tried to post signs on the bathroom making them gender neutral. The landlord had the cleaning company remove them and threatened us with a fine every time they had to remove them again. We have tried things like sending them information…and enlightening them as to why we want to do this, and we get no response to most of those emails." Gender neutral bathrooms improve access by allowing opposite gender caregivers in washrooms, for example.

Another interviewee discussed how he wanted an automatic door, but the landlord and property manager were an issue. He said:

> "They see the value (of installing an automatic door) from our (viewpoint), but maybe not from theirs…They are reasonable people, but their job is to rent out real estate, and the real estate has been rented...so their job is done…. (If) they looked at improvement, (they will look at) what is going to make this (building) more attractive or rentable. We are in a 20-year lease with them, so they are not too…worried about us going anywhere… We are also not going to leave because the door has no accessibility button. So, the incentive is not really there for them…what we are doing (to get the door) is appealing to their sense of being a good neighbor and a good citizen."

Overall, business interviewees saw their landlords or strata as real obstacles to making permanent accessibility improvements. Even when funding was taken care of, some interviewees did not feel that property owners were motivated to allow projects to go forward. Like the issue of a lack of practical information, the difficulties associated with renting are not in the existing literature as obstacles to improving accessibility.

Chapter 5.   Options and Analysis

This project's goal was to devise practical recommendations that can be easily implemented, not to single-handedly end inaccessibility. To be considered in the evaluation, the policy had to have some sort of incentive to appeal to businesses, result in timely improvements, and be reasonably simple to implement. For these reasons, comprehensive provincial accessibility legislation similar to the AODA was not considered. However, it could be a goal in the long term. Based on the findings, this project determined three policy options to improve access to small businesses. These options are not mutually exclusive, however.

5.1. Policy Options

5.1.1. Policy Option One: BC Accessibility Grant Program and Accessibility Certification

This option is the status quo. Although there is a federal grant program, this project focused on the provincial program to avoid duplication and because applicants face very similar challenges in either process. In addition, the provincial option is new and has not been evaluated yet. The provincial grants are also unique because they are combined with a certification program. Since it is a new program and unlikely to drastically change in the near future, it was evaluated based on how it currently performs to show how it could be improved.

In 2017, the provincial government partnered with the Rick Hansen Foundation to implement the grant and accessibility certification programs. The government provided funding for both programs, including money for free accessibility audits until March 2019 (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). Through the BC Accessibility Grants program, businesses can apply for grants of up to $20,000, but they must make a matching a contribution (Carss 2017). Projects must also "result in tangible and permanent improvements for people with disabilities in the built environment" (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). These projects include things like building a curb ramp, a ramp to the entrance, a lift, or a power door.

To be eligible for the grant, businesses first have to obtain an accessibility audit from the Rick Hansen accessibility certification program. The program's goal is to establish a LEED-style national certification system that sets a consistent standard for accessibility. Buildings are scored in eight areas, including exterior access and interior circulation (Carss 2017). Each general area has subsections, such as "parking" and "path of travel," which have different point values.

The audit tells businesses which things should be improved in the short term as well as projects that could be done in the future. There are three outcomes. A score of 80% or more is considered "gold," 60-79% is simply "certified," and buildings below 60% do not meet the requirements for certification (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). You can purchase a plaque to "showcase that your location is fully accessible" and have your business's score put in an online registry (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). The audit is based on the principles of Universal Design (UD) which seek to promote the integration of different groups of people into a space (Steinfeld 1999). The audit takes into consideration six disability groups, including those with mobility disabilities. The program launched in 2017 with 12 accessibility assessors for all of Canada, but the organization hopes to increase this to 200 in 18-24 months (Carss 2017).

5.1.2. Policy Option Two: Small Business Tax Credit

This policy consists of implementing a tax credit modeled on the US's Disabled Access Credit for small businesses. The US defines small businesses as those with 30 or fewer employees or total revenues of $1 million or less (US Department of Justice 2005). They can get a credit of up to $5,000 (half of eligible expenses up to $10,250, with no credit for the first $250) (Department of Justice 2005). This funding can be used for a wide variety of improvements based on ADA regulations. This includes removing physical barriers, buying equipment to improve access (such as accessible debit card machines), making information accessible, or providing services to improve access (such as sign language interpreters) (Department of Justice 2005). For this analysis, the same types of limitations and eligible expenses were assumed to apply.

