

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2021, 1:30PM TO 3:30PM

ZOOM VIRTUAL PEER GROUP MEETING NOTES

Hosted By:

Paul Gauthier,

Executive Director

Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

Ruth Marzetti

Executive Director

Technology For Living

Guest Speakers:

Green Party Candidate, Felix Kongyuy

Liberal Candidate, The Honourable Carla Qualtrough

New Democrat Party Candidate, Councillor Bonita Zarillo



More than ever, people with disabilities must come together as a unified group. How we support each other through crisis and every day hurdles will strengthen us as a community and as individuals. Living independently is a choice and comes with challenges. Through unification people with disabilities make a difference; each voice is important.

The goal of Pathways To Independence meetings are for peers to come together and share information and updates on current issues facing people with disabilities.

The September 1st, 2021, meeting was attended by approximately 90 people.

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Technology for Living Updates with Taylor Danielson

Simon Cox Student Design Competition

The seventh annual Simon Cox Student Design Competition has begun and invites post secondary students from across the province to design, and build, innovative assistive technology solutions.

Many of these designs are based on ideas submitted by peers like yourself. It is very easy to participate because the Technology for Living members and peers had the best ideas on how to improve the daily lives for people with disabilities living in their own homes.

Some examples of ideas from last year's competition included:

1. Mobile Warmth, submitted by the Kwantlen Polytechnic University
 - a device to keep your hands warm while in a wheelchair.
2. Adjustable Portable Tabletop, submitted by the University of British Columbia
 - For making dinners out more convenient
3. Mobile Arm, submitted by the University of Victoria
 - Retractable mechanical arm which helps wheelchair users independently carry shopping bags and packs
4. Hot Goo, submitted by the British Columbia Institute of Technology
 - Wheelchair arm warmer

Simon Cox Principal Award First Place Winner was the MobilArm.

Three of those four ideas were submitted by Pathways peers, people who regularly attend these meetings, so I hope you can see that your involvement is an integral part of the competition.

I encourage you to contact me by email or visit the Simon Cox website if you have an idea you would like to see a student team build.

Taylor Danielson

Email: tdanielson@technologyforliving.org

[Simon Cox Student Design Competition Website](#)

We Talk Tech Senior's

The We Talk Tech Senior's Project was started this year to provide education on technology and promote inclusivity for seniors within the community. At the previous Pathways meeting we introduced Accessible Sailing and Gardening, and the notes included the post meeting upload of a video about Tech for Seniors with Memory Loss.

Our latest video features the New Westminster Police Department on how seniors and people with disabilities can be safer in their homes and have a greater awareness of common scams and fraud.

[Watch Safety with the New Westminster Police Department](#)

New Peer Group - Prop

Technology for Living is considering starting a new Peer Group for those people who use respiratory equipment, such as a BiPAP, a Ventilator or CPAP, in addition to other devices.

This group is an excellent opportunity for peers to share their lived experience of managing their respiratory health, discuss current and future events such as the Philips Respironics Recall and learn from the experienced Respiratory Therapists of the PROP Program. It is important we hear from you so we can gauge interest.

Contact Nancy Lear with your feedback and if you are interested in attending these meetings.

Email: nlear@technologyforliving.org

Technology for Living 2021 Annual General Meeting

Our 2021 Annual General Meeting; is on Thursday, September 16th, from 5:30pm until 7:00pm and is a virtual event hosted through Zoom. All Technology for Living members are asked to please join us. If you are not a Technology Living member and you are also a Peer, you are still welcomed to join us.

There will be a special guest performance by a talented local musician.

Technology for Living Board of Directors

Technology for Living Board of Directors is looking for a new member. This is a volunteer position open to all members of Technology for Living; you must be either a TIL Service user or a PROP Service user to apply.

This is an interesting career opportunity. Responsibilities include attending four board meetings per year and being involved in some side projects as they occur.

If you are interested in applying for the Board Membership, please contact us to express your interest, request more information and to request a full job description:

Email info@technologyforliving.org

Q. I have gotten most of the things that you described in your presentation, in terms of using Amazon Alexa and I can control lights and switches and heaters and different fans, which as you said was particularly important this year. But the one that I am struggling with is we have a Harmony Hub, which Alexa will control, to control the television.

Unfortunately, when we switched over to Gateway, we lost the ability to voice control the channels on the TV. We can still turn the TV on and off, and sometimes it does not always increase or decrease volume. Have you any experience with that issue?

A. It is something that if not myself, one of the other Technicians can help you with.

Send us an email at: tiltechs@technologyforliving.org

Community Updates

Letter to the Ministry of Health, with Paul Gauthier, ACE Executive

In August, the Association of CSIL Employers Executive sent an email to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Teri Collins to address the Temporary Policy Exemptions that were scheduled to end on September 30th, 2021.

As a reminder, those exemptions were;

1. the Payment to Family Members,
2. the ability to utilize a staffing agency without permission,
3. to be able to expenses PPE beyond the normal monthly allowance,
4. sick pay for employees.

This letter stated that transitioning back to pre-pandemic policy was too premature and requested it be put a hold on indefinitely. The rise in the Delta variant has left people with disabilities receiving home support, vulnerable to new caregivers.

We told them that CSIL Employers have informed us that they continue to be in a crisis, as it relates to being able to hire caregivers. This was a concern before the pandemic and COVID has made it significantly worse.

We stated that the Health Authorities, agencies and care facilities have been hiring significantly more caregivers over the past few months, and this has also added to the crisis, making it worse for CSIL Employers to retain qualified staff as employers as they are now competing for a limited pool of workers.

We made that clear in the letter that the wages for caregivers, paid by Health Authorities and agencies has also created a problem once again with parity challenges. We requested that we re-engage with the Ministry as a working group to address these and other CSIL matters.

A meeting with the Ministry has been scheduled for September 9th, and I hope to be able to provide an update very soon. We will probably do an email update if we can get some good information after the meeting. Otherwise, we do have our pathways meeting coming up at the end of the month on September 29th.

