

December 16, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills
Attn: MLA Amna Shah, Chair
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Chair Amna Shah and Committee Members:

**RE: *Bill M216 Professional Reliance Act* – Planning Institute of British Columbia
Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members'
Bills**

The Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) is pleased to offer its input, recommendation, and supporting analysis regarding *Bill M216 – Professional Reliance Act*. PIBC is a professional association of nearly 2,000 members, including more than 1,200 Registered Professional Planners, who work in key roles in the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors in British Columbia and the Yukon to ensure land use planning and development are aligned with legislative requirements, promote community values and wellbeing, and promote and protect the public interest.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

By undertaking policy analysis, commissioning a legal analysis, and monitoring responses from our professional members and other stakeholder organizations¹, we have reached the conclusion that *Bill M216* as proposed will have a high likelihood of causing serious harm to the effective delivery of housing and other forms of land use development in British Columbia. The potentially significant adverse risk that *Bill M216* introduces to communities across the province overwhelms any potential benefits.

For reasons expressed in this submission, PIBC principally recommends:

**THAT THE SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BILLS AND PRIVATE
MEMBERS' BILLS MOVE TO NOT PROCEED WITH *BILL M216*.**

¹ Union of BC Municipalities Submission to Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills (November 28, 2025): <https://www.ubcm.ca/sites/default/files/2025-11/UBCM-Submission-on-BillM216-2025-11-28.pdf>

Separately, PIBC recommends that the **Province, through the Ministry of Housing & Municipal Affairs, collaborate with communities and key stakeholders, including PIBC, to accelerate implementation of integrated and effective development approvals process improvements for housing and to share best practices through expanded peer learning.**

FUNDAMENTAL DEFICIENCIES IN *BILL M216*

In our analysis, *Bill M216* as proposed contains five fundamental deficiencies:

1. **The bill is disconnected from existing provincial housing initiatives, including the Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR), Local Government Development Approvals Program (LGDAP), Building Permit Hub, and recently enacted legislation on proactive planning for housing.**
2. **The bill's scope is overly broad and will impact all forms and stages of land development in all communities and regions.**
3. **The bill's prohibition on local government peer review of development-related technical submissions will likely lead to adverse outcomes on the public interest: safety, health, and welfare of the public and environment.**
4. **The bill's dispute resolution process is critically flawed will likely increase the cost and time for new housing and land development.**
5. **The bill displaces Registered Professional Planners who play critical roles in the review of professional technical submissions to protect the public interest.**

These fundamental deficiencies cannot be remedied by clause-by-clause amendments. In fact, any attempt to amend the current bill will likely create new and unintended consequences. It is our assessment that the bill must not proceed. To continue to deliver more housing faster, and without compromising the health, safety, and the welfare of the public, we encourage government to start the process anew and engage with relevant stakeholders, including PIBC, to build on existing legislative frameworks and identify appropriate legislative or resource support for local governments, builders, and practitioners.

***Bill M216* Deficiency #1:**

The bill is disconnected from existing provincial housing initiatives, including the Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR), Local Government Development Approvals Program (LGDAP), Building Permit Hub, and recently enacted legislation on proactive planning for housing.

The first deficiency in *Bill M216* is its failure to complement or integrate with any of the existing provincial government directives on speeding up the approval of housing that began in 2019 with government's completion of the Development Approvals Process Review² (DAPR) project.

If *Bill M216* had been prepared and drafted through the regular legislative process, it would have been introduced by the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs following completion of comprehensive analysis and engagement with relevant parties, professional practitioners, and subject matter experts. As explained in this submission, *Bill M216*, in its current scope and form, would likely cause serious harm to the delivery of housing and other forms of land use development in British Columbia.

In fact, *Bill M216* is a significant departure from any of the priority opportunities identified in the final DAPR report. The following are some of the specific actions identified in that final report to improve local government application processes and local government approval processes:

- Local government application processes:
 - Improve business workflows to triage development applications to identify and treat incomplete, simple, or complex applications appropriately
 - Implement digital permit tracking systems
 - Develop best practices guides and model development checklists
- Local government approval processes
 - Review opportunities to increase councils' ability to delegate individual development approvals to staff
 - Provide local governments with the authority to delegate decision-making to staff for minor development variance permit matters

Following the completion of DAPR, a number of implementation initiatives are now underway, including most notably:

² Province of BC Development Approvals Process Review Final Report (2019):
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/local-governments/planning-land-use/dapr_2019_report.pdf

- Proactive Planning for Housing Legislation: In 2023 and 2024, government enacted a series of interlocking legislation to facilitate more housing supply that:
 - eliminates public hearings for new proposed zoning bylaws that are consistent with the official community plans,
 - eliminates exclusionary single family housing zoning,
 - mandates minimum allowable densities in all residential zones, particularly in transit-oriented areas,
 - requires local governments to ensure official community plans and zoning bylaws are aligned with 20-year housing needs projections,
 - creates new certainty in how local infrastructure and community amenities are funded by development, and
 - authorizes local governments to establish inclusionary zoning to support more affordable housing supply.