5.1.3. Policy Option Three: Education Campaign

This option is modeled on the New Westminster education campaign targeting small businesses that sought to improve customer service for seniors. The campaign had a PowerPoint presentation and distributed information packets to businesses. The presentation discussed why seniors are an important consumer market and had tips to make the physical and social environments more senior-friendly. This campaign is similar but has some distinct differences to take into account the project's findings. This policy consists of two parts: an 8-item action list and an online resource page for small businesses.

The 8-item action list can include many things, but this list is devised from the literature review and findings. The eight items are:

1. Wayfinding: Each business inputs accessibility information and photos into AccessNow, an app for people with disabilities. The city could specify what types of information to include, such as door width, which would provide objective data for customers.

2. Wayfinding: Participating businesses can put a decal in their shop window to show they are disability-friendly.

3. Built Environment: Businesses with one step at their entrance can contact StopGap Vancouver to get a free temporary ramp.

4. Built Environment: Businesses try to keep aisles clear of merchandise or other temporary objects and limit end caps on aisles

5. Built Environment: Businesses provide permanent seating inside or outside the building. If impossible, they try to come up with a temporary seating option that is available on request.

6. Built Environment: Businesses provide ways for customers who cannot access the building to contact them from outside, such as a doorbell or a phone number advertised in the window.

7. Built Environment: Businesses provide a claw grabber on request for people who need help reaching items.

8. Social Environment: The city provides employee training materials either online or in packet form which gives basic tips for helping customers with disabilities.

Instead of general tips, items are specific and incorporate each category of accessibility. This allows small businesses of any type to improve access in some way, however small. Items also represent priority areas for each category. In the built environment, for example, inaccessible entrances was one of the top issues found in the AODA legislative review (Moran 2014).

The other part of this policy consists of a resource page on the City of Vancouver website. Interviewees identified a lack of information about professionals and companies to help with more complicated improvements. This website would provide information about those topics so businesses could plan ahead for different projects.

5.2. Criteria and Measures

Each option is described and then evaluated using criteria based on the literature review and findings. Comprehensive criteria were chosen to show the nuance between different options, particularly how they affect small businesses. This means weak points in each policy can be better identified and remedied.

5.2.1. Increase in Accessibility

Any policy should increase access to goods and services as this is the key criteria addressing the policy problem. Ways to measure accessibility vary and data is lacking for items like the number of businesses with level entrances. So, this study estimated how policies affected the three areas of accessibility identified by the findings. For each policy, the project estimated what effect it would have on wayfinding, the built environment, and the social environment. Each policy was evaluated based on how much a fully implemented project under that policy would impact each area of accessibility, regardless of what difficulties might occur in the implementation process. Issues of policy implementation were considered in a separate criterion so this one could

estimate the maximum potential for accessibility under each option. A 1 to 5 scale was used to estimate the impact on wayfinding and the built and social environments with 5 indicating a large impact. These scores were combined to get a score measuring the increase in accessibility.

5.2.2. Ease of Implementation

Ease of implementation was estimated for both the government and small businesses. This criterion took into account any weaknesses of the policy option program design. For government, the project considered the level of government needed to implement the policy since some policies would be additions to existing structures while others would require new structures.

Each policy was ranked on a 1 to 5 scale with a 5 indicating a low level of government was needed.

For small businesses, ease of implementation was estimated using how complex the policy was. This could capture issues with landlord approval. Because actual time commitments vary depending on the project, the study estimated how easily they could complete the program based on the results and literature review.

Each option was ranked on a 1 to 5 scale with a 5 indicating a very simple process.

5.2.3. Stakeholder Acceptance

Stakeholder groups were determined based on who would be affected by these policies and who could implement them. Although accessibility affects the whole community, the main stakeholders for this policy problem are:

1. The Government (municipal or provincial)

2. Small businesses

3. People with mobility disabilities

The study estimated each groups' support for the policy using a 1 to 5 scale with a 5 indicating a high level of support.

5.2.4. Cost

This project estimated costs to government for each policy using programs in the province and other jurisdictions. Each option was scored using a 1 to 5 scale with a 5 indicating a very inexpensive option.