Update:

After having engaged in communications with the Ministry of Health, by ACE Executives Ken Kramer, Tim Louis and myself, in which we outlined the continued challenges that CSIL employers continue to experience as a result of the pandemic, I am very happy to report that on September 9th, 2021, the Ministry of Health reinstated the temporary CSIL policy exceptions until April 1st, 2022, with a ninety (90) day transition period ending July 1, 2022.

You can expect to receive a letter or email from your Health Authority informing of this important update.

I look forward to continuing our relationship with the working team at the Ministry of Health and will continue to provide updates as they occur.

Accessible Nature Wellness Update by Nancy Lear

I work for Technology for Living as the Peer Support Facilitator. I am also a part of the Accessible Nature Wellness Program, and our third session is coming up **Saturday, September 18th from 2:00pm to 4:30pm**. I want to give you all a friendly reminder, if you have not already registered, please do so.

It is a very simple registration; just provide your name, address, and contact details and if you have any accessible accommodations that we need to know about. The sessions are two and a half hours long. The time passes rather quickly and is a beautiful experience.

This is my fourth time experiencing the Nature Wellness Program, and you can do it from your home; from your beds or anywhere in your house or wherever it is convenient for you, or you could go out in nature.

Nature has a way of making us all feel so empowered; it boosts overall health and wellbeing, and you will experience that through the program. We go through mindfulness, guided imagery and even travel through a forest. It is very beautiful, so hopefully you will get a chance to join us and connect with nature.

As a second update as part of the Accessible Nature Wellness Program, we applied for a grant to train five people with disabilities to be part of this program and facilitate during the program session. Hopefully you will think about this and let us know that you would like to participate. We are hoping to hear about the acceptance of the grant in a couple of weeks. Hopefully you can join us.

Paul Gauthier: I have had a chance to take part as well. It's such a great experience to just sometimes to take some time to enjoy nature and get out of the hustle and bustle of the world we are dealing with.

TransLink Update by Linda McGowan

Help Shape The Future of Accessibility Programs at Translink

Some of you may know that TransLink has two Community Committees. One is the HandyDART User's Advisory Committee (HDUAC), which is made up of thirty people with a variety of disabilities who live in different areas of the city and are HandyDART users. Any new proposals with TransLink are presented to this Committee and are assessed for the ability of peoples with disabilities to comply.

The purpose of the HDUAC is for HandyDART customers and their representatives to provide advice and guidance on HandyDART plans, programs and other initiatives, and to advise TransLink on matters to improve HandyDART service for customers. The HDUAC helps TransLink hear directly from customers and stakeholders to ensure the service meets their needs.

HandyDART customers, or individuals who have direct experience working with them, are eligible to sit on the HDUAC. Members serve for two-year terms, with the option to extend for a maximum term of four years. Members attend a minimum of four meetings per year and are appointed by TransLink's Board of Directors.

Both of those Committees are now working for new members applications; they are looking for your participation and advice of how to make the TransLink and the HandyDART system more manageable for people with disabilities.

Candidates will be evaluated based on their experience and understanding of HandyDART service, their ability to work collaboratively, and how they contribute to the diversity of the committee. Candidates may be contacted for additional information. Committee members will be appointed by the TransLink Board.

Note: Applications are being accepted until October 1, 2021, for the year of 2022 session. Those interested in applying can fill out and submit an [application form](#).

Access Transit Users' Advisory Committee (UAC)

The purpose of the UAC is to advise TransLink on accessibility improvements on our conventional transit services. The Committee provides accessibility-related advice on plans, programs, and other initiatives that TransLink funds.

The UAC meets approximately six times per year, and members are appointed for a three-year term, with the option to reapply for a second consecutive three-year term if they wish.

Candidates will be evaluated based on relevant qualifications and the need to reflect a balanced representation from various user groups, including persons with one or more disabilities, their representatives, and seniors or their representatives. Committee members are selected to participate based on their background, transit experience, accessibility knowledge, and community involvement.

Please read through the committee [Terms of Reference](#) prior to completing an [application form](#).

For more information or to request the application forms in an alternate format, please contact access.transit@translink.ca.

Braille and Tactile Communication

Starting in April of this year, TransLink started to put braille and Tactile communications at major bus stops for people with a visual impairment. They started with Joyce Road station as an experiment, and they are spreading this new initiative to many major bus stops throughout the city. They will also have Tactile on the ground so people can know where the bus stop is and interpret when the next bus is coming, and how long it is going to be.

HandyDART Modernization

As of October 1st, people will be able to use the Compass Card on HandyDART. It will reduce fares for people ages 13 to 18 and over the age of 64. Up until now, Seniors Fare was only available on SkyTrain, buses and SeaBus, but as of October 1st the Senior's Fares will be available on HandyDART, making your trips \$2 rather than \$3 cash or \$2.40 if you bought Fare Savers. If you do have Fare Savers, they can be used until the middle of November, but will no longer be sold after October 1st.

Q. Will the meetings be during the day or the evening?

A. During the day and generally run 11:00am until 1:00pm. Sometimes they go a bit longer to 1:30pm. When they are in person, they are held at the New Westminster TransLink office, and they will provide you with lunch. However, currently all meetings are being held via Zoom.

Paralympics

Paul Gauthier spoke briefly about the Paralympics. The Paralympics are dear to Paul's heart and he continues to support the athletes. He urged everyone to access the videos and life streams of the events to support the efforts of the athletes.

Update: Canada brought home 21 medals:

- 5 Gold
- 10 Silver
- 6 Bronze

To view the list of Canadian medal winners, click the Canadian Paralympic logo.



We send all our athletes a very heartfelt congratulations!



Federal Election Candidate Panel

Paul Gauthier was in the role of Moderator for the Panel and outlined the panel format for the peers. Thank you to all those who submitted their questions to Hilary; they helped create the framework for this panel, and the questions that the panelists received.