 - Local Government Development Approvals Program³: This program offers grants to local governments to streamline and introduce innovation in the development approvals process to speed up housing approvals and meet local government planning and policy objectives. To date, government has approved \$19 million to 69 local governments, of which \$15 million have been invested on a variety of improvements. For example, the City of Burnaby, which was awarded \$650,000, began introducing new technology and reforms to its approval processes in 2023. As a result, the City has seen a dramatic decline in residential permitting time from **180 days in March 2023 to 60 days as of March 2025⁴**.
- With the third intake of the Local Government Approvals Program scheduled to launch in January 2026 with a total offering of \$9 million, PIBC would be pleased to collaborate with government and Union of British Columbia Municipalities (the program administrator) so that the successes seen in Burnaby and elsewhere can be shared and adapted widely.
- Building Permit Hub: Launched by government in 2024 as a pilot program with 12 local governments and two First Nations as participants, the Building Permit Hub allows applicants to submit building permit applications online using a standardized

³ Local Government Development Approvals Program:
<https://www.ubcm.ca/lgps/local-government-development-approvals>

⁴ “The Human Engine of Digital Transformation: Burnaby’s People-Centred Approach to Planning Innovation” (*Planning West*, p.12): <https://www.pibc.bc.ca/sites/default/files/2025-11/PIBC-PW-Fall-2025-FINAL-WEB.pdf>

template. Once an application is submitted, a review officer from the corresponding local jurisdiction reviews the application initially for completeness, followed by a detailed evaluation for compliance with the BC Building Code and local bylaws.⁵

- **PIBC Peer Learning Network:** Consultation during the DAPR project confirmed for government the need for a peer learning network for practitioners to share best practices and innovation on housing delivery. With a \$500,000 contribution from government, PIBC launched the three-year Peer Learning Network program in January 2024. Since that time, the Peer Learning Network program has directly supported and engaged hundreds of Registered Professional Planners and practitioners from other professions in British Columbia to comply with the newly enacted housing legislation on proactive planning, zoning reforms, and development financing⁶.

These are the types of complementary efforts that are designed to speed up housing approvals without compromising safety, accountability, and customer service. The role of government should be to support and scale up these efforts in communities across the province. We believe strongly that *Bill M216* neither supports nor fits with these efforts but rather undermines progress to date.

***Bill M216* Deficiency #2:**

The bill's scope is overly broad and will impact all forms and stages of land development in all communities and regions.

Through public remarks and a briefing note (Attachment B) prepared by MLA Anderson, it is our understanding that *Bill M216* is modelled on existing Certified Professional (CP) programs. CP programs are discretionary programs authorized by local governments that offer an alternative and voluntary pathway for development applicants to submit building and occupancy permit applications. CP programs are currently operational in a dozen communities.⁷ The reviews are performed by an independent third-party who is either a registered architect or professional engineer with advanced training in fire safety, life safety, and accessibility provisions of the *BC Building Code*. The reviews are performed on behalf of local governments.

⁵ Building Permit Hub: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/building-or-renovating/permits/building-permit-hub>

⁶ PIBC Peer Learning Network: www.pibc.bc.ca/pln

⁷ CP programs are jointly administered by the Architectural Institute of BC and Engineers and Geoscientists BC: <https://www.egbc.ca/registrants/registant-programs/certified-professional-program>

New legislation is not required to facilitate or implement CP programs. Instead, it appears that *Bill M216* is intended to replace existing CP programs with an expanded, involuntary program that covers:

- all forms of land development (housing, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc.) and
- all stages of land development (rezoning development area permits, development variance permits, temporary use permits, environmental permits, tree removal permits, hazardous site permits, demolition permits, traffic impact studies, etc.).

Moreover, *Bill M216* usurps local governments' ability to undertake appropriate due diligence by prohibiting the review of technical submissions made by professionals regulated by the *Professional Governance Act (PGA)* and working on behalf of applicants. In contrast, CP reviewers conduct their work on behalf of local governments.

This simplistic expansion in scope introduces significant and unnecessary uncertainty to land development activities – more certainty, not less, is needed to delivery more housing and to support more economic development. The bill will lead to increased costs and a slowdown of all forms of development across the province.

***Bill M216* Deficiency #3:**

The bill's prohibition on local government peer review of development-related technical submissions will likely lead to adverse outcomes on the public interest: safety, health, and welfare of the public and environment.

We understand that *Bill M216* is partially informed by the experience of the RidgeView Place project in the City of Langford (Attachment B). According to public reporting, RidgeView Place (originally called Danbrook One) is a purpose-built rental residential building that was found to not have complied with the seismic requirements in the *BC Building Code*⁸. The building's occupancy permit was first revoked in 2019. Subsequent structural remediation work did not resolve all of the structural design faults, and the occupancy permit was revoked for a second time in 2023. The building remains vacant to this day. The issues uncovered in the Ridgeview Place project include an admission of unprofessional conduct

⁸ News articles about RidgeView Place project in Langford:

2019: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/langford-danbrook-one-1.5406134>

2023: <https://islandsocialtrends.ca/former-danbrook-one-sees-second-occupancy-permit-crisis/>

2024: <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/one-year-later-no-answers-on-evacuated-langford-high-rise-8643879>

2025: <https://saanichnews.com/2025/11/03/negligence-claims-in-twice-evacuated-highrise-case-cast-shadow-over-langford/>

by the professional engineer who designed the building⁹. Litigation is ongoing between the building's owner and the City of Langford.

It is unclear how *Bill M216* would prevent future cases like 'Ridgeview Place' from occurring if that is indeed one of the intentions of the bill. We observe that the bill contains a provision to immunize local governments from any liability arising from work submitted by PGA professionals.

What is clear is that by curtailing local government ability to conduct oversight of technical submissions, the conditions are set for more 'Ridgeview Places' to happen across the province, thereby putting people and the environment directly in harm's way¹⁰.

Fundamentally, *Bill M216* runs counter to sections 1(2)(b) and 3(c) of the *Community Charter*. In section 1(2)(b) government recognizes that municipalities require authority to determine the public interest of their communities. Section 3(c) says one of the purposes of the *Act* is to give municipalities the flexibility to determine the public interest of their communities and respond to different needs and changing circumstances. In the development review context, by prohibiting in-house and third-party scrutiny of any submission certified by a PGA professional on behalf of an applicant, *Bill M216* is abrogating from all local governments the kind of authority the *Community Charter* purports to grant, at least to municipalities. That is not in the public interest of any community in British Columbia¹¹.