Costs to small businesses to do different projects were estimated under each option using past programs and interviews. A 1 to 5 scale was used with a 5 indicating a very inexpensive option.

The criteria for evaluation are summarized below:

Table 1:   Criteria for Assessment

Objectives	Criteria	Measure	Method
Increase in Accessibility	Estimated effect on 1) Wayfinding 2) Built Environment 3) Social Environment	Qualitative: Estimated effect 1- little or no effect 5- large effect	Literature review, interviews
Ease of Implementation	Degree to which the policy is easy for government to implement	Qualitative: Level of government needed to implement the policy 1-High level of government needed 5 -Little or no government needed	Literature review, legal framework, interviews
	Degree to which policy is easy for businesses to implement	Qualitative: Estimated complexity of the policy 1- Very complex 5- Very simple	Literature, legal framework, interviews

Stakeholder Acceptance	The support for the policy by the government, small businesses, and people with mobility disabilities	Qualitative: Estimate of support for policy 1-Little or no support 5 -High level of support	Literature review, news releases, interviews
Cost	Expected cost to government	Qualitative: Estimate cost 1 -Very expensive 5 -Very inexpensive	Literature Review, Interviews
	Expected cost to small businesses	Qualitative: Estimate cost 1 -Very expensive 5 -Very inexpensive	Literature Review, Interviews

5.3. Policy Analysis

5.3.1. Policy Option One: BC Accessibility Grant Program and Accessibility Certification

Increase in Accessibility

Wayfinding

It is possible grants could cover some aspects of wayfinding, such as signs. But since the program is new it is unclear if these would be considered permanent enough to qualify. Other aspects of wayfinding, such as an accessible website showing the layout of the store, would not qualify for grants since they are not part of the built environment.

In terms of the certification program, it is also unclear what sort of information will be available in the online registry because none have been posted yet. This makes it uncertain how much people can learn about the business before they go in. The audit does take into account internal wayfinding, however. If there were issues with wayfinding inside, the audit would tell business owners what to do to improve.

Because of the large amount of uncertainty but the potential to improve internal wayfinding, this scored a 2.

Built Environment

The grant does not cover temporary barriers; however, the audit can highlight issues with them. Auditors look at the path of travel inside and outside of buildings which would capture problems like cluttered aisles. The grant program does provide funding to change fixed barriers, and most of the subsections of the audit score fixed barriers. So, these programs together identify a variety of barriers and give businesses a lot of funding to change them. This means that businesses would be able to do expensive renovations.

Although difficult to quantify, the federal grant program made it possible for a lot of projects to be completed and increased accessibility in terms of scope and quality (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2012). The federal program allows funding to be used for vehicles or communications projects, but over 90% of projects from 2008 and 2009 were for renovations (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2012). A vast majority of these projects were for exterior access, with 42.9% of projects involving new doors or entranceways and 30.2% of projects involving ramps (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2012).

Because of the size of the provincial grant, information given about a variety of fixed barriers, and performance of the federal program in terms of built environment projects this option scored a 5.

Social Barriers

Neither the grant program nor the audit takes into account ways to improve customer service or other social aspects.

For this reason, this option scored a 1.

Ease of Implementation: Government

The provincial government is not involved in implementing these programs, but it does support them financially as part of its overall goal to improve accessibility. In 2017, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation awarded the Rick Hansen Foundation money for the grant and certification programs a few days after the release

of the provincial budget. Any future grant funding would likely need to be secured via the Ministry (as opposed to legislation) which decreases the level of government involvement needed. The certification program would not need more provincial funding since assessment fees will be paid by applicants after March 2019.

Because the provincial government is needed to award funding in the future, but no new structures are needed to carry out the policy, this scored a 5.

Ease of Implementation: Small Businesses

The grant program requires projects be permanent, built environment improvements. This means property owners need to be involved for most small businesses because they do not own their buildings. The audit is a low time commitment, taking two to ten hours depending on the size of the building (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). Grant programs in general, however, can pose some challenges. Applicants may be unfamiliar with the grant process or not have the staff needed to complete the forms in a timely manner. This can make the process difficult, complex, and daunting (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2012).