Acknowledgment that the meeting was held on the Unceded Territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Wauthuth Nations.

Candidates in Alphabetical Order of Parties

Green Party Candidate for Surrey Central riding, Felix Kongyuy, a business owner and arbitrator and has been active in the political, corporate and social service sectors. He has served on multiple advisory boards addressing social injustices and issues affecting the vulnerable population.

Liberal Candidate for Delta riding, the Honorable Carla Qualtrough who is currently the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion of Canada. Carla is a Lawyer primarily focused on Human Rights and is also a former Paralympic Swimmer.

New Democratic Party Candidate for Port Moody/Coquitlam riding Councillor Bonita Zarillo who currently serves as a Coquitlam City Councillor. Bonita is a Business Analyst with a background in Sales, Marketing and Consumer Research. Currently she is the Chair of the Universal Access-Ability Advisory Committee.

The Conservative Party Canada for Burnaby South riding, Likky Lavji. Unfortunately, we received a late message from him that he was forced to cancel, and he sent his regrets.

Personal Introductions

1. Green Party Candidate, - Surrey Riding: Felix Kongyuy

Thank you very much. I am the Green Party candidate for Surrey Central. Most of you have heard I have worked with your community for a very long time. I am a Community Organizer. I am a father of three, and I am a Business Consultant and Arbitrator.

I entered this race because for too long, I saw the need to have a different voice on the table; someone who has worked with the community, and somebody who understands the needs of this community. I am running to ensure that things which are very important to this community are not ignored.

For example, things like affordable housing. I am running to also ensure that things like Climate Change is not ignored, and also to ensure that something is done about poverty, and also about the opioid crisis which is plaguing our community here. Those are just some of the few basic things which I have decided to do for now.

2. Liberal Candidate, Delta Riding; The Honourable Carla Qualtrough

Happy to be joining you from the Traditional Territory of the *Tsleil-Waututh* and Musqueam Nations.

I am also happy to be joined by fellow Candidates from the Green and NDP parties. I have been the Member of Parliament for Delta for the past six years, and I have also been a cabinet minister since then. In 2015 I was named Canada's first ever Minister responsible for persons with a disability. I am also a person with a disability; I was born legally blind, and very much identify as a person with a disability, it is foundational to who I am as a person, and has really shaped the way I look at the world.

Before going into politics, I was a Human Rights Lawyer and a Paralympic Athlete, but I am also a mother; my husband and I have four kids, the youngest of which are 8 and 11. What I will say quickly is over the past six years, our Liberal government has made Accessibility and Disability Inclusion a priority. We have done a lot of important policy legislative and program work. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, but it really began with the Consultation for the ACA which were the most inclusive and comprehensive ever held by the Federal Government.

I have begun using a shortened version of “*nothing about us without us*” and now say “*nothing without us*” because everything is about us. Another big step was our announcement last fall of our first ever Disability Inclusion Action Plan which aims to improve the Social and Economic Inclusion of Canadians with disabilities, and of course, the Flagship Initiative under that is the Canada Disability Benefit.

Hot off the press, our platform was released this morning, and I think it is the most ambitious and comprehensive set of payments to people with disabilities, ever put out by any political party in the history of our country. I urge you to look at the disability specific commitments and see how disability is really woven throughout the platform. I am excited to share that our government will move forward with the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and reintroduce Legislation to implement the Canada Disability Benefit; there is so much more to say, including using the definition of disability in the Accessible Canada Act across all federal programs so formalizing that and putting disability lens on government decisions.

3. New Democrat Party Candidate, Port Moody-Coquitlam Riding, Councillor Bonita Zarillo

Thank you for the invitation today; I very much appreciate being able to meet with you. I am the NDP Candidate for Port Moody/Coquitlam, and I am also a City Councillor in Coquitlam. I have been working alongside people in our community, and some people even on this call today, in regard to accessibility for the city.

I also like to acknowledge that I am on the land of the Coquitlam First Nation Territory here. The Coquitlam people continue to live here and take care of the land and the water and certainly all that is below we know that fish are very important, and salmon are very important in my community.

This Pandemic has certainly shown the inequities that we all know exist. The burden is falling on municipalities, through the pandemic, to get food. To get access to some of the immune compromised [people] who could not get out of their homes during this time and also others in the community that did not have access to the resources that they usually have. One of the reasons that I am running for the Federal Party this time is this inequity and inclusion that has been missing for such a long time. I look forward to the opportunity for the discussion today.

I know that many of you have seen and been impacted by the housing crisis in the municipalities; the housing crisis is at the top of mind for us. We know that housing for people that need accessible housing is not getting the attention it needs at the municipal level, and it needs federal funding for us to get a stronger housing safety net for everyone in our community.

I am looking forward to the discussion and the Q&A on housing. The NDP platform is committing to the Universal Basic Income starting with persons with disability. We need to get housing, and we need to get people onto a basic income. Thank you again for the invite.

Panel Questions

1.Housing

British Columbia is experiencing a crisis in affordable, wheelchair accessible housing, which has led to invisible homelessness for people with disabilities who struggle to sustain themselves in, inappropriate and unsafe housing. Accessible units, when they do become available, are often unaffordable for people with disabilities and these units revert to able bodied tenants and are lost to the pool of scarce, accessible housing.

If your party is elected, what will you do to immediately solve the affordability issue? Can the Federal Government supplement the individual floating rent subsidy program that is administered by the Provincial Government?

Can there be a pool of federal funds available to non-profit and co-op housing providers to provide subsidies for wheelchair accessible units?

Felix Kongyuy:

I agree, as the Green Party has already stated in 2019, we expect to work with the provinces to improve on rent to own programs, and rent subsidies. This is something we need to work together with the provinces because that will help a lot of people to enter the housing market.

