



# Alberta Ability Network Human Rights Table

**Date/Time:**  
November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - 1:00 PM – 3:00PM

**Location:** Zoom

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

**In Attendance:**

Alison Stutz (Alberta Deaf and Hear)  
Cal Schuler (Calgary Alternative Support Services)  
Cam Stewart (Alberta Human Rights Commission)  
Dan Pederson (Community Advocate)  
Gilary Guzman (Canadian Equality Services)  
Haley Weiss (Selections Career Support Services)  
Katherine Such (Easter Seals Alberta)  
Leslie Jerry (Medicine Hat)

Margot Brunner (Voice of Albertans with Disabilities)  
Meri Topchieva (Alberta Ability Network)  
Mezaun Lakha-Evin (Alberta Ability Network)  
Philip Ney (Inclusion Alberta)  
Sam Mason (Voice of Albertans with Disabilities)  
Stacey Perlin (Perlin Foundation)  
Stella Varvis (Alberta Law Reform Counsel)  
Tony Flores (Community Advocate)  
Valeria Palladino (Edmonton Epilepsy Association )

## Meeting Minutes

Land Acknowledgement  
Welcome and Introductions

Review/Approval of previous meeting's minutes

**Spotlight Presenters:**

**Deaf and Hear Alberta:**

- Provide programs, services, and technology to support Deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Albertans in achieving communication access everywhere.
- Offer online and in-person ASL classes. A common curriculum is signing naturally which is full immersion, no voice is used during classes. This class is the first step towards becoming an interpreter in Alberta.
- Offer summer camp in person and online. There are 2 levels: basic and intermediate.
- Offer customized courses with a focus on specialized vocabulary tailored to your organization.
- ASL interpreting is the biggest revenue generator for the organization, making them not 100% reliant on funding.
- Now offering VRI On Demand which is "an interpreter in your pocket". It is very popular for young people when they open bank accounts or need to have a full understanding of what agreement they are getting into.

- Offer a step-ahead program where volunteers connect with deaf and hard-of-hearing seniors who feel isolated and lonely
- There are in-person interpreting and ASL classes in Edmonton as well as online classes. Interpreters are mainly based in Edmonton and Calgary
- Have been working with Alberta Human Rights Commission and AHS and their workplace assessments.
- Alison will follow up with Alberta Public Service Commissioner to see if they would like further collaboration in regard to their equity, inclusion, and diversity statement.

## **Premier Press Release**

- Premier Smith and Minister Nixon announced that there will be a 6% increase to AISH, child, and family benefits, seniors' benefits, and income support that people will see on their January payments.
- If indexation were never paused, there would've been \$100 more that people would've received. With the current index of 6% to \$1787, AISH would've been around \$1878 had the indexation not been paused.
- People with these income supports will also receive an additional \$100 for the first 6 months of the year.
- Inclusion Alberta will be asking that the federal or provincial government commit that if the Canada Disability Benefit is introduced that the province won't have any claw backs on provincial funding and won't impact eligibility for programs.
- Employment Insurance is currently deducted dollar for dollar under AISH, Inclusion Alberta will recommend that it should be treated similarly to other income under AISH. When Premier Smith was still a UCP candidate she showed interest in that recommendation.

## **Barrier Free Alberta**

- Made some changes to the Barrier Free Alberta Strategic Plan for 2023.
- Included more goals such as 1) having a barrier-free Alberta and 2) building public support through education and awareness.
- Made small editorial changes to the principals, partners, governance, stakeholder, and risk/mitigation topics.
- If you would like to see the changes, please click here:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1P0yqAPhGchMCI00ugTGANtdOdUMT0ivE/edit?rtfpof=true>
- The previous Human Rights Commissioner, Michael, was just appointed as the National Accessibility Commissioner.
- There's a new Human Rights Commissioner, Kathryn, who just got appointed last week. We will reach out to her and see if she wants to join this table.

## Elections Campaign

- Barrier-free Alberta has already provided multiple presentations to many municipalities across Alberta and with the election happening in the next 6 months we will need to reach out to a bigger variety of stakeholders.
- The Perlin Foundation will collaborate with the Alberta Ability Network to help support our elections campaign in the coming months. We will potentially create a quarterly collaborative event to help cross-pollinate our different support groups and create more holistic conversations.
- We need to find more events and more opportunities to share our agenda. There are many communities that haven't heard from us and need to.
- By having quarterly events we can create and share some messaging about the barrier-free initiative as well.
- Some processes such as the hiring of a consultation group by the Advocate's Office have gotten delayed due to the change of leadership and Cabinet shuffle. We will continue working side by side and complement the work that the Advocate's Office is doing.
- Alberta Ability Network sent out congratulatory letters to all new Cabinet Ministers and asked them to join one of the tables for a meet and greet. So far, all Ministers that responded have extended their gratitude for the invitation but are unable to make it.
- The elections subcommittee has been created to flush out the details of our election campaign.
- Alberta at noon is a radio station on CBC that has a legislative focus and would be a good agency to contact and to speak about a barrier-free Alberta. They have many avid listeners and will be able to reach more stakeholders outside the disability community.
- 60-70 people have signed on as supporters of the Barrier-Free Initiative through the website and we need to figure out how to mobilize our supporters.
- Giliary works for a Diversity Institute (DI) Company and hosts a webinar each month on different topics, a potential place to speak about Barrier-Free.
- Deaf and Hear Alberta have memberships to both Edmonton and Calgary Chambers of Commerce and are willing to do an educational item just on Barrier-Free.

## Provincial IDPD Virtual Event

- Cerebral Palsy Alberta, Easter Seals Alberta, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities, and other community organizers were selected by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities to host a virtual, province-wide, International Day of Persons with Disabilities event.
- This year's event will showcase the talents, hobbies, skills, and passions of disabled Albertans virtually on Saturday, December 3, 2022.
- If you would like to register, please click here:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_jB7u2KXpRs-Uhw6z-Zw7qA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jB7u2KXpRs-Uhw6z-Zw7qA)



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## Canadian Equality Consulting

- Canadian Equality Consulting is hosting a 2-day GBA (Gender-Based Analysis) Plus conference on May 8-9.
- If interested, please click here to register: <https://canadianequality.ca/gba-plus-conference/>

## Edmonton Holiday Mingle

- If anyone is interested in the following event please click here: <https://www.cphrab.ca/professional-development/edmonton-holiday-mingle>

## Action items:

- Meri will Reach out to the new Human Rights Commissioner Kathryn Oviatt
- Mezaun, Stacey, and Meri will start planning a collaboration between the Perlin Foundation and Alberta Ability Network.
- Valeria will contact Judy Aldous from Alberta at Noon and see if their radio station can speak about a Barrier-Free Alberta.

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

**Next meeting: There will be no meeting in December. Happy Holidays!**

**Date:** January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Time:** 1:00 PMM – 3:00 PM

**Location:** Zoom