The deadlines might also become an issue. There are two rounds of deadlines each year in May and November for grant applications (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). After approval, the project must be completed within one year (Rick Hansen Foundation 2017). Budgets cannot be easily adjusted with grants, especially for unforeseen construction difficulties (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2012). One interviewee who did complete the program noted that although the process was straightforward, it could be a lot of work doing all of the paperwork.

It is a multi-step process to get to project completion, so this scored a 2.

Stakeholder Acceptance: Government

The Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation Minister Michelle Stilwell provided funding for these programs originally. This ministry has since become the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Direction. The new minister, Shane Simpson, has not said anything specific about businesses and accessibility, but the government's recent moves support people with disabilities in general. For example, the

government increased disability support rates (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2018).

One of the ministry's four broad policy goals is to help people with disabilities be a part of their communities (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction2018). It is also seeking "innovative and inclusive" supports and services to improve outcomes and wants the business community to be a part of solutions (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2018). The minister stated, "Organizations, community groups, the disability community, businesses and governments all play a vital role in moving us closer to a fully inclusive society that encourages everyone to thrive, no matter their ability" (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2017). However, the new government has already committed a lot of money supporting people with disabilities by increasing disability support rates and other policies. So, it will probably be hesitant to renew funding for the grant program in the near future.

For these reasons, this scored a 2.

Stakeholder Acceptance: Small Businesses

This option helps to address the barrier of cost so business interviewees felt positive about this option. On the other hand, most did not like that costs had to be paid in full up front. In this program, businesses are reimbursed after project completion. In addition, having to match funds made this program significantly less feasible for some interviewees because eligible projects would likely require renovations. They noted that together these policies made it very difficult to do projects, even seemingly simple ones.

There is also the issue of who gets grant approval. Because people judge grant proposals, there is the chance for bias, whether intentional or not. Some applicants to the federal grant program, for example, felt that similar organizations and situations were not judged with the same selection criteria; this made them reluctant to apply in the future (The Government of Canada 2012). One business interviewee brought up the issue of discrimination in the grant approval process. The perception of bias, especially for business applicants who need to match funding, can dissuade them from applying.

The support for accessibility certification is less straightforward. Because certification programs are new in the world, proving they attract customers is difficult because we simply do not have the data. Heather McCain noted that the program is in the very beginning stages, so businesses do not know what the benefits are. In addition, she felt that many businesses suffered from audit fatigue because so many other programs had tried this. On the positive side, business interviewees liked how it was very specific in what things needed to be improved and separated them into different time frames. This allowed them to make plans to fix critical things first and leave bigger projects for later.

For these reasons, this scored a 3.

Stakeholder Acceptance: People with Mobility Disabilities

The support for this policy from people with mobility disabilities is mixed. On the positive side, disability interviewees welcomed any way to improve access to buildings. Self reporting from the federal grant program noted that their projects either made buildings accessible or made existing accessibility features more efficient (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2012). The vast majority of projects funded by the EAF were for entrances and doors, and entrances was one of the most frequent problem areas in consultations in Ontario (Moran 2014). Some research also suggests support for certification. Participants at the AODA legislative review felt that a LEED-style certification system or a logo to raise awareness were the best ways to incentivize businesses to improve accessibility (Moran 2014).

On the other hand, when the federal government asked how it could encourage, support and recognize organizations that showed accessibility leadership, only 4% of comments from the survey suggested certification (The Government of Canada 2017). Another issue is that as interviewees mentioned, accessibility is not the same for everyone. The plaque or badge the certification program uses might backfire for the person who finds the place to not be "fully accessible."

For these reasons, this option scored a 4 for acceptance by people with mobility disabilities.

Cost: The Government

On February 23, 2017, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation announced it was giving the Rick Hansen Foundation $9 million to help improve accessibility in British Columbia (The Government of British Columbia 2017). $5 million dollars was for the accessibility certification program, and the other $4 million was for the accessibility grant program. Since the organization used the accessibility certification program funds for development, it is unlikely it will need such a significant amount of money again.

However, it is highly likely that the province will need to contribute to the accessibility grant program again eventually. There is no indication of when grant funding might be renewed or how long the initial funding is supposed to last, but $4 million is an insufficient amount of money to improve access in the entire the province. An evaluation of the federal grant program revealed that there are very few funding sources in Canada that offer money for accessibility renovations and that demand far exceeds supply (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012).

