



## Briefing Note 5: Bill C-81 – *Accessible Canada Act*

### Exemptions

#### How does Bill C-81 currently address this issue?

Bill C-81 allows the Minister, Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) and Canadian Radio-television and telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to exempt organizations and government from complying with accessibility requirements such as preparing and publishing accessibility plans, and developing progress reports on accessibility.

In response to advocacy from disability communities, the House of Commons made some amendments to limit the way exemptions can be made. As a result of these amendments, Bill C-81 now states that exemptions can only apply for 3 years. And, any order granting an exemption and reasons for the exemption must be made public.

#### Why is this concerning?

Even though the changes made by the House of Commons limit the way exemptions can be made, Bill C-81 still allows for exemptions. There is no principled reason why some organizations or government departments should be exempted. Any exemptions will weaken the *Accessible Canada Act* by sending the message that it is ok for some organizations not to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. In addition, although reasons for exemptions will be published, Bill C-81 does not allow persons with disabilities to have any input before a decision is made to grant an exemption.

#### How should Bill C-81 be changed?

- Bill C-81 must require all federally-regulated organizations and government departments that fall within the scope of the Bill to comply with accessibility requirements. It must not allow the Minister, CRTC or CTA to order exemptions.
- If exemptions continue to be allowed, then Bill C-81 must provide a way for persons with disabilities to provide their input. The Minister, CRTC or CTA must consider these views before a decision is made to grant an exemption.