



Briefing Note 7: Bill C-81 – *Accessible Canada Act*

Independence

How does Bill C-81 currently address this issue?

Under the Bill, the Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (CASDO), the Accessibility Commissioner and other key agencies are not independent from government. Many of these agencies report directly to government.

Why is this concerning?

The Government of Canada is the largest organization that will have to comply with the *Accessible Canada Act*. Agencies responsible for overseeing and enforcing the legislation must be independent from government so that they are free to enforce the law unencumbered by the politics of the government of the day. Without independence, it may appear that government is influencing how the legislation is implemented and enforced. This would significantly weaken the *Accessible Canada Act*.

How should Bill C-81 be changed?

- It must be clear that CASDO and the Accessibility Commissioner are independent entities, which both report to Parliament rather than to the Minister.
- It must allow the Minister to issue only non-binding general directions to CASDO.
- It must provide for fixed-term appointments of CASDO directors, with removal based on a competence standard.
- It must require persons with disabilities to be represented on CASDO committees that develop accessibility standards.

Additional Advocacy Points:

We are asking Senators to support amendments to ensure that CASDO, the Accessibility Commissioner, and other key agencies have real operational independence from the Government of Canada. This is an important change necessary to strengthen Bill C-81 and to ensure that it is implemented and enforced regardless of which government holds power.