The purpose of the various requirements set out by local governments and provincial/federal statutes is to carefully assess the impacts of a given proposed development project on the surrounding and receiving natural environments and where people live, work, and travel. As noted by Lidstone & Company, most new development in British Columbia occurs on difficult terrains and environmentally vulnerable areas, such as floodplains, steep slopes, earthquake or tsunami zones, or wildfire interface regions¹². Further, in the more dense and

⁹ Engineers & Geoscientists BC Consent Order: <https://www.egbc.ca/getmedia/e20e7c66-aa52-46d4-9d15-f7e3c31bd7d6/2022-05-09-Consent-Order-McClure-for-publishing.pdf.aspx>

¹⁰ According to a UBC structural engineering professor, there are three 'failsafes' in a building's design and construction to ensure structural integrity (depending on the complexity of the building). The first failsafe is to ensure the building is designed by a registered and qualified engineer. The second failsafe is the local government's review process performed by staff with requisite expertise or by external reviewers. The third failsafe is to obtain a third-party review to review the calculations and assumptions for the building design. (<https://www.capitaldaily.ca/news/should-not-have-happened-new-documents-outline-potentially-catastrophic-failures-in-danbrook-one-design>)

¹¹ *Community Charter*: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/03026_01

¹² Bulletin by Lidstone & Company (November 19, 2025): <https://lidstone.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Bulletin-Bill-M216-2025-1401-4528-5658-v.1.pdf>

populated centres of the province, new development is typically characterized as redevelopment in established neighbourhoods and where any adverse livability impacts during construction and post-occupancy are keenly felt.

Bill M216 covers not only certified professionals working in their capacity on building design, but it also covers engineers (e.g. civil, transportation), geoscientists, foresters, biologists, agrologists, and applied science technologists and technicians. It also applies to architects working on urban design or community planning projects and submissions beyond the scope of building design. These professionals are regularly retained by development applicants to complete technical submissions and associated analysis as part of the land development process.

While many necessary approvals in land development are ‘technical’ in content, the methodologies and assumptions used in practice are regularly subject to professional judgement. These professional judgement calls are informed by applicable standards and guidelines, knowledge of best practices, and understanding of local contexts. Because these professionals are retained by the applicant to deliver a service, it is important for the local government to have the opportunity to evaluate and query the judgement calls and assumptions to ensure that they are reasonable.

In current practice, staff-led reviews and dialogues, and formal peer reviews can ultimately be a less costly and more efficient approach to resolving possible differences between professionals on technical matters. Even though *Bill M216* contains a provision that no legal proceeding for damages may be filed against a local government in respect of a submission certified by a PGA professional, Lidstone & Company cautions that local governments will still carry residual liability. In the event the builder, owner, subcontractor, or PGA professional is dissolved or insolvent, the local government could be jointly and severally liable¹³.

“That means if a Village is found 5% liable, it pays 100% of the liability. No discussion of local government financial liability is as important, however, as the reduction of safety of people and the incidence of costly building failures that would be a predictable outcome of Bill M216.”

While *Bill M216* requires local governments to accept a completed technical submission, it is unclear whether local governments are obliged to accept the overall development application.

¹³ Bulletin by Lidstone & Company (November 19, 2025): <https://lidstone.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Bulletin-Bill-M216-2025-1401-4528-5658-v.1.pdf>

Either way, *Bill M216* would leave local governments with two sub-optimal choices that fall short of the principles set out in the *Community Charter*. Either the local government:

- A. Accepts the technical submission as prepared by a PGA professional while running the risk that the technical study contains significant shortcomings that are not addressed, or
- B. Commission a parallel technical analysis (not a peer review) as a second opinion to protect against future legal liability and other risks.

Choice A runs afoul of the public interest principle set out in the *Community Charter*, and Choice B is a duplication of effort and a poor use of scarce public resources.

To put this deficiency into more practical terms, we present several generalized scenarios shared by Registered Professional Planners working in the public and private sectors. These examples illustrate a wide range of land development scenarios that would fall within the scope of *Bill M216* and, should the bill be enacted, the untenable choice being made.

Environmental Protection (Riparian Areas)

In rapidly growing places like the City of Surrey or Township of Langley, new residential, commercial, and industrial development are often on parcels with or adjacent to streams and wetlands, which are crucial habitat for fish and other species. These environmental features and species are protected under both federal (e.g. *Fisheries Act*) and provincial legislation (e.g. *Riparian Areas Protection Act*, *Water Sustainability Act*).

Local governments are required to consider and enforce these protection measures, typically through a development permit area designation and/or a bylaw. Provincial regulations require a developer to retain a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), who must be registered and in good standing with one of the regulators governed by the *Professional Governance Act*, to prepare an assessment report for submission to the local government. There are times when QEPs do not actually conduct site visits or review the development plans in detail, rendering their recommendations invalid as they are based on incomplete or inaccurate information about on-site conditions and development intention. Registered Professional Planners, either local government staff or consultants acting on behalf of local governments as professional reviewers, ensure these inaccurate submissions are rectified before any permits are granted.

Is local government staff review or third-party independent peer review a reasonable trade-off in order to achieve environmental protection, or is it better that Bill M216 assigns the full liability to the certifying professional, but the community is left with a filled-in stream and dead fish?

Environmental Protection (Agricultural Lands)

Many growing communities, such as Abbotsford, Surrey, and Maple Ridge, contain prime agricultural lands designated provincially as part of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Protection of provincially regulated streams and features is required on these lands. Measures are typically triggered by development on ALR lands, including non-farm use proposals, soil and fill deposit/removal permits, and building permits for residential dwellings and farm structures.