For these reasons, this option scored a 1.

Cost: Small Businesses

Renovations are expensive, but these costs need to be put into context. As noted above, many small businesses rent spaces and have a triple-net lease. Interviewees cited lack of cash flow as an issue for them. It impossible to accurately estimate how much businesses would need to pay to improve accessibility since each one has unique barriers; a business on the second floor without elevator access is going to need to spend a lot more than a street level store, for example. However, the grant requires physical changes which most likely means renovations. In addition, small businesses need to pay upfront all of the costs of a project because grant money is given after project completion. Lastly, as described by interviewees, there is the risk that improvements can involve additional renovations. Even though the grant gives the most money out of all of the options, the types of projects it funds require a lot of money in matching contributions from the beginning.

For these reasons, this scored a 1.

5.3.2. Policy Option Two: Small Business Tax Credit

Increase in Accessibility

Wayfinding

This policy could help with some costs associated with wayfinding, such as signage within the business. Under the ADA, this type of tax credit also covers making a website accessible, so a small business would be able to display the store layout and other helpful information online. However, it does not help businesses identify wayfinding issues to fix.

For these reasons, this scored a 2.

Built Environment

This policy could help cover the costs for a variety of built environment items. One interviewee noted that they would like to be able to buy special equipment to make the work area more accessible, and this tax would cover that. Another interviewee said this would cover a lot of the cheap hardware involved with accessibility upgrades, like new sinks. However, the tax credit is not large enough to cover extensive built environment improvements, such as a lift.

This would also help buy a lot of small items to improve a customer's experience, such as a claw grabber to get items out of reach and business materials in accessible formats. As mentioned above, this would help pay for an accessible website; this could potentially allow people to shop or access services from home if the building is inaccessible. Even though it provides less funding than the grant, it covers a much wider variety of built environment improvements.

For these reasons, this scored a 3.

Social Environment

This option has the potential to improve the social environment and customer service because it covers fees for services. One interviewee noted this would be very helpful hiring professionals for certain events instead of having to rely on volunteers. The interviewee thought sign language interpretation in particular would make certain customers feel much more welcome. The ability to hire professionals for certain services might ease the uncertainty and stress noted in the results. The credit could not be used

to pay for employee training in serving customers with disabilities, however, so it is impact to change attitudes is uncertain.

For these reasons, this scored a 2.

Ease of Implementation: Government

Like the grant option, a tax credit requires provincial involvement. However, there is the added hurdle of needing to pass legislation in order for this tax credit to come into effect. In terms of implementation, BC already has a tax credit for home improvements. The Home Renovation Tax Credit is a provincial credit launched in 2012 as a way for seniors to pay for permanent renovations for improved accessibility and mobility at home. In 2016, the program was expanded to cover those with disabilities. So the tax system is largely already set up to judge eligible expenses for accessibility improvements. The government would need to just specify what types of enhancements businesses could access.

For these reasons, this scored option a 2.

Ease of Implementation: Small Businesses

The question of landlord involvement depends on the project, but this option allows for a lot of improvements that do not require renovations. A tax credit has a more flexible timeline since which is important in case permits do not get approved quickly or if unexpected problems are uncovered. Finally, this option uses the tax system as its implementation mechanism, which is something small businesses are already familiar with.

This option has a few steps to complete, and there is the chance that a landlord needs to be consulted. Overall, however, it is straightforward and simple. So, this scored a 3.

Stakeholder Acceptance: Government

As mentioned above, there is some precedent in BC for this type of legislation in the form of the Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC). In addition, like the grant program this tax credit aligns with one of the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty

Reduction's four broad policy goals. Finally, the government would not need to commit much money to this program apart from some awareness initiatives to promote the credit.

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Stakeholder Acceptance: Small Businesses

Even though the definition of small businesses is lowered from BC's definition of 50 employees to 30, this still means the vast majority of business would qualify. This policy also helps to address the barrier of cost since it covers half of eligible expenses. Ontario business groups suggested tax incentives to improve accessibility (Moran 2014). The credit would provide less money than the grant, but it would cover a wider range of things and allow businesses to pay for more than just built environment improvements. Website accessibility and accessible information formats might require significant resources, for example (Moran 2014). One business interviewee noted that coverage for services would be beneficial because hired professionals for things like sign language interpretation are more reliable than volunteers.