Also, we would refocus the mandate of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Development to ensure that more co-ops are built, and that a lot of houses are built in areas where people need them. We will also ensure that we restore incentives that would encourage developers as well to build more affordable housing communities and rental units. We will also crack down on money laundering, which is something that has been driving the prices which we have right now, and, in that way, we ensure that a lot of people who are being kept out of the market right now can have access to affordable housing.

This is a crisis that was created, and it has been around for a very long time. We have heard all the talks about unaffordable housing for a very long time, but I think that the Green Party's platform will definitely ensure that we support renters and at the same time, refocus the Mandate of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Development.

It is key, because we can provide, we can talk about all the good things that we want to do but it is very essential that we understand that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Development is really important, it plays an essential role in accessibility, and also to support people who will need accessible housing.

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

I believe, as all of you do, that affordable housing is one of the most pressing issues facing Canadians, and of course for people with disabilities. This crisis is even more dire due to lack of availability of accessible, affordable housing. Over the years I have worked within my community to bring together Housing Partners and the city CMHC non-profits and developers to spark conversations and build relationships that have led, and continue to lead, to exciting housing initiatives.

As part of our platform, we are increasing funding to help affordable housing providers buy land and build buildings and bring co-op housing to more communities and do critical repairs within this program. It is exciting because housing for persons with disabilities are a priority for this funding.

We have also launched our National Housing Plan, which has a goal of helping 530,000 Canadian families with housing needs and reducing chronic homelessness by half over the next decade, and this plan includes a focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable populations including persons with disabilities again.

In terms of affordability, one of the purposes of the Canada disability benefit will be to put money directly into the hands of Canadians with disabilities to help pay for rent and groceries and other monthly expenses and while this does not create housing, it will help you afford housing, and it is a piece of the puzzle.

In terms of subsidizing any provincial rent subsidy program this is exactly why we need to work with the provinces and talk to them as we negotiate and implement the Canada Disability Benefit because it is the kind of program that we could potentially partner on so I am so excited about all of this. Thanks.

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

This is one of the most pressing issues and certainly at this election is the affordable, accessible housing and we know that over the last almost 40 years this has been left to the market. This has been left to the market to determine that we would get affordable housing, it is just not happening in this market, so we need to correct the market.

We cannot do that alone, so of course the NDP is committed to taking speculation out of the market. The NDP is committed to making sure that we are not encouraging home flipping, but that we are encouraging homes for homes, and the NDP is also committed to 500,000 units of new affordable housing.

The biggest thing that we can do here is to get the Federal Government involved in affordable housing. We need to have the Feds as partners, but we also need to have the not-for-profits in the communities as partners, and the Provincial Governments as partners. As a city Councillor I can say that it has been difficult to get partners to the table. It has been difficult to get corporate partners to get involved in a meaningful amount of supportive housing and accessible housing.

We have had to use a bit of a carrot approach, but that it is not going to solve this problem. BC Provincial Government; we need to get a great partnership going with them. We need to get lots of NGO's [non-government organization] and not for profits we have in our community, like working with Vancouver Resource Society, which they very recently received some units, but it is certainly not enough.

I want to just speak a little bit about stable purpose-built rental housing as well. This is an area that in my community we are really struggling with because we're looking at redevelopment and gentrification at a speed that is far too rapid for the community. We are losing a lot of stable purpose-built rental, some purpose-built rental that has already been rent renovated or has been retrofit for accessibility. This is a real problem in our community.

Conservative Party, Likky Lavji . Unfortunately, we received a late message from Mr. Lavji that he was forced to cancel, and he sent his regrets. He sent his answer to this question

Affordable housing is an important issue to all Canadians and those with disabilities need extra support to also ensure the home is accessible. One of the issues is we are not building enough homes to keep up with Canada's growing population. This is a big part of why homes are getting harder and harder for Canadians to afford. The Canada Recovery Plan lays out details about how we will address the high cost of buying and / or renting a home.

Implement our plan to build one million homes in the next three years. Review the extensive real estate portfolio of the federal government – the largest property owner in the country with over 37,000 buildings – and release at least 15% for affordable homes. Build more homes near publicly funded transit.

Encourage foreign investment in affordable purpose-built rental housing for Canadians. Stabilize the real estate market by increasing the number of homes being built and addressing unfair and corrupt practices that have driven up prices, such as money laundering. Address the soaring cost of renting a home by partnering with municipalities and the private sector to bring new rental units into the market.

To stop and reverse the inflationary impacts of foreign buyers and speculation in the housing market, we will ensure that housing in Canada is truly for Canadian citizens and residents first.

2.Home Support Funding

People with disabilities rely on disability supports including home supports, which are administered through the provincial government. Provincial funding has been shrinking and is becoming increasingly difficult for people to get adequate support. Individualized funding like the Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL) program has proven to be the best vehicle to deliver disability supports but it is still very hard to access.

What will your party do to ensure that the transfer payments provided to BC will stipulate adequate assessment of hours and financial rates per hour, which would include community participation as well as create parity and enable individualized funded employers to pay workers a comparable rate to those employed by Health Authorities, care homes and agencies?

Will your party support a comprehensive Federal-Provincial and Territorial disability supports strategy in order for people who receive home support through individualized funding to get sufficient hours to allow them to participate in community as full citizens?

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

First of all, I am going to address your last question first, because I believe that this kind of comprehensive Fed, Province, Territory and Disability Support strategy is exactly what Canada needs, and I think that is where our negotiations on the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) with the provinces are going to lead.

I think it is time well overdue, time to think differently about the interrelationship between the supports and services that provinces offer. I think we should decouple income support from other types of supports so that these supports are not necessarily lost when a person gets a job, because the reality is in many provinces persons with disabilities cannot take work because it would disqualify them from the vital supports, such as transportation, PharmaCare, personal support workers or assistive devices.