For instance, local governments may require environmental assessments to be conducted on ALR properties. These assessments would be performed by a QEP to confirm watercourse classifications and recommended setbacks and/or best management practices to support the development of agricultural and non-agricultural uses. Other reports, such as geotechnical reports, are frequently required for development on ALR lands and require coordination among various professionals. While these reports are produced by qualified professionals, errors and omissions do happen from time to time. *Bill M216* would prevent local governments from verifying the analysis and conclusions of these technical submissions. The consequences of any flawed technical work could be loss of farmland, impacts to drainage and flood mitigation, and negative impacts to aquatic habitat and species.

Is local government staff review or third-party independent peer review a reasonable trade-off in order to achieve protection of environmental resources on agricultural lands, or is it better that Bill M216 assigns the full liability to the certifying professional, but the community is left with soil inadvertently deposited in watercourses, permanently damaging aquatic habitats and species?

Hazard Lands (Steep Slopes)

Across British Columbia, many local governments have had to contend with the impacts of housing development on steep slopes. Many local governments, such as Nanaimo, West Vancouver, and the City and District of North Vancouver, have undertaken major studies on land stability, and adopted development permit areas and design guidelines to specifically address steep slopes. In the rural community of Quesnel, a significant area of the community is deemed to be within an ancient landslide area, and ground movement continues to impact buildings and properties within that area today. Vacant lots are available for single and multifamily housing, but in some areas limited information is available regarding the safety of such development. If a certified professional does not undertake a complete assessment of these hazards, a development permit and/or building permit application may be submitted that will be based on incomplete or faulty

information. Worse-case scenario, any resulting development activity may contribute to land movement, putting people, property, and the environment at risk.

Is local government staff or third-party independent peer review a reasonable trade-off in order to minimize the risk to people, property, and the environment from slope hazards, or is it better that Bill M216 assigns the full liability to the certifying professional, but the community is unknowingly facing potential pending peril.

Building Safety

On face value, professional preparation of building plans is a technical activity that should be straightforward in order to be made compliant with the BC Building Code and local bylaws. However, more often than not, local government staff or professional reviewers may identify errors or omissions in building plans, such as:

- Deficiencies in the design with respect to life-safety elements set out in the BC Building Code
- Deficiencies in the design with respect to meeting zoning and other local bylaws
- Building plans submitted by engineers and architects for the same development project are not coordinated and provide conflicting information, sometimes as a result of unduly pressure from the developer client.
- Building plans are not designed correctly to meet floodplain elevation requirements, putting future residents in harm's way of potential flood risk.

Is local government staff review or third-party independent peer review a reasonable trade-off in order to achieve a building that complies with the building code and local bylaws before it is constructed, or is it better that Bill M216 assigns the full liability to the certifying professional, but the community is left with a vacant building unfit for occupation and a blight in the neighbourhood?

Livability (Traffic Impacts)

A common requirement of a rezoning application (request to change the land use or allowable density on a parcel of land as currently designated in the official community plan) is a traffic impact study, which quantifies the transportation impacts of a new development on the surrounding transportation network. These assessments also include a review of the site access, which can affect both access to the property but also traffic flow on surrounding streets. This type of study involves established technical methodologies, such as the application of trip generation rates to different types of development. However, considerable judgement is called on to understand 'off the shelf' trip generation rates and make any appropriate modifications to suit the specific context of a development and community.

In addition, a careful understanding of the local context, such as nearby planned developments, would inform the cumulative impacts on the transportation network. Minor variations in these inputs can have major impacts on a study's outcome and obligations for mitigation.

A major component of these traffic impact studies is recommended mitigation measures. These recommendations may include improvements to traffic signals, new lane configurations, and other measures under the jurisdiction of the local government. It is critical for local governments to have the ability to review, provide requested revisions, and/or make specific requests that could maintain or improve the road network for traffic flow and road safety.

Without local government scrutiny of traffic impact studies, the final development may result in excessive vehicle traffic, 'rat running' on nearby streets, impacts on pedestrian safety, and, generally, a lower quality of life for everyone in the neighbourhood.

Is local government staff review or third-party independent peer review a reasonable trade-off in order to achieve a functioning transportation network or is it better that Bill M216 assigns the full liability to the certifying professional, but the community is left with worsened traffic conditions and accessibility challenges for residents and visitors?

Livability (Shadow Impacts)

Whether it is in Victoria, Kelowna, Vancouver, or Surrey, new residential developments in growing urban centres typically come in the form of mid or high-rises. Government now prescribes minimum allowable densities for new residential development in transit-oriented areas served by SkyTrain and frequent buses. The City of Surrey, for example, requires shadow studies for any buildings six storeys and higher. Shadow studies evaluate the impact of shadows cast by proposed new developments on surrounding public spaces and private properties to ensure adequate sunlight is maintained. These studies involve a mix of technical analysis and professional judgement. The characterization of shadow impacts is inherently subjective and should be open to scrutiny. For example, an architect may certify that a proposed residential building close to a SkyTrain station will not cast shadows onto an adjacent park. But if the analysis was done incorrectly, then the park could end up in the dark for much of the year, diminishing its use as an active public space for a growing population.

Is local government staff review or third party independent peer review a reasonable trade-off in order to achieve an equitable and healthy built environment, or is it better that Bill M216 assigns the full liability to the certifying professional, but the community is left with an adjacent park covered in a tower's shadow for most of the year and unsuitable for recreational use?

Bill M216 Deficiency #4:

The bill's dispute resolution process is critically flawed and will likely increase the cost and time for new housing and land development.