Although the government would determine what sorts of improvements are eligible, small businesses have a lot more freedom to choose what they would like to do (as opposed to a grant which requires approval). One business interviewee said that a tax credit would help with the little improvements that are not really worth the effort of grant applications. The negative part of this option is that only general categories of eligible expenses are given, and businesses may not know what to do, so they would need to self-evaluate. Ontarian businesses wanted specific information, not general guidelines, for how to improve accessibility (Moran 2014).

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Stakeholder Acceptance: People with Mobility Disabilities

Non-business interviewees recognized cost as an issue and talked about many ways to improve accessibility that did not involve renovations. This option would cover funding for a wider range of goods and services which tend to be less expensive than retrofitting. Dr. Labbé commented that fixed debit card machines, for example, could be

a big issue for wheelchair users. This option would help fund the cost of accessible machines.

In its consultations with the public about federal legislation, the Canadian government found that people highly favored financial support and incentives to help businesses improve accessibility and remove barriers. People with disabilities were part of an open-ended survey about ways to improve accessibility and made up 52% of respondents. On the topic of improving access to businesses, 70% of comments talked about tools like subsidies, tax breaks, and rebates (The Government of Canada, 2017). In a later question, the government asked how it could encourage, support, and recognize businesses going above and beyond standards; 22% of comments suggested monetary incentives like tax breaks; a further 19% suggested subsidies (The Government of Canada 2017).

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Cost: Government

As noted above, the Home Renovation Tax Credit has been in place for years, and so this tax would simply expand eligible applicants and expenses within the tax system. There could be some minor costs related to publicizing and promoting the tax, however.

For these reasons, this scored a 5.

Cost: Small Businesses

This program would help cover both expensive renovation projects as well as small purchases of hardware, such as for an accessible bathroom. One thing business interviewees brought up about this option is that businesses must cover all of the expenses upfront. This could make larger projects more difficult, and, as noted above, businesses can have limited cash flow. The credit pays for half of eligible expenses, and it is smaller than the grant funding. However, the projects covered in this option can be significantly less expensive than those covered by the grant which requires permanent, built environment improvements. So, businesses can pay less overall for a wide variety of improvements since renovations can be avoided. Because of the range of possibilities that could be expensive or inexpensive, this scored a 3.

5.3.3. Policy Option Three: Education Campaign

Increase in Accessibility

Wayfinding

This policy as I designed it requires two types of wayfinding items: a decal to show the business is disability friendly and information on an accessibility app. If the campaign tells businesses what types of information and photos to include on the app, it could become an exceptional resource for objective data. Customers would be able to make informed decisions about the accessibility of different businesses.

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Built Environment

This policy incorporates built environment improvements and ways to make navigating an inaccessible business easier, including door access. However, it does not involve any permanent improvements, and the improvements it does promote are limited compared to the other options.

For these reasons, this scored a 1.

Social Environment

This policy incorporates training materials to improve employee attitudes. The effect can depend on the format decided by the city. The effect of customer service training for disabled customers is not well-known but thought to be helpful for changing attitudes. A study in Quebec provided a 3-hour training session to mall employees and found that it increased their knowledge and confidence (Rochette 2017). Take up is not likely to be perfect, however. One business interviewee commented that it would be difficult to make young workers put a lot of effort into customer service. For these reasons, this scored a 3.

Ease of Implementation: Government

The municipal government in Vancouver could implement an education campaign on its own. Vancouver does have a Disability Advisory Council which could help with the process of creating materials, however the campaign would need to have a

budget, so City Council would most likely have to be involved to allocate necessary funds.

For these reasons, this option scored a 4.

Ease of Implementation: Small Businesses

This policy would not require permission from the landlord to do anything, so businesses can avoid that hurdle. However, implementing all of the action items can take time and is a multi-step process. Training employees in particular can be difficult if the business has a large or unmotivated staff.

For these reasons, this scored a 3.