Conversations with the provinces about the Canada Disability Benefits have already begun, and I have met with Provincial Ministers and made it very clear that Provincial Benefits and supports cannot be clawed back because people are getting the CDB. I have also highlighted the importance of using this opportunity to reconfigure our provincial systems.

I also agree that Individualized Funding is the best way to provide disability supports, and this issue is directly related to the availability of personal support workers, and the ability to pay competitive wages, and that is why as part of our platform, we are committing to train and hire 50,000 new personal support workers, and we will ensure that there is equitable access to these workers, and this absolutely means building this requirements into our agreements with the Provinces.

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

I agree fully with the autonomy and the autonomy to have access to funds for your caregivers and I also agree so much with collaborating patients, caregivers, Provincial and Territory Governments to develop national standards for home care and long-term care, and we want that to be regulated by the same principles as the Canadian Health Act and have enforcement of that.

By doing so, the New Democratic Government will legally protect access to home care and ensure a consistent quality of care costs across the country. We know over the pandemic that we have seen how important it is to have access to care in your home, and the NDP government is definitely committed to that.

Response by Felix Kongyuy:

I agree, I think that is something that can be done working together with the provinces and is the only solution that we have right now since incentives have started and that is something I am definitely going to support, and also the Green Party thinks that it is time for us to increase the budget for most of the support which have been providing for persons with a disability because it has not been enough.

What we have right now is still negatively impacting people and is making it very, very difficult for some of them to access programs in the community. As someone who has worked with, and run, some of those funds as well, in Delta and Richmond and Surrey, I understand the need for them to have adequate funding and support, and that is something that I will be working day and night to ensure that their needs are my priority, if I am sent to order.

3. Triage, Human Rights during a Crisis

The pandemic has highlighted the inequities that continue to plague Canada when it comes to people with disabilities and seniors. As a nation, we are judged by how we treat those with vulnerabilities during difficult times and it appears that Canada has failed miserably in this regard. Triage policies and guidelines with respect to health care in all provinces, including British Columbia, during the past year has reinforced the reality that people with disabilities and their lives do not matter when there is a crisis and have lower value than other Canadians.

If elected, how will your government ensure that all Canadians, including people with disabilities, seniors, and other vulnerable groups, are equally valued when it comes to health care in our country and that Canada abides by international standards of equity and human rights?

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

The NDP is going to uphold the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and strengthen the Accessibility Act. We know that the NDP is deeply committed to correcting some of the flaws that are in the Accessibility Act, and it still needs to be fixed in regard to enforcement. We know over this pandemic that many vulnerable people have had to advocate for themselves with the lack of enforcement and did not have the resources available to them to even do that advocacy work.

There are too many barriers that continue to exist for Canadians living with disabilities and it is time to take action to change that. People and families that live with disabilities deserve equality, accessibility, and inclusion. It is time for us to get serious about equity and about supporting persons living with disabilities.

Jagmeet Singh is going to immediately introduce a basic guaranteed livable income to raise persons living with a disability out of poverty. They are going to work on fixing the Accessibility Act and work to approve accessibility including making standards more enforceable and this is key enforcement by expanding and improving employment programs, and by improving access to essentials like prescription drugs, affordable housing that we talked about earlier, and quality home care. Also adding the autism spectrum disorder, national strategy is what Jagmeet Singh and his team will be working on.

Felix Kongyuy:

Yes, the Green Party is also, as well, very, very passionate about this topic and I think that the Green Party has been very clear that we will call on the UN Convention of Human Rights and will ensure that the system is fixed. We will ensure that we will work with other parties to ensure that the Universal Health Care Plan is implemented in Canada and persons with disabilities and seniors are fully supported.

We will also ensure that the basic income will be introduced; the Green Party has been talking about this for a very long time now. If you have been reading our platform you'll see that basic income will be implemented for persons with disability and some of the incentives which they get from the government will be tax free, that they get themselves supported.

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

The pandemic revealed the gaps and barriers and discrimination in our health care system but so many of us in the disability community have known were there for years. In fact, I was actually motivated to create our Government of Canada COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group in part by what we saw going on around the world in terms of the triage policies and access to healthcare and we knew we had to dig in.

As much as we could on the Federal side, we also saw what was happening across the country on the Health Minister side and I wrote to the provinces, spoke to the provinces, and the Prime Minister spoke to Premiers to insist that they allow us to support personnel in health care facilities. We spoke out very loudly against discriminatory triage policies and we highlighted the need to support all forms of congregate living.

There is so much more to be done in health care and we are absolutely committed to addressing these issues. We have moved to a Human Rights based approach to Disability Inclusion, but we are not there with everything. We are moving from a medical or charity model and it is important that we are taking in human rights commitments and obligations into our measures and our path forward.

We are committed in our platform to putting a disability lens on government decision making, this will ensure that dollars we invest in health care do not perpetuate discrimination or exclusion, and to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to mental health supports and of course what I have already mentioned about personal support workers, but fundamentally will be remained focused on ensuring equitable and dignified access to health care. We have to move forward for everyone. I am absolutely committed, and I think we have the tools to do that for people with disabilities.

4. Accessibility Canada Act

The Accessibility Canada Act applies to the built environment, information and communications technology, procurement and transportation for areas under federal jurisdiction but it falls short in its ability to be effective in enabling full participation.

How will your party strengthen this Act? What compliance and strong enforcement procedures, and accessible, communications complaint mechanism will you put in place?

Felix Kongyuy:

I think we will work to strengthen the Act, and the first thing that we need to do is to ensure that there is a reporting system, which is helping us to eventually collect data and see what is not working right now. We are sure that what we are addressing in this act is appropriately implemented.

Also, transportation regulations should be looked into. Those are areas that we look at in the Green Party and it will be necessary for us if we want to kind of improve the Accessibility Act. We will also put in place a commission that will review what has been previously done in the past, and looking at the future that will advise us with the other parties and partners involved like non-profit to ensure that it is appropriately implemented.