The current practice of resolving disputes involves the professionals working on behalf of a development applicant and the professionals working on behalf of a local government to enter into a dialogue to attempt to resolve differences. The developer and local government can come to terms relatively quickly. The key benefit to this approach is that issues and differences are caught before decisions are made – once soil fill is deposited over watercourses, shovels are put into the ground, and concrete poured, correcting and reversing these actions will be costly if not infeasible.

Bill M216 introduces an ill-conceived approach to resolving disputes over technical submissions that is vague, complex, uncertain, and very likely more time-consuming than current practice. The likely outcomes are higher costs for applicants and local governments, higher housing costs, and fewer housing units built. The dispute resolution is triggered only when a *PGA* professional employed or retained by a local government files a complaint

against the *PGA* professional retained by an applicant. The matter is then referred to the Superintendent of Professional Governance for resolution.

The dispute resolution approach contains a number of flaws. First, it is our understanding that the Office of Superintendent of Professional Governance (OSPG) does not currently have the explicit mandate to adjudicate technical submissions related to land development¹⁴. The OSPG's legislative mandate is to oversee professional regulatory bodies under the *PGA*. The Superintendent is the head of the OSPG, and with a focus on public interest, is authorized by the *PGA* to carry out various functions including:

- Overseeing the governance of regulatory bodies under the *PGA*;
- Administering and enforcing the *PGA*;
- Conducting research and promoting best practices on professional governance; and,
- Considering additional professions for inclusion under the *PGA*

Second, it is our understanding that the OPSG currently does not have the staff capacity and subject matter expertise to adjudicate land development-related technical submissions. There are 188 local governments in British Columbia. For reference, the City of Surrey issued 1,000 building permits in 2024, representing 6,800 dwelling units¹⁵. One can only imagine the backlog and slowdown in new housing supply in Surrey if even a fraction of the 1,000 building permit applications were subject to a complaint and referred to the OSPG for dispute resolution.

Third, the actual operation of the dispute resolution is unworkable. In the event that the Superintendent accepts a referral for dispute resolution, the Superintendent will then likely receive a set of documents from the local government's *PGA* professional and a second set from the applicant's *PGA* professional. The Superintendent must then determine if the resolution of the issue is within the competencies of the Office. If not, the Superintendent may have to retain an outside *PGA* professional to conduct a peer review of the developer submissions and issue a recommendation. The Superintendent must make a determination: in favour of the applicant, in favour of the local government, or perhaps neither. It is unclear whether the Superintendent has a fourth option to convene dialogues between the two parties to allow them to engage in dialogue, joint factfinding, and come to a resolution – just like in current practice. The bill is silent on all these non-trivial matters, including the opportunity for appeals, who pays for the Superintendent's adjudication, and where liability

¹⁴ Office of the Superintendent of Professional Governance: <https://professionalgovernancebc.ca/>

¹⁵ City of Surrey development statistics 2024: <https://www.surrey.ca/sites/default/files/media/documents/MonthlyBuildingPermitSummary202412.pdf>

falls should any errors be made by the Superintendent or by the Superintendent's PGA professional.

In sum, the process of resolving important technical considerations via referral to the Superintendent for dispute resolution is likely more complex, more expensive, and more time-consuming than established practice, with no net benefit to the public interest in the form of more housing built on a faster timeline.

We offer a closing observation about this deficiency: any suggestion that the PGA regulators are intrinsically suitable and capable to execute, as an alternative to the Superintendent, dispute resolutions over land development technical submissions shows an alarming absence of research and analysis about the purpose of the *PGA* and the role of the regulators. It is not a suitable remedy for this deficiency¹⁶.

Bill M216 Deficiency #5:

The bill displaces Registered Professional Planners who play critical roles in the review of professional technical submissions to protect the public interest.

Bill M216 contains yet another major flaw. *Bill M216* proposes a dispute resolution approach that is triggered only when a *PGA* professional employed by a local government files a complaint against the *PGA* professional retained by an applicant. As noted earlier, local governments employ Registered Professional Planners on staff or as consultants to perform a number of functions in support of long-range planning, current planning (i.e. land development applications), and professional reviews of technical submissions.

Registered Professional Planners are not currently regulated under the *PGA* but are certified and self-regulated by PIBC, which operates under the *Societies Act*. Registered Professional Planners must adhere to the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct to promote and protect the public interest¹⁷. The majority of Registered Professional Planners in British Columbia are employed in local government, and many private sector planners are retained by local governments to perform specialized professional services, including professional reviews of technical submissions.

¹⁶ Professional Governance Act (background): <https://professionalgovernancebc.ca/about/professional-governance-act/>

Regulatory bodies under the *PGA*: <https://professionalgovernancebc.ca/regulatory-bodies/>

¹⁷ PIBC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct:

https://www.pibc.bc.ca/sites/default/files/internal_pages_pdfs/about-us/Code-Of-Ethics-Professional-Conduct-PIBC-Bylaws-2018-Part-14.pdf

The most likely practical effect of *Bill M216* is to displace Registered Professional Planners from fulfilling their duty to the public interest on behalf of local governments. Many Registered Professional Planners have graduate degrees from accredited planning schools, specialized training, and extensive professional experience ensuring work prepared by architects, engineers, biologists, surveyors, and other relevant professionals is coordinated, aligned, integrated, and consistent with federal, provincial, and local regulations and policies. Displacing Registered Professional Planners from the review of technical submissions creates a new risk as current *PGA*-regulated professionals would have to step in to undertake coordination and professional reviews – a role that may not be within their normal designated scopes of practice or experience. Errors and omissions in technical submissions could well escape scrutiny, leading to ill-advised decisions, and potential harm to the public interest.