Stakeholder Acceptance: Government

The City of Vancouver currently does not have a community plan to address accessibility, and this would not be going against or duplicating any current initiatives. In terms of policy, the closest Vancouver has come to an accessibility plan is the city's Transportation 2040 plan adopted in 2012. It has the broad goals of making streets safe, accessible, and rain-friendly, and creating generous, unobstructed sidewalks on all streets. The inside of buildings, however, is not addressed. This policy could be a first step in addressing that gap.

There are indications that city council would support this project. As noted in the jurisdictional scan, Vancouver recently consulted people with disabilities for a development project. In February 2018, city council also unanimously passed a motion to prioritize curb ramp installation in 6,000 spots and has ordered staff to look for funding to accelerate the process (Ip 2018). NPA Councillor Elizabeth Ball commented, "Improving city-wide accessibility is an ongoing priority that benefits everyone in the community" (Ip 2018).

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Stakeholder Acceptance: Small Businesses

This policy provides both specific tips and resources for further improvement. Dr. Labbé noted that education campaigns could be good because they are less threatening

than other methods. During the AODA legislative review, businesses sent a "strong message" that education was important (Moran 2014). This policy would give businesses specific things to do, which takes a lot of the guesswork out of improving accessibility. People in consultations on federal legislation for accessibility discussed how businesses wanted to improve, but often did not know how (The Government of Canada 2017).

This policy would also provide businesses with resources if they wanted to do more complicated improvements. Ontarian small businesses wanted one portal that had support materials to improve accessibility (Moran 2014). One business interviewee said, "A place (to find vendors) would be nice. I am prepared to spend the money, I just need to know who to give it to! One place where I could get all of the products…or a list of links to products I might need would be fantastic."

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Stakeholder Acceptance: People with Mobility Disabilities

A few non-business interviewees discussed how businesses needed to be educated about inexpensive ways to improve accessibility. All three disability representatives emphasized the need to improve the social environment, and this policy would offer training materials. Two also mentioned that having decals in windows would be helpful. Participants at the AODA legislative review felt that a logo to raise awareness was one of the best ways to incentivize businesses to improve accessibility (Moran 2014). One interviewee specifically wanted a resource to view and rate the accessibility of businesses which is included in this policy.

In consultations about federal legislation for accessibility, participants (52% of which identified as disabled) felt that the best way to change the culture around disability was awareness-building campaigns (44%) (The Government of Canada 2017). People also felt that a key initiative would be to target businesses and organizations so that they would be better informed about serving people with disabilities (The Government of Canada 2017).

However, it is likely that support will not be unanimous. One disability representative did not think basic lists were worthwhile and felt that comprehensive

government legislation needed to be passed. In addition, support can depend on the format of training materials. In a legislative review of the AODA, some people with disabilities felt that online training was less effective than face-to-face training (Moran 2014).

For these reasons, this scored a 4.

Cost: Government

The cost largely depends on how comprehensive the action items are. The city may make training packets, for example, refer people to Ontario's online training modules, or produce its own. Part of the cost can be saved by engaging with the Disability Advisory Committee and the Senior Advisory Committee as well as referring to past engagement projects in other municipalities; the same barriers can be found regardless of city. Since a lot of the details affecting cost would be decided later, this scored a 3.

Cost: Small Businesses

This policy is designed to be extremely low cost. The action items presented are free or require very little investment from businesses. So, this scored a 5.

5.3.4. Summary of Policy Criteria

Provided below is a matrix containing all of the criteria and scores for each policy option.

Table 2   Summary of Criteria and Scores

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">**Policy Evaluation Summary**</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td align="center">Grant and Certification</td><td align="center">Small Business Tax Credit</td><td align="center">Education Campaign</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Increase in Accessibility**
1) Wayfinding (W)
2) Built Environment (B)
3) Social Environment (S)</td><td>W- 2
B- 5
S- 1

Total Increase in Accessibility: 8</td><td>W- 2
B- 3
S- 2

Total Increase in Accessibility:7</td><td>W- 4
B- 1
S- 3

Total Increase in Accessibility:8</td></tr>
</table>

Ease of Implementation: 1) Government 2) Small Businesses	G- 5 B -2	G -2 B -3	G- 4 B -3
Stakeholder Acceptance: 1) Government 2) Small Businesses 3) People with Mobility Disabilities	G- 2 B –3 PWD -4	G- 4 B –4 PWD -4	G- 4 B –4 PWD -4
Administrative Cost: 1) Government 2) Small Businesses	G- 1 B -1	G- 5 B -3	G- 3 B -5
Total Score	28	32	35

5.3.5. Recommendation

Based on these scores, this study recommends starting with an education campaign targeted towards small businesses. This can introduce them to new ideas of what accessibility means in a non-threatening way. Breaking it down into manageable parts can also prevent people from feeling overwhelmed.

