



# Alberta Ability Network Human Rights Table

**Date/Time:**  
February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - 1:00 PM – 3:00PM

**Location:** Zoom

**Chairs:** Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Sean Crump

### In Attendance:

Aileen Burke (Community Advocate)  
 Alison Stutz (Alberta Deaf and Hear)  
 Amanda Warnock (Action Coalition of Human Trafficking Alberta)  
 Andrew Rob (Disability Alliance BC)  
 Brandy Gassner (ATB)  
 Cam Stewart (Alberta Human Rights Commission)  
 Chris Ryan (Community Advocate)  
 Dan Pederson (Community Advocate)  
 Deborah Abiola ((Alberta Human Rights Commission)  
 Diane Kreuger (Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary)  
 Gilary Guzman (Canadian Equality)

Haley Weiss (Selections Career Support Services)  
 Greg McMeekin (Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities)  
 Joyce Cook (Community Advocate)  
 Katherine Such (Easter Seals)  
 Keri McEachern (Self-Advocacy Federation)  
 Mezaun Lakha-Evin (Alberta Ability Network)  
 Sam Mason (Voices of Albertans with Disabilities)  
 Sheralee Stelter (Calgary CP)  
 Stacey Perlin (Perlin Foundation of Wellness)  
 Stella Varvis (Alberta Law Reform Counsel)  
 Tasha M (Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary)  
 Tessa Turner (Action Coalition of Human Trafficking Alberta)  
 Tenelle Bradley (Accessible Housing)  
 Tonia LaRiviere (City of Edmonton)  
 Valeria Palladino (Edmonton Epilepsy Association)

## Meeting Minutes

Welcome  
 Land Acknowledgement  
 Breakout Rooms  
 Meeting considerations  
 Review of last month's meeting minutes

### Spotlight Series

#### Action Coalition on Human Trafficking (ACT) Alberta

- If anyone is interested in a more in-depth presentation, ACT Alberta provides a 1-hour lunch and learn and a 3-hour customized training on human trafficking for service providers.
- ACT Alberta is a frontline service agency that helps victims and survivors of human trafficking on their way to safety.
- Since 2008, they've been the only agency in Alberta that includes all types and experiences of human trafficking including working with men, women, gender diverse folks, undocumented people, foreign nationals, and LGBTQ populations.
- ACT Alberta works with anyone except children and youth under the age of 18 as many services help minors and there is legislation that protects them.
- Currently have offices in Edmonton in Calgary, and all projects run across the province.
- Their vision is an Alberta free of human trafficking and they will do that by increasing knowledge and awareness on human trafficking, advocating for effective rights-based responses, building the capacity of all involved stakeholders and leading and fostering collaboration for joint action against human trafficking.
- Their program model is through prevention, response, and mobilization. For prevention, they offer tailored training and education for community response. In response, they have specialized case management for victims and survivors of human trafficking. For

mobilization, they have cross-agency stakeholder partnerships and contribute to knowledge sharing and research.

- What is human trafficking? Human trafficking is the act of forcing, coercing or deceiving an individual into selling sex or labour or other to a third party's game.
- People with disabilities can be extremely vulnerable to trafficking due to dependence on a caregiver, where familial or caregiver trafficking happens exceedingly more in this population than in able-bodied counterparts. Other factors are isolation and looking for friendships online, impaired judgement resulting in manipulation, lack of education about relationships, sexual health and rights, feeling helplessness or an inability to fight back, and lack of social power.
- People with disabilities are 4 times more likely to be a victim of sexual exploitation and an unknown number of victims of labour or financial exploitation.
- If you need to refer a client to them, please contact them through their phone number or email, they are not a 24/7 crisis support centre, however, you can call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010.
- ACT Alberta's phone number is 780-474-1104 and their email is [info@actalberta.org](mailto:info@actalberta.org)
- To contact Tessa Turner, please email [tessaturner@actalberta.org](mailto:tessaturner@actalberta.org).
- To contact Amanda Warnock, please email [amandawarnock@actalberta.org](mailto:amandawarnock@actalberta.org) or call **587-930-6126**.