As noted earlier, government and PIBC have established a positive and impactful partnership through the Peer Learning Network over the past three years. The Peer Learning Network has engaged and equipped hundreds of Registered Professional Planners and practitioners to understand, engage, and implement the suite of legislation on proactive planning legislation, zoning reforms, and development financing. It is likely the case that *Bill M216* was conceptualized and drafted without fully appreciating the system of legislation, regulations, and financial tools already enacted by government to facilitate more housing development and the unique and valuable role of the Registered Professional Planner in promoting and protecting the public interest. These are harmful oversights.

CONCLUSION

Bill M216 contains serious deficiencies. We believe it fails to meet the stated objectives and undermines government's efforts to speed up more housing. Far from streamlining the development process to facilitate more housing to be built faster, *Bill M216* is likely to increase the timeframe, complexity, and cost of processing housing and other forms of land development. The bill applies to a wide range of professional inputs to development applications for official community plan amendments, rezonings, and development permits that can involve complex assumptions and judgements. Local governments, aided by professional staff, must retain the right to appropriately review the reasonableness of these assumptions and judgements in order to fulfill the mandate of promoting and protecting the public interest.

PIBC respectfully recommends that the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills to **not proceed** with *Bill M216*. Instead, PIBC strongly recommends that the **Province, through the Ministry of Housing & Municipal Affairs, collaborate with communities and key stakeholders, including PIBC, to accelerate implementation of**

integrated and effective development approvals process improvements for housing and to share best practices through expanded peer learning.

PIBC remains committed and available to contribute to government's work on expanding housing supply.

PIBC is pleased to offer to speak to your committee on this matter of great consequence.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Kenna Jonkman RPP, MCIP
President, Planning Institute of British Columbia

CC: Honourable David Eby, Premier of British Columbia
Honourable Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
Honourable Jessie Sunner, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Honourable Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions
MLA Trevor Halford, Interim Leader of the Conservative Party of BC and Deputy
Chair of Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills
MLA George Anderson, Parliamentary Secretary for Transit
Kate Haines, Superintendent of the Office of Professional Governance and Office for
International Credential Recognition
Emily Lowan, Elected Leader of the BC Green Party
Cori Ramsay, Union of British Columbia Municipalities, President
Paul Albrecht, Lower Mainland Local Government Association, President
Kevin McIsaac, Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments, President
Ben Geselbracht, Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities,
President
Gladys Atrill, North Central Local Government Association, President
Louise Wallace Richmond, Southern Interior Local Government Association,
President
Keri-Ann Austin, Local Government Management Association, President
Trevor Welsh, Building Officials' Association of BC, President
Lesley Cabott RPP, FCIP, Canadian Institute of Planners, President

Theresa McCurry, Applied Science Technologists & Technicians BC, CEO
Mark Vernon, Architectural Institute of BC, CEO
Jennifer Lawrence, BC Institute of Agrologists, CEO
Christine Houghton, College of Applied Biologists, CEO
Heidi Yang, Engineers and Geoscientists BC, CEO
Christine Gelowitz, Forest Professionals BC, CEO
Ryan Noakes, BC Society of Landscape Architects, Executive Director
Bridgitte Anderson, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, President and CEO
Anne McMullin, Urban Development Institute, CEO

ATTACHMENT A: PIBC Letter to Premier David Eby (dated November 14, 2025)

ATTACHMENT B: Briefing Note by MLA George Anderson (received by PIBC on November 14, 2025)

November 14, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Honourable David Eby
Premier, Province of British Columbia
PO BOX 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Eby:

RE: *Bill M216 Professional Reliance Act* – Planning Institute of British Columbia Preliminary Comments

I am writing as President of the Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC), which represents close to 2000 members across British Columbia and the Yukon, to offer preliminary comments on *Bill M216 – Professional Reliance Act*, which is currently under consideration by the Legislative Assembly. We appreciate MLA George Anderson meeting with PIBC staff and representatives of PIBC's Policy & Public Affairs Committee on November 10, 2025, to review and discuss the proposed Bill that he introduced. We appreciate and share Mr. Anderson's overall goal to appropriately accelerate the expansion of housing supply in communities across the province through potential improvements to the development approval and review processes, while ensuring good process and safeguarding the public interest. We further appreciate MLA Anderson's interest in feedback and input on the proposed Bill.

Bill M216 Professional Reliance Act

PIBC acknowledges the Province's efforts to expand housing supply through recent legislation. PIBC's Peer Learning Network – funded by a generous 2023 contribution from the Province of BC – is successfully supporting Registered Professional Planners and other practitioners in complying with and implementing legislation affecting proactive planning, small-scale multi-unit housing, housing in transit-oriented areas, development financing, and inclusionary zoning. Through the Peer Learning Network, and in consultation with the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, the Institute has learned that engaging Registered Professional Planners and practitioners is the best way to share and advance best practices and ideas, and to make continuous improvement to planning regulations and practices.

In this context, and through our meeting with MLA Anderson, PIBC offers the following preliminary comments and recommendations regarding *Bill M216*.

1. *Bill M216* appears to be inconsistent with Certified Professional Programs already being implemented by local governments to streamline building and occupancy permit processes.

Stemming from our November 10, 2025 meeting with MLA Anderson, it is our understanding that *Bill M216* is intended to reflect and expand on Certified Professional (CP) programs currently being implemented by an increasing number of local governments. Generally, CP programs allow building permit applicants to hire a CP to support processing building permit applications. A CP is an independent third-party who is either a registered architect or professional engineer with advanced training in fire safety, life safety, and accessibility provisions of the *BC Building Code*.

