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Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

BILL 13

**SAFE ACCESS TO PLACES OF
PUBLIC WORSHIP ACT**

Honourable Niki Sharma
Attorney General and Deputy Premier

Explanatory Note

This Bill protects access to places of public worship by providing for the establishment of access zones around places of public worship and prohibiting conduct in those zones that impedes access, disrupts activities at the place of public worship or causes concern for a person's physical or mental safety.

BILL 13 – 2026

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HIS MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia, enacts as follows:

Definitions

1 In this Act:

“**access zone**” means an access zone established in accordance with section 3;

“**interference**” means advising or persuading, or attempting to advise or persuade, by any means, including, without limitation, graphic, verbal or written means, a person to refrain from participating in an activity at a place of public worship;

“**multi-use building**” does not include a building that is used for activities in addition to public worship if the use of the building for those additional activities is authorized by the owner or occupier of the place of public worship;

“**occupier**”, in relation to a place of public worship, means a person who has

- (a) responsibility for and control over the condition of the place of public worship or the activities carried out at the place of public worship, or
- (b) control over persons allowed to enter the place of public worship;

“**parcel**” means a lot, block or other area in which land is held or into which land is subdivided;

“place of public worship”

- (a) means any of the following:
 - (i) property that is exempt from taxation under section 220 (1) (h) [*general statutory exemptions*] of the *Community Charter*;
 - (ii) property that is exempt from taxation under section 396 (1) (c) (iv) of the *Vancouver Charter*;
 - (iii) property that is exempt from taxation under section 15 (1) (d) of the *Taxation (Rural Area) Act*;
 - (iv) property that is within a prescribed class of property, and
- (b) does not include property referred to in paragraph (a) (i), (ii) or (iii) that is within a prescribed class of property;

“police officer” means a person who, under the *Police Act*, is

- (a) a provincial constable,
- (b) a municipal constable, or
- (c) if a designated policing unit is prescribed under this Act, a designated constable of the designated policing unit.

Access protected

- 2 (1) Subject to subsection (3), a person must not, in an access zone for a place of public worship,
 - (a) impede access to or egress from the place of public worship,
 - (b) disrupt activities at the place of public worship,
 - (c) engage in interference, or
 - (d) intimidate or attempt to intimidate a person or otherwise do or say anything that could reasonably be expected to cause concern for a person’s physical or mental safety.
- (2) Subject to subsection (3), a person must not, in an access zone for a place of public worship, wilfully participate in a gathering whose participants are contravening subsection (1) (a), (b), (c) or (d).
- (3) The prohibitions in subsections (1) and (2) do not apply in relation to any of the following:
 - (a) anything done or said in the course of activities authorized by the owner or occupier of the place of public worship;
 - (b) a strike, a lockout or picketing, as those terms are defined in section 1 (1) of the *Labour Relations Code*, that is carried out in accordance with that Act;
 - (c) a prescribed activity or class of activities.

Notice required to establish an access zone

- 3** (1) In order to establish an access zone for a place of public worship, signs must be posted so that in daylight, under normal weather conditions and from the locations set out in subsection (2) or the regulations,
- (a) a sign is clearly visible,
 - (b) if the sign contains writing, the writing is clearly legible, and
 - (c) if the sign uses graphic representation, the graphic representation is clearly visible.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the locations from which a sign must be clearly visible are as follows, unless the regulations provide otherwise:
- (a) if the place of public worship is not in a multi-use building, the approach to each ordinary point of entry to the parcel on which the place of public worship is located, in which case section 4 (1) applies;
 - (b) if the place of public worship is in a multi-use building, the approach to each ordinary point of entry
 - (i) to the place of public worship, in which case section 4 (2) applies, or
 - (ii) to the place of public worship and to the multi-use building, in which case section 4 (3) applies.
- (3) A sign posted under subsection (1) must contain the following information:
- (a) the identification of the place of public worship;
 - (b) the areas included in the access zone;
 - (c) the prohibitions in section 2 (1) and (2);
 - (d) any other prescribed information.
- (4) A person, other than an owner or occupier of a place of public worship, must not remove, alter or deface signs posted under this section.

What is included in an access zone

- 4** (1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3), an access zone for a place of public worship includes the following areas, unless different areas are prescribed for the place of public worship:
- (a) the parcel on which the place of public worship is located;
 - (b) the area that extends 20 metres from the boundaries of the parcel.
- (2) If a place of public worship is in a multi-use building and a sign is clearly visible from the approach to each ordinary point of entry to the place of public worship in accordance with section 3 (2) (b) (i), the access zone for the place of public worship includes the following areas, unless different areas are prescribed for the place of public worship:
- (a) the place of public worship;

- (b) the area that extends 20 metres from each entrance to and exit from the place of public worship.
- (3) If a place of public worship is in a multi-use building and a sign is clearly visible from the approach to each ordinary point of entry to the place of public worship and to the multi-use building in accordance with section 3 (2) (b) (ii), the access zone for the place of public worship includes the following areas, unless different areas are prescribed for the place of public worship:
 - (a) the place of public worship;
 - (b) the area that extends 20 metres from each entrance to and exit from the multi-use building;
 - (c) passageways, 20 metres wide, along the routes from each entrance to and exit from the multi-use building to each entrance to and exit from the place of public worship.
- (4) Despite subsections (1) to (3) and the regulations, the following are excluded from an access zone:
 - (a) a private residence;
 - (b) a place to which the public does not ordinarily have access.

Arrest without warrant

- 5 A police officer may arrest, without a warrant, a person who the police officer believes on reasonable grounds is contravening section 2.

Injunction

- 6 (1) On application by the Attorney General or any other person, the Supreme Court may grant an injunction restraining a person from contravening section 2 if the court is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person has contravened or is likely to contravene that section.
- (2) An application under this section may be made without notice to any person.
- (3) The Supreme Court may grant an interim injunction until the disposition of an application under this section.
- (4) A contravention of section 2 may be restrained under this section whether or not a penalty or other remedy is provided by this Act.

Regulations

- 7 (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations referred to in section 41 of the *Interpretation Act*.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations as follows:
 - (a) prescribing a class of property for the purposes of paragraph (a) (iv) or (b) of the definition of “place of public worship” in section 1;

- (b) prescribing a designated policing unit for the purposes of paragraph (c) of the definition of “police officer” in section 1;
 - (c) providing that section 2 (3) (a) or (b) includes or does not include an activity or class of activities or does not apply in relation to a class of persons;
 - (d) prescribing an activity or class of activities for the purposes of section 2 (3) (c);
 - (e) for the purposes of section 3, respecting signs and the establishment of access zones, including the following:
 - (i) the information that signs must contain;
 - (ii) the posting of signs;
 - (iii) the locations, other than those set out in section 3 (2), from which a sign must be clearly visible in order to establish an access zone;
 - (iv) the areas included in an access zone referred to in subparagraph (iii);
 - (f) for the purposes of section 4 (1), (2) or (3), prescribing different areas for a place of public worship or a class of places of public worship.
- (3) A regulation under this section may provide differently for different places of public worship or activities or classes of places of public worship, activities or persons.

Repeal of this Act

- 8** This Act is repealed 4 years after the date it comes into force or on an earlier date prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Commencement

- 9** This Act comes into force on the date of Royal Assent.