

PIBC's Professional Governance Research and Engagement Project – In Full Swing!

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Please note: this image is a depiction of a general focus group and not one from the current project.

Please stay up to date with the web page and take every opportunity to provide feedback through the engagement activities.

We look forward to hearing from you!

www.pibc.bc.ca/professionalgovernance

Author's Note: this is the fourth article in *Planning West* reporting on the status of PIBC's Professional Governance Research and Engagement Project.

If you are a diligent reader of *Planning West*, then you'll know that the Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) has been trying to actively engage with its membership on the topic of professional governance. In December 2023, the PIBC Board approved direction to undertake outreach and education about the *Professional Governance Act* (PGA) and its possible opportunities and implications for PIBC and its membership. The RPP Regulation Subcommittee has been overseeing this project through educating and engaging PIBC members about professional standards and the PGA, presenting research and analysis on issues identified, and addressing potential opportunities and tradeoffs.

The primary purpose of the PGA is to set out a governance framework for self-regulating professions that protects the public interest from, and reduces the risk of, unethical and incompetent practice. To date, six professions have been regulated under the PGA, including architects, engineers, agrologists and forestry professionals. The PIBC membership is not currently regulated under

the PGA, and at this time no action has been taken by either PIBC or the provincial government that would lead to planning professionals being regulated by this legislation. The current project is in no way intended to result in a decision on whether the planning profession should be regulated under the PGA, but rather to gather and analyze information regarding the pros and cons of such a move should it occur, and to provide a comprehensive review to the Board in order to further inform future decision-making.

The Work Plan for the professional governance project presents a comprehensive approach to engage and educate the membership. To date, the following activities have been completed:

- Initial engagement survey with the PIBC membership;
- Discussions with other organizations operating under the PGA or similar legislation;
- Publication of articles in *Planning West* (see Fall 2024, Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 issues);
- Initial webinar to introduce the Project; and
- Session at the annual PIBC conference.

Over the summer months, the RPP Regulation Subcommittee and PIBC staff have been working to retain a consultant to further assist with this project. In April, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued to retain the services of a consultant to undertake a strategic assessment of professional governance for the planning profession in BC. After an extensive review process in July, the Subcommittee endorsed the retention of The Regulator's Practice, a consulting firm that focusses on providing advice and services related to professional governance matters. Their work with the project will include background research, preparation and facilitation of nine focus groups, and the overall synthesis and integration of all research and information gleaned from the membership and elsewhere.

The focus groups currently underway are an integral component of this project, providing PIBC members and opportunity for in depth discussion on a variety of topics related to professional governance. A request for participation was issued to the PIBC membership in September, for which we received a high level of interest. The fulsome discussion resulting from these focus groups has been quite valuable, and greatly contributes to the final analysis of this project.

Additional engagement opportunities are still forthcoming. A second member engagement survey will be offered to the membership, and an online discussion forum will be launched to provide an opportunity for further discussion around the research findings. In the end, a strategic discussion paper will be prepared that evaluates the high level pros, cons, and tradeoffs of professional governance options – with an expected completion date of early 2026.

The project webpage (www.pibc.bc.ca/professionalgovernance) continues to be updated to make information available to the membership, providing FAQ resources, PGA information, the project Work Plan, Planning West articles and more. So please stay up to date with this web page and take every opportunity to provide feedback through the engagement activities. We look forward to hearing from you!

Deborah Jensen RPP, MCIP is the Principal and Senior Planner of PlanningWorks Consulting, and a regular consultant with JRTW Planning Services. With over 25 years of volunteer experience with PIBC, Deborah is currently the Chair of the RPP Regulation Subcommittee.



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