What is important to note is that local government CP programs are restricted to the building permit and occupancy permit review and approval process, and they are designed to help both the applicant and/or the local government. For example:

- City of Vancouver¹: “The Certified Professional (CP) program facilitates the issuance of building permits for new or existing buildings by allowing certified professionals to take on the full review and inspection role on behalf of the City.”
- City of Maple Ridge²: “The Certified Professional program offers a voluntary alternative route for obtaining building and occupancy permits for large, complex builds...helping to streamline the approval process while ensuring the highest safety standards and conformity with the British Columbia Building Code. The Program allows applicants to hire a CP to assist with the City’s building permit review and approval process...CPs can support both the applicant and City building officials by providing impartial design review, advice and recommendations to ensure a project’s design and construction comply with the Building Code, the related development permit and other relevant safety enactments.”

In contrast, as drafted *Bill M216* would appear to nullify one of the purposes of CP programs – for CP to take on the review and inspection role on behalf of the local government – by prohibiting a local government from undertaking peer reviews unless specifically authorized by the Superintendent of the Office of Professional Governance. Secondly, and perhaps of greater significance, the scope of *Bill M216* goes above and beyond the building permit and occupancy permit process to the wider and more complex development approval process, thereby introducing potential adverse risks to housing development.

¹ <https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/certified-professional-program.aspx>

² <https://www.mapleridge.ca/build-do-business/construction-development-permits/certified-professional-program>

2. The scope of *Bill M216* is unnecessarily broad, thereby potentially creating adverse risks to the public interest and to planning practice.

The current scope of *Bill M216* is too broad. The scope may cover rezoning applications, development permit applications, temporary use permits, etc. These types of non-building permit applications greatly benefit from the involvement, if not oversight and coordination, of Registered Professional Planners and other diverse, relevant professionals, whether on the side of the applicant or on the side of the local government to ensure alignment and consistency with policy and guidelines (land use, design, heritage, environmental, transportation).

However, *Bill M216* may displace or diminish the role of Registered Professional Planners, who are not currently regulated under the *Professional Governance Act (PGA)*. Registered Professional Planners ensure work prepared by architects, engineers, biologists, surveyors, and other relevant professionals is coordinated, aligned and integrated. The additional risk is whether current PGA-regulated professionals are suitably positioned within their designated scopes of practice to undertake planning practice in respect of the development application review and approval process. In sum, there is considerable potential adverse risk to the public should *Bill M216* be enacted in its current form.

3. *Bill M216* is likely to introduce significant uncertainty and delays to new housing development

Bill M216 as drafted requires any dispute arising between a PGA professional employed by a local government and a PGA professional retained by an applicant to be referred to the Office of the Superintendent of Professional Governance (OSPG) for resolution. Based on our current understanding, the OSPG mandate and mission, as set out in the PGA, does not contain any provisions relating to resolving local government planning, development, building permit, or occupancy permit application disputes between PGA regulated professionals. The OSPG does not appear, at present, to have the capacity and unique professional subject matter expertise to adjudicate such disputes across the 188 local governments in BC.

Moreover, we are not aware of any other existing quasi-judicial entity in British Columbia that currently has a mandate, mission, and staff expertise to receive and resolve local government planning, development, building permit, or occupancy permit application disputes between an applicant and a local government.

Even if a new quasi-judicial entity were enacted or the powers of such is endowed on an existing professional regulatory body the net effect would likely be longer delays for new housing development approvals, further exacerbating the housing crisis.

For the reasons stated above, PIBC strongly recommends that *Bill M216* be carefully reviewed and discussed in open forums with relevant stakeholders, including PIBC, to ensure it is appropriately scoped and analyzed for potential risks, implications and effects before proceeding to second reading and potential adoption. The risk of not undertaking a full due diligence review is severe harm to the public interest.

We want to conclude by applauding MLA Anderson's passion and intuition about the need to expand the housing supply on a much quicker pace and scale. As recent years have shown, charting new zoning rules and proactive planning can help set the stage for new housing, subject to economic cycles and other considerations. But a necessary key to success is ensuring each and every new piece of legislation or regulation fits within the broader mosaic of policies and regulations.

In closing, we would like to take the opportunity to offer the Institute's assistance in providing support and insight to the Government, MLA Anderson and your colleagues on reviewing and refining *Bill M216* and related planning and housing-related legislation and policy. PIBC stands ready to offer our members' professional planning expertise and assistance to successfully and effectively advance housing delivery.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Kenna Jonkman RPP, MCIP
President, Planning Institute of British Columbia

CC: MLA George Anderson, Parliamentary Secretary for Transit
Honourable Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
Honourable Jessie Sunner, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Kate Haines, Superintendent of the Office of Professional Governance and Office for International Credential Recognition
MLA John Rustad, Leader of the Conservative Party of British Columbia
MLA Jeremy Valeriote, BC Green Party
Narissa Chadwick RPP, MCIP – Chair, PIBC Policy & Public Affairs Committee
Deborah Jensen RPP, MCIP – Chair, PIBC RPP Regulation Subcommittee
Dave Crossley, PIBC Executive Director

Background about the Planning Institute of British Columbia

The Institute is the self-regulating professional association of professional planners in BC and the Yukon – currently numbering about 2000 members. PIBC is incorporated under the *Societies Act of BC* as a “Division 2 – Occupational Title Society”. Certified PIBC members use the protected title “Registered Professional Planner” and “RPP” designation and are permitted to use “MCIP” to indicate national membership with the Canadian Institute of Planners – the national association to which PIBC is affiliated.

PIBC’s mission is to support, connect, and advance the planning profession in BC and the Yukon through certification, ethical standards, education, and advocacy. The 11-person elected Board determines institute policy and strategic direction. PIBC bylaws address qualifications for membership, institute administration, continuous professional learning and professional conduct and discipline. A *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* establishing core standards is incorporated in the bylaws and upheld by PIBC.

The Planning Profession

Planners work throughout British Columbia, the Yukon, and beyond, in large urban centres, suburban communities, and rural and remote communities and regions. Planning is a multidisciplinary field with practitioners in the public and private sectors, as well as in academia and the non-governmental sectors.