**Andrew Robb – Disability Law Clinic at Disability Alliance BC**

- DABC (Disability Alliance BC) was created in 1977, and they have been a long-time advocate for people with disabilities.
- The presentation will be discussed accessibility laws in Canada, the process that led to the creation of the Accessible BC Act in 2021, and some possible benefits and risks of the creation of accessibility laws that BC has experienced and might be relevant to Alberta.
- Currently, there are accessibility laws in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Manitoba. We also have legislations in Quebec and BC, which are different from the other accessibility acts in Canada. Some other provinces currently are creating their accessibility acts.
- Ontario was the first province in Canada to introduce the accessibility law in 2005 and it was inspired by an American law called the Americans with Disabilities Act. The American law is the best accessibility legislation in North America so far. Canadian versions have not been as effective.
- Accessibility laws in Canada are framework laws. Framework laws are frameworks or principles that generate standards of accessibility. These laws do not contain detailed rules. They do not state what governments, businesses or people must do to promote accessibility, instead, they require governments to create more specific rules.
- BC's Accessibility Act was created in 2021 but there haven't been any standards created yet. They are still waiting for them to be rolled out and implemented. Currently, even though the law has been in effect for almost 2 years, it hasn't done anything.
- The first thing that must happen is the government has to create a law that empowers the government to create further rules and more specific standards that people, governments, and businesses have to follow to ensure barriers to accessibility are removed.
- When the government creates a specific standard, this is when consultation is extremely important. However, consultation is less important in the initial stage when the government is creating the law.
- The BC government has stated that the first standards will be made surrounding employability standards with no indication of when the draft will be completed. ongoing consultation by the Disability Alliance will occur.
- Most important things to insist the government does when creating the law are:

- 1) Set out clear and ambitious purposes and goals for the law, write those into the law and make sure that they aren't implied but spelled out clearly.
- 2) Make the law apply broadly as possible, currently in BC and Quebec it is only applied in the public sector.
- 3) Law should include timelines and specific dates when the government promises to get certain steps done.
- 4) Include robust enforcement mechanisms.
- 5) How will it be enforced?
- 6) Pre-emptively ensures that the legislation is robust, so individuals don't have to make human rights complaints consistently.
- If the law is not effective, it will become another unkept legislation where the government can say they're doing something for people with disabilities without changing anything.
- Accessible Canada Act (ACA) is the closest accessibility legislation in Canada, in terms of enforcement, that other accessibility legislations should aim for.
- Please email Andrew Robb at [andrew@disabilityalliancebc.org](mailto:andrew@disabilityalliancebc.org) for more information.

## Topics of Discussion:

### Advocate's Office Update

- The Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities is beginning an engagement in the initial stages. Please stay tuned for information about the survey and the upcoming engagement sessions that will begin shortly.

### Barrier-Free Alberta: Election campaign update

- Mezaun met with an MLA last week and she provided her with some key contacts of whom we need to contact to promote Barrier-Free 23.
- BFA will be targeting all candidates running for the Provincial election parties, and recommend they put accessibility legislation on their platforms.
- BFA has 2 versions of the Barrier-Free AB in 2023 poster. One is for the public and one is for the candidates.
- For candidates, we included more statistics around the potential GDP increase once we have an inclusive labor market as it is more compelling. Some of the ways candidates can engage with this campaign is to book a 15-minute presentation with Barrier-Free Alberta, join as a supporter on our website and ask their party members to support Accessibility Legislation in Alberta.
- This is step one to generating political will amongst the provincial candidates.
- Need to send updates to the supporters of Barrier-Free Alberta to keep them engaged and updated on what is currently going on.
- Minister Qualtrough has offered to speak to the HR table.
- This election initiative is starting immediately, and we will be asking the table for support.
- One of the reasons government officials haven't enacted this yet is because there will be a cost associated with this legislation. However, what is the cost of not having this legislation? Billions of dollars can be brought into the province by enacting it.
- All of the government officials BFA presented to expressed their support. We need to accumulate their support and add this to current election platforms.
- We've had the gatekeeper issue, where, the Minister knows about this initiative and wants to support us, but administrative staff forwards it to other Ministers, and they don't get a chance to see our emails. We can start talking to ADMs to address this issue.



# Alberta Ability Network Human Rights Table

- Sam is presenting the Barrier-Free Alberta presentation to her networking group the next week.

**Action items:**

- The table can reach out to the Chief of ACA, Michael Gottheil to gain further support for Barrier-Free23.
- Sam will create a newsletter for Barrier-Free Alberta to keep supporters updated on what is currently going on.
- Please share the Barrier-Free Alberta social media campaign on all of your social media platforms.
- If your logo isn't on the Barrier Free Alberta website or if you haven't signed up as a supporter, please click here to do that <https://www.barrierfreeab.ca/support>.

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

**Next meeting:**

**Date:** March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

**Location:** Zoom