



# Media Release

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## **GOVERNMENT BILL FALLS WELL SHORT OF HONOURING LONGSTANDING COMMITMENTS**

WINNIPEG – Barrier-Free Manitoba expressed disappointment that [Bill 47: The Accessibility Advisory Council Act](#) introduced in the Manitoba Legislature today by the Honourable Jennifer Howard, the Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities, represents only a first step toward addressing the historic injustices that continue to deny Manitobans with disabilities their right to equitable access.

The government has now been offering promising words for over a decade. Commitments to take action to address systemic discrimination have now been made in three discussion papers released in 2001 (*Full Citizenship*), 2009 (*Opening Doors*) and 2011 (*Discussion Paper for Made in Manitoba Accessibility Legislation*). The commitment to introduce accessibility-rights legislation was made by Premier Selinger, in his candidacy for the NDP leadership. A commitment to legislative reform was also included in the 2009 Speech from the Throne.

"Today's government Bill sets out a legislated process for the next two years that will see work continue toward honouring these longstanding commitments," said Dale Kendel, member of, and spokesperson for, the Barrier-Free Manitoba Steering Committee. "Requiring that the future government tends to the important but unfinished business of making Manitoba truly inclusive is a good thing. Having had the government fulfill its decade-old commitments before heading into a general election would have been a much, much better thing. That is why this Bill is so disappointing."

Disability discrimination has ranked as the foremost reason for complaint to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission (MHRC) every year over the last decade. Data from the most recent MHRC annual report show that 47% of all formal complaints to the commission were related to disability discrimination – more than for almost all of the other grounds combined.

Barrier-Free Manitoba, with the endorsement of more than 100 coalitions and groups spanning the disability and seniors communities, and many hundreds of concerned citizens, has been advocating for strong and effective accessibility-rights legislation for the past 2+ years. "With such broad-based support for real action on an important public policy issue that affects or will affect all Manitobans, we had expected far more from this government," said Kendel.

Barrier-Free Manitoba ([www.barrierfreemb.com](http://www.barrierfreemb.com)) is a non-partisan, non-profit, cross-disability initiative that was formed in 2008.

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