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

I do not think you will be surprised that I disagree slightly with how you framed it. It is early days for this law, but I believe that the Accessible Canada Act is the most important advancement in Disability Rights since the Charter. It very intentionally recognized this Canada's Human Rights framework, including the

Charter of Human Rights Act and the UN Convention, this is now how Accessibility is Legally framed in our country.

Most importantly, as good as our Human Rights System is for the most part, it kicks in after discrimination has happened and I can tell you I live this frustration as a Human Rights Lawyer, and the Accessible Canada Act (ACA) fundamentally changes this by putting in place a proactive systematic approach to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility, and by putting the onus on government.

The ACA came into force in July of 2019 and in just over two years, a lot of work has been done, particularly since we have been in a global pandemic for the most of it. Accessible Standards Canada has been set up with a Board of more than 50% persons with disabilities. It set up Technical Committees for its first four standards, plain language, outdoor spaces, emergency regress and employments. It provides funding for Accessibility and Research.

The first set of regulations under the Act are set to come into force at the beginning of next year, and we are in the process of hiring the Chief Accessibility Officer and the Accessibility Commissioner. In terms of compliance, we have tools within this law to do inspections to make production and compliance orders to make violations public.

There is a complaint system in the law where complaints generally go to the Accessibility Commissioner, but there is also a “No Wrong Door” policy, where it does not matter to whom you complain, your complaint will get where it needs to go. We are always looking at ways to strengthen the activist system, our platform commits us to timely and ambitious implementation of the ACA.

The next step is the harmonization of Accessibility Standards across Canada. Because we do not want the experience of accessibility to be different depending on if you walk into a building or a company that is Federally or Provincially regulated; banks or Credit Unions are Provincial, we need to make sure your experience, the day to day experiences, is accessible and consistent.

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

This Accessibility Canada Act is so important and I am going to have to say, I wish we were not in an election period right now. I wish we were working on this; it is so important. We can do so much more to make Canada an inclusive and barrier free place and as a New Democrat I am committed. We are committed to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to strengthen the Accessibility Act to cover all federal agencies equally, and have the power to make it enforceable, this is where we were. It is about enforcement it is about having to not having to self advocate. We need to fund it properly, have timely implementation and it is about accountability; we can say that we are going to do it.

The New Democrats are advocating for timelines and funding for enforcement, and to have this Act happen on the ground, that is what we are committed to, with the NDP.

5. Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)

Bill C-35 is an Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada Disability Benefit as a supplement to existing federal and provincial supports and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act. Canadians with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty than those without disabilities and millions of people are counting on the proposed federal disability benefit.

Do you support the CDB as a way of reducing poverty experienced by people with disabilities? If so, will the benefit raise the income of Canadians with disabilities above the disability poverty line, which takes into consideration the additional costs associated with disability?

How would you ensure that the majority of people on the CDB design team are people with disabilities?

Response by Carla Qualtrough:

Yes of course, I was the one who introduced, Bill C-35 in the House of Commons. 100% of this is a way to lift hundreds of 1000s of people out of poverty. This is absolutely about poverty reduction, as you said the poverty rate of working age Canadians with disabilities, it is twice that of Canadians without disabilities. It is actually 22%, which is just shameful.

No one in our country should be living in poverty, which is why we are committing again in our platform to introduce this Legislation, and implement the Canada Disability Benefit, and I completely agree as well that the benefit has to take into consideration the additional costs associated with disability.

The most important work that we need to do is ensuring that provinces don't claw back this benefit and ensuring that other supports and services are not impacted. That is what keeps me awake at night about this benefit, because the goal of this benefit is to provide financial security and make people better off; not to give money to the provinces.

As I have said, my hope is to provoke an overhaul of Provincial disability support systems through the CDB in the conversations with the provinces, but most importantly, we need to make sure people are better off, and not impacted and never mind worse off.

Another reason we created C-35 as a framework piece of Legislation is to ensure that people with lived experience contribute to design and parameters of this benefit like our consultations with the Accessible Canada Act, we are going to ensure that there is fulsome and meaningful participation, and that has already started consultations and discussions with the provinces have started. We are continuing to do the work.

It is so exciting but the short answer, yes!

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

There is a bit of a common theme that is coming out today and this is around partnerships. Whether it is partnerships for not-for-profits or partnerships with the province and certainly this is another space where we need to be close.

By working closely with community, not-for-profits on the ground and also with the Provincial Government to help tackle this unacceptable rate of poverty among Canadians living with disabilities and ensure that everyone has the chance to thrive and live in dignity, the NDP will expand Income Security Programs to ensure Canadians living with a disability have a guaranteed livable income.

This is work that the New Democrats will get to work immediately on to deliver it starting with persons that live with a disability and seniors, and in time the New Democrats will expand their income security programs to ensure everyone in Canada has access to a guaranteed livable basic income. Just on ensuring the majority of people on the CBD design team are people with disabilities I know in my work as a City Councillor we tend to be very limited in who gets access to those roundtables and who gets access to have a voice.

This is an area that the NDP is committed to; to widen that voice of input from the community so that you can see yourself in all of the committees. That is definitely something on top of mind for the NDP; to make a wide approach to community input going forward.

Felix Kongyuy:

Thank you very much; the short answer is yes. The Green Party is very committed to this, and the Green Party will ensure that basic income is introduced, and we make this permanent so it's something that they will definitely have in the future.

Also, we will partner with the provinces and ensure that there are possibilities for that group to be represented in most of the decisions that we make, and we are going to ensure that some of the disability tax credit be converted to become refundable credits so they could access extra funding.

6. MAID

The Act states in 3.1 (g) that medical practitioners or nurse practitioner provides medical assistance in dying to a person whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, they “...*must ensure that the person has been informed of the means available to relieve their suffering, including, where appropriate, counselling services, mental health and disability support services, community services and palliative care and has been offered consultations with relevant professionals who provide those services or that care*”; before moving forward with MAID.