Later on, however, this study strongly suggests that a tax credit be implemented. This would give small businesses a lot of flexibility in terms of options and has the potential to improve accessibility beyond simply built environment improvements. The BC Accessibility Grant program should be re-funded as necessary so that major built environment projects can be payed for. It is a very high-quality program in terms of permanent improvements, but it is more limited in scope, resulting in its low score. It could be made more user-friendly for businesses if less expensive projects were allowed, such as accessible equipment. It would also be helpful if the issue of having to

pay all costs upfront was addressed. This would involve changing how funds are distributed, such as giving businesses an account to withdraw funds from as each renovation bill is received.

Chapter 6.   Conclusion

This project addressed the problem of too many small businesses in Vancouver being inaccessible for people with mobility disabilities. Based on the literature review and findings, the study narrowed solutions down to a grant and certification program, a small business tax credit, and an education campaign. Although each has different scores, these policies can be implemented together.

This project contributes to the literature in that it revealed two problems specific to small businesses in improving accessibility: lack of practical information and renting property. These are two important considerations when trying to design policies to improve accessibility in cities. The project also contributed to growing research on the social aspects of accessibility, confirming its importance. In terms of dissemination, this report will be shared with the Canadian Disability Participation Project. If possible, these findings will also be presented to Vancouver's Disability Advisory Committee as a first step towards alerting the city to possible initiatives.

In the future, researchers should continue to look into barriers for small businesses to improving access, as more interviews and surveys can reveal different issues. However, it seems that researching barriers, or lack of incentives, for property owners to improve accessibility is also a key part of this puzzle. Future research can also look at the possible benefits of making education about accessible design a requirement for engineering and architecture students.

With so much existing building stock that is not required to improve access even as building codes change and the population rapidly ages, it is essential that we take steps now to engage small businesses. Initiatives improving access should focus on urban centres first. Urban centres tend to be more accessible than rural areas, so people with disabilities often relocate there to take advantage of those differences. The need for accessibility will only increase in the near future, and so it is important to find the problem areas in policy now so that they can be fixed.

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Appendix: Interview Details

Table A1 lists interviewees used in this research project. Business interviewees were automatically made anonymous to encourage honesty, but two additional interviewees also chose to be anonymous.

Table A1: List of Interviewees

Name	Interview Group	Organization
Confidential	Business	Confidential
Confidential	Business	Confidential
Confidential	Business	Confidential
Confidential	Business	Confidential
Confidential	Business	Confidential
Confidential	Disability Representative	Confidential
Eric Molendyk	Disability Representative	Tetra Society of North America
Heather McCain	Disability Representative	Citizens for Accessible Neighborhoods
Atiya Mahmood	Researcher	Simon Fraser University
Ben Mortenson	Researcher	University of British Columbia

Delphine Labbé	Researcher	University of British Columbia

Table A2 lists some of the questions used during interviews. These were semi-structured interviews, so follow-up questions varied from person to person to maintain a conversational atmosphere. I asked each interviewee specific questions based on their work and/or experiences.

Question	Group(s) Asked
What comes to mind when you think about accessibility/what does accessibility mean to you?	Business
What are the biggest barriers for you in improving access?	Business
What things would you need/what would help you if you wanted to improve access?	Business
Have you tried to improve access before? What was the experience like?	Business
What kinds of barriers are most common for people with mobility disabilities?	Disability representatives, researchers
What kinds of barriers might there be for making a business accessible?	Disability representatives, researchers

Why is accessibility important for people without disabilities?	Disability representatives, researchers
Do you think businesses are aware that accessibility is an issue?	Disability representatives, researchers
What do you think the ideal policy would be to improve accessibility?	Disability representatives, researchers