The scope of planning generally revolves around land use and covers diverse areas of practice and specialization such as housing planning and policy, transportation planning, resource management planning, environmental planning, social policy and planning, and population and employment forecasting – among many areas of professional practice.

What sets planning apart from other professions is the overarching ethos to uphold the public interest, actively seeking out to understand and balance the goals of a multitude of stakeholders, recognize the interplay between the built and natural environments, and to ensure a future-oriented perspective on building resilient, livable, and equitable communities.

In practical terms, planners take on a variety of tasks, such as:

- Coordinating and working alongside professional practitioners from many different specialized disciplines, such as architects and engineers, in addition to working with the public, proponents, stakeholders, and decision-makers through planning and development processes
- Convening and facilitating dialogues with land developers, local government officials, other professionals, and citizens; and,

- Undertaking technical analysis of demographics and transportation demand; preparing plans and policies that comply with laws and regulations; and, providing independent professional advice to decision-makers and clients.

Partnerships in Housing

PIBC has been proudly designing and delivering the Peer Learning Network from a one-time contribution by the Province. Through monthly coordination meetings with Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs staff, PIBC has delivered focused and practical offerings to both members and non-members. Upcoming offerings include Housing Advisory Bulletins and the Pilot Intelligent Inventory of Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaws. The key takeaway from the Peer Learning Network program is that continuous improvement should be pursued in part by building on established legislation and regulations, and strengthening partnerships between public, private, and non-profit actors.

PIBC looks forward to opportunities to strengthen this partnership with the Province to deliver timely knowledge transfer and innovative research to planners and practitioners working in housing and related matters so that more housing can be delivered faster without compromising safety.

Briefing Note re: Professional Reliance Act

Prepared by: MLA George Anderson, Nanaimo - Lantzville

RE: *Professional Reliance Act*

Purpose: To strengthen local government capacity, accelerate housing approvals, and reduce costs by trusting qualified professionals under existing provincial regulation.

Overview

British Columbia needs to build housing and community infrastructure faster without compromising safety or accountability.

Right now, many local governments are required to re-review the technical work of provincially licensed professionals (engineers, architects, etc.), even though those professionals are already accountable under the *Professional Governance Act* (PGA).

This duplication drains staff time, delays housing, and increases costs for families and local taxpayers.

The *Professional Reliance Act* fixes that.

It allows municipalities to **accept certified work from qualified professionals** and move projects forward faster, freeing up staff for community planning and public engagement.

Key Benefits

For young people:

- More homes coming to market sooner, making home ownership and renting more attainable.

For families:

- A better chance to find or own a home in the community they love.

For local governments:

- Less red tape, more capacity, and reduced administrative costs.

For taxpayers:

- Savings on staff duplication and lower development costs over time.

How It Works

- If a professional certified under the *Professional Governance Act* (PGA) seals their work, local governments can accept it without a second technical peer review.
- The professional remains fully liable and accountable through their regulatory body (Architectural Institute of British Columbia, Engineers and Geoscientist of British Columbia, etc.).
- Municipalities maintain control over zoning, design guidelines, and policy decisions — this reform only streamlines *technical* approvals.
- Disputes between professionals can be referred to the Office of the Superintendent of Professional Governance (OSPG).

What It's Not

- Not privatization - accountability stays public through OSPG oversight.
- Not deregulation - standards stay the same. The process just becomes faster.
- Not a download to municipalities. Simply a reduction in administrative pressure.

Q&A Sheet – Professional Reliance Act

Q1: Why is this bill needed?

A: Many housing projects are delayed because local governments have to re-review work already completed by licensed professionals.

This duplication adds time, costs, and frustration. The bill modernizes that process so projects move faster and local governments can focus on planning great communities.

Q2: Will this reduce oversight or lower standards?

A: No. Professionals are still regulated, insured, and accountable under the *Professional Governance Act* and the Office of the Superintendent of Professional Governance. Oversight remains public and strong.

Q3: How does this help housing affordability?

A: Every month of delay adds cost. Both for builders and, eventually, for families. By removing redundant steps, we reduce those costs and get homes to market faster.

Q4: Does this take power away from local governments?

A: No. Local councils still decide zoning, design, and land-use policy. The *Act* streamlines technical review so staff can focus on community priorities instead of paperwork.

Q5: How does this help smaller municipalities?

A: Smaller towns often struggle to hire engineers or architects for peer review. This bill saves them those costs and lets them rely on provincially regulated professionals instead.

Q6: Is this a “developer giveaway”?

A: No. Developers still meet all local requirements and hire qualified, accountable professionals. The difference is that cities won’t waste months re-checking certified work.

Q7: What about unionized staff in local governments?

A: This bill doesn’t eliminate positions; it helps municipal staff focus on higher-value work like long-term planning, housing strategy, and public consultation.

Q8: Is this costly to implement?

A: No. It uses existing provincial structures under the *Professional Governance Act* and the OSPG. Local governments may make small bylaw or process adjustments, but the overall effect is cost-saving.

Q9: What about RidgeView Place in Langford? Couldn’t this potentially lead to more of that?

A: The issues at Ridgeview Place occurred under the existing system and partially informed this bill.

This bill would make it clear that the professionals remain fully liable and accountable through their regulatory body. Further clarifying that local governments will not be liable for the actions of certified professionals.

Q10: Are there any other municipalities using this model or Professional Reliance?

A: Yes, there are several certified professional programs in British Columbia, for example:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| *City of Vancouver | *City of Surrey |
| *City of Burnaby | * District of Squamish |
| *District of West Vancouver | *City of Maple Ridge |
| *Town of Ladysmith | *City of Abbotsford |
| * City of Prince George | |