There is much concern that just being informed is inadequate and too many people with disabilities will make their decisions based on, for example, a lack of accessible housing and adequate home support, believing that their only option is a care facility.

What mechanism will your party put into this system, which would enforce a fast-track system to provide those personal supports, thereby enabling the individual to make a MAID decision after having had the opportunity of lived experience?

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

We talked earlier about just how this pandemic has shined a light on the inequities that exist and certainly for persons that live with disabilities and those that have been so deeply impacted and for the NDP it is deeply disappointing that they have still failed to deal with the complex medical ethical and legal issues involved with medical assistance in dying.

We need to protect vulnerable people without creating unfair barriers for people seeking access to MAID. A special joint committee on medical assistance in dying was appointed in May with a mandate to review the provisions of the criminal code relating to medical assistance in dying, and their application. This includes reviewing the issues you have identified, and instead of calling a snap election which is what we did, it would have been great for the person to proceed with the important work on this.

The NDP is looking forward to reconstituting the special Joint Committee, resuming its mandatory review of Canada's medical assistance in dying Legislation as soon as possible following this election, and also to follow through with that commitment on universal basic income for persons living with disabilities and seniors right away.

Felix Kongyuy:

I think that this whole issue is very sensitive. For the greens, what we have seen is that there is lack of guidance in this program. That is something that we want, that there should be definitely a commission that sits down and reviews what is out there because people need adequate guidance and instruction in order to implement it.

That red tape should be reduced, and that is something that we think that the Green supports, and there should be more clarity in it. Right now, if you look at that law it is a very, very complex law and the bureaucracy which is involved in it created more and more problems even for those who deliver the services.

There ought to be some clarity and guidance provided and that is something that the Green think we can reinforce. This election was uncalled for; I think the time should have been spent to address some of these things which were left in the mandate that the people gave to the party in power, but right now we are here so if elected, this is something I will ensure that I work really hard to be sure that there is transparency, there is adequate guidance, and there is adequate support as well for service providers when implementing any of this.

Response by Carla Qualtrough:

Let me first start by acknowledging what a deeply personal issue this is for everyone and for persons with disabilities, it is existential. The provision and expansion of MAID has been directed by the courts, no political party ever ran on a mandate to implement MAID, it has been driven by the courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada.

How I have seen my role in this file is twofold; first to ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard on this issue, leaning in on national organizations having town halls, getting the Ministers of Health and justice in front of groups representing people with disabilities and people with lived experience. Second, to ensure that it is well understood and clearly stated in the law that this is a matter of human rights.

This is a matter of both the personal autonomy side which gets spoken, and it is also about our equality rights and the inherent equal value of every person, and sometimes those rights are at odds, and this is one of those examples.

The specific section of the law that you mentioned is a new safeguard put into the law to obligate healthcare professionals to explore the kind of social circumstances that might be underlying and MAID requires three things that the individual be informed of services at the end.

The individual being offered consultations with professionals who provide these services, and that the person and their Medical Practitioner have to discuss these measures and agree that the individual has seriously considered that. In doing this, importantly this Legislation purposely recognizes the significant role that social, mental health, disability community, support services play in the full realization of equality rights. This is important because the next step is to connect the dots and boldly address the underlying systems at play here.

We have already talked a little bit about the engagement piece but for people to have a choice; they have to see that they can make a good life for themselves, and if that is a life with options. I think you might be getting at obligating medical practitioners or somebody to go a little further. Maybe we should provide

access to these services because by providing these services is informing and discussing them and is enough. The important questions will be addressed as we move forward. We are going to keep working on this and I believe that I am completely with you on this and the importance.

Conservative Party, Likky Lavji Unfortunately, we received a late message from Mr. Lavji that he was forced to cancel, and he sent his regrets. He sent his answer to this question.

Conservatives will reinstate the ten-day waiting period to make sure Canadians do not make this decision at their lowest point. The requirement for two fully independent witnesses to ensure that a vulnerable person is not being forced or coerced will also be restored.

A Conservative Government will also require any discussion of MAID only occur if raised by the patient. This will prevent healthcare workers from suggesting it to someone who is not seeking it. Canadians living with disabilities regularly report being in situations where MAID is suggested or pushed on them and report how this undermines their sense of security in healthcare environments.

The provision in Bill C-7 allowing MAID for those with mental health challenges will be repealed by a Conservative Government. We will also require any patient receiving MAID to be informed/reminded immediately before receiving it that they will be given the opportunity to withdraw consent.

Canada's Conservatives will require healthcare practitioners approving MAID requests (MAID assessors) to examine and consult directly with the patient before approving the request. Such health practitioners will be required to complete MAID assessor training to ensure full awareness of, and compliance, with laws and best practices around MAID.

Questions and Answers:

Q. Has your party considered how Canada can work to encourage immigration either permanent or temporary program for Foreign Workers to work as caregivers? This is a really important one for those that are trying to get caregivers.

Felix Kongyuy:

Yes, the Green Party is committed to fast tracking and supporting those who are here and to ensuring that Canada brings in caregivers and individuals who are specialized in the medical field in Canada, so that we have better supply of professionals who can assist individuals with a disability. This is something that the Green Party has been committed to for a very long time, and we would ensure that we fast track some of those applications which are right now, backlogged, and having challenges from the government.

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

We have started this by creating a different track for caregivers and support workers who come from other countries, both on a Temporary Foreign Worker Program basis but more importantly in a fast-tracked path to permanent residents.

During the Pandemic one of the exciting things we did was a pilot in Montreal, but I look forward to rolling this out. Basically, almost give personal support workers, Angel Status within the Immigration system knowing how hard they work and how they are the backbone of so much of our Health Care System.

That is the plan for our government moving forward is to fast track it make it simple, recognizing the importance of the value of the work that is being done. Get rid of the fees, it is just so onerous, and it has been for so long. I think we have taken a tiny step, but we need to move forward, quicker, and more boldly.

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

The NDP has always been committed to workers and it is no different from foreign workers. We want to keep families together as well. We would like to be able to have the opportunity for when immigrants come to do caregiving, that they are also able to bring their families with them and to expand that network for them so that they have a network as well; a compassionate, safety network for them.

The second thing is around recognizing credentials. Many experienced medical workers and people that work in support come to us, and they cannot work because they need additional credentials and cannot afford to take the testing and do those tests in those courses. We are committed to that.

Thirdly, just wanted to talk about salaries for support workers and NDP's commitment to make sure that everybody has a livable income, thank you.

Q. We need a Federal Mandate to increase Automatic Door Openers.

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

That is the exact kind of standard that we are working through the Accessible Standards Canada to develop, whether it is ATM machines or automatic doors. The idea is people should not have to file Human Rights complaint every single time they want to get in somewhere. If we create a standard for the building code nationally through accessible standards that mandates automatic door openers, it is up to governments to get right in. Absolutely, this will be on the list, I do not know where it is on the order I must confess, because COVID has changed the order a little bit but, absolutely.

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

I really like this question because it highlights what we were talking about before. Again, just partnerships between the different levels of government, and also with not-for-profits in the community. Different provinces having different regulations. I think that when we are talking about Human Rights, that it needs to be an overarching commitment that does not come based on if you are in BC or Alberta. Also, some of this even falls on municipalities, so it would be municipality by municipality. Basic human rights; removing barriers needs to be a Federal Jurisdiction and we need to get on this.

Felix Kongyuy:

I totally agree. I think there ought to be a National Standard which is addressing this whole issue of accessibility, because it is a human right, and it is making it challenging for a lot of persons with disabilities to access services, to access a lot of recreational programs in other places, and it is kind of somehow discriminatory. I do not understand why this should even be something that they should be asking for, this is a Human Rights issue that we should be doing already.

We should be doing everything in our powers, as part of the government, to ensure that everyone can access services or buildings that technology is already here. That is how I look at it is just that we have to stand up and do it and that is something I will be fighting for if sent to order.

Q. Considering there are persons with disabilities who cannot be vaccinated. Will there be a Federal protection, that does not discriminate against unvaccinated people with disabilities?

Councillor Bonita Zarillo:

Definitely, there are people that cannot get vaccinated. At this point in time it seems like those that cannot get vaccinated, those are the most vulnerable are having to limit their access to society, getting out to do grocery shopping, getting out to see family they are having to limit it.

Absolutely I think that we need to turn this one upside down and we need to talk about what the rest of society can do to protect the most vulnerable in our community. I know right now that is Provincial Jurisdiction. We are taking on the NDP and we are talking about mandatory vaccinations for Federally regulated workers and those that work with vulnerable populations. For sure, that needs to happen, but we need to have a really serious conversation about how added layers of barriers have come into place with vaccinations for those that cannot be vaccinated.

Felix Kongyuy:

I agree with her on that, I think that we need to look at proactive ways of looking at it. We work with service providers, or we work with provincial partners to see how we can make it easy for them because this is a kind of barrier that we are creating in our society for a community that has already been hit hard by COVID and all the other challenges.

I think this is something that we all need to put our heads together and find a solution either by working with the service providers and the provinces or looking at ways that we deliver services that can make it much easier for them.

Honourable Carla Qualtrough:

I have been worried from the beginning, since COVID came to Canada, about the efforts we put in place to protect the majority and the impact that was having on different minorities, and in our case, people with disabilities.

I frankly think that there is a Human Rights Complaint waiting to happen on this. I think that we already have a duty to accommodate. I think that exists, it is reactive, and we need to make it proactive, but absolutely. I have said, the Prime Minister has said, if you are immunocompromised, health related or other and you cannot get vaccinated, then we have to, we must and we will put into a system that kind of in a dignified way ensures that you can have access to services and programs.

Closing Remarks

Thank you to all of the candidates for joining us today. I know I speak for everyone when I say we all appreciate your time in answering the questions, and we had a lot of questions for you, so we appreciate the thought that you put into answering them.

You have given us all much food for thought. The issues surrounding people with disabilities that affect their current lives and the future of people with disabilities, and your platform to address them is critical.

On behalf of everyone, thank you.

Upcoming Pathway Meeting

Date & Time

Wednesday, September 29th, 1:30pm until 3:30pm

Agenda

1. **Technology for Living with Taylor Danielson**
 - a. **Simon Cox Student Design Competition 2022**
2. **Technology for Living Peer Updates with Nancy Lear**
 - a. **Accessible Nature Wellness Program**
 - b. **Peer Chat**
 - c. **Peers on Pages**
3. **BC Human Rights: New Legislation around Vaccination & Job Requirements, with Hilary Currie, IFRC**
4. **Ministry of Health update with the Association of CSIL Employers**
5. **CSIL Employee Benefit Package Presentation with Vantage Corporate Benefits Advisory**
 - a. **Vantage have developed a comprehensive benefit package, specifically tailored for CSIL Employers and employees!**
 - b. **The plan is flexible for employers who have one or seven employees.**
 - c. **Shawn Perryman and Jordan Armstrong will outline the available benefits details which include Extended Health Plans (including prescription drugs, massage/chiro/physio), Dental, Life Insurance and Long Term Disability options etc.**
 - d. **Offering benefits is a great way to attract and retain quality and loyal employees. A tax free benefit program vs. a salary raise can be a much more efficient way of compensating your staff.**

Peers are reminded that if they have a topic idea for a future meeting, to please send an email to pathways@ifrcsociety.org

Pathways To Independence Peer Group Meeting Notes and pertinent documents are uploaded to <https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>

The Pathways To Independence Meeting is in partnership with Technology for Living, whose Technical Team, headed by Ean Price, successfully ensure that peers connect to the meeting from across the province.

THANK YOU EVERYONE, FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE MEETING!