SUMMER 2023

Woman Brings
Discrimination
Case Against City

Human Rights Office Rewrite the Rules Campaign

transition

The Magazine of Disability Alliance BC

BC's Legal System

Is it Working for People with Disabilities?



Being there for people we care about is one of the most gratifying things in life.

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Wherever you are in your planning, let us know if you're considering a legacy gift to Disability Alliance BC (DABC). We are glad to support your decision every step of the way.

Your Planned Giving support to DABC will protect the dignity and independence of people living with a disability.

Why Consider a Planned Gift?

There are many benefits to Planned Giving. By writing down your wishes, you will have increased peace of mind and control over your finances. You can also provide a significant future donation without reducing your income today.

A gift in your Will to DABC will help us to be here in the future for those who need us.

Tax Savings

You can realize significant tax savings with Planned Giving. For example, stocks, bonds and mutual funds that you may have in a Trust can be transferred through your Will to a charity and a tax receipt will be issued.

We're Here to Help

Our donors are important to us and we'll work with you to be recognized in the way that you'd prefer.

If you would like more information about Planned Giving, please contact us at 604-875-0188 or **feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org**. We will send you DABC's Planned Giving information to review with your financial planner, lawyer, family or friends.

Learn More Online

disabilityalliancebc.org

Planned Giving Brochure https://tinyurl.com/33cvw83s

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editorial

by Odette Dempsey-Caputo

People with disabilities do not have equity when it comes to access to justice.

ull and equal access to justice is a cornerstone of being a citizen.

Yet, significant barriers continue to deny people with disabilities access to fair and equitable treatment in our legal system.

We will look at some of these barriers in this Transition. And, we will look at how individuals and organizations are working to turn the tide.

The Highest Barrier

Genuine access to justice includes accessible legal information, timely attention to a legal issue, physical access to legal institutions, and last but definitely not least, affordable legal advice and representation.

However, the most pervasive legal barrier for people with disabilities is ableism.

Not only do many of us face barriers in the areas I just mentioned, there are deeply held assumptions and attitudes that inform our legal

Some of the most common legal barriers for people with disabilities are not understood or accommodated.

system that do not allow equal access to justice (see the "Rewrite the Rules" Awareness Campaign article on page 10).

Legal service providers, government workers and programs, and lawyers themselves are often entrenched in this ableism. Some of the most common legal barriers for people with disabilities are not understood or addressed.

The accommodations people require are much more varied and nuanced than ramp access to a building or a reader-friendly document.

Someone living with a mental health issue, for example, may need a particular accommodation that is different from what someone with a visual impairment needs. Someone who has a communication disability may need very different accommodation than a wheelchair user

to gain equitable access to legal information and support.

When faced with these multiple barriers, and a system that does not treat them fairly, people with disabilities sometimes give up on finding legal solutions to their often urgent concerns.

The Social Model of Disability

One way to reframe access to justice is the social model of disability.

This model sees disability arising from social barriers, not from a person's limitation or impairment. In the case of the legal system, a person's disability isn't their visual impairment, for example, but the lack of services, personnel and resources accessible to them.

It provides the rationale and momentum for dismantling any kind of barrier that deters participation and inclusion of people with a disability.

The COVID pandemic showed us that we can drastically change how we do things when we must.

The social model puts the needs of people with disabilities first, making sure all resources are available to level the legal playing field.

Individual and Systemic Changes

There are many concrete ways we could do this. Individually, for the person who struggles to leave their home, we would allow them to use videoconferencing for a legal proceeding.

For a person who develops migraines using a computer, we would allow them to appear in person.

Systemically, we could start by accommodating more people with disabilities who want to enter the legal field (please see Legal Professionals with Disabilities on page 15). More lawyers and judges with disabilities would direct how we implement justice and address ableism "from within."

The COVID pandemic showed us that we can drastically change how we do things when we must. Well, we must find ways individually and systemically to make our legal system serve and support everyone.

As the former Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin said, "The most advanced justice system in the world is a failure if it does not provide justice to the people it means to serve."

ODETTE DEMPSEY-CAPUTO HAS BEEN A LAWYER FOR OVER 15 YEARS FOCUSING ON CIVIL LITIGATION, ADMINISTRATIVE LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS. SHE SITS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF DISABILITY ALLIANCE BC AND THE CHRIS ROSE THERAPY CENTRE FOR AUTISM.

ODETTE IS A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN BAR ASSOCIATION BC BRANCH ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND COURT USER COMMITTEES, A REGULAR VOLUNTEER JUDGE FOR TRU LAW MOOT TEAMS, AND IS A REGULAR PRESENTER AT SEMINARS AND TRAINING EVENTS FOR LAWYERS AND THE PUBLIC.

Resources

Where can you go if you have questions about a legal issue? Which organizations can help if you believe you have been discriminated against? And, who is working to improve access to justice for people living with disability?

Learn about the following organizations and their one-to-one and systemic work in this Transition.

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Community Legal Assistance Society

DABC's Disability Law Clinic

The Kettle Society

Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry

Disability Alliance BC

Office of the BC Ombudsperson

disabilityalliancebc.org



DABC's Disability Law Clinic Marks Three Years

Learn about the DLC and how the team is working to expand legal access for people living with disability. I by Andrew Robb

In March 2023, the Disability Law Clinic (DLC) marked three years of operations as the first community legal clinic in BC with an exclusive focus on disability rights law.

I started the DLC in 2020, along with Salina Dewar our Advocate and Clinic Assistant. We faced many challenges setting up a brand new law office at the same time as the pandemic was starting! But, with support from DABC, we navigated an abrupt transition to remote work and then a much more gradual transition back to working from the office.

In 2021, we started to grow. We were joined by Leon Thompson who was hired as an articling student in the DLC. In 2022, we grew again, adding Margery Pazdor as our Staff Lawyer and Susan Hart as our formidable part-time Legal and Intake Assistant. We have also welcomed many law students for temporary work and volunteer placements.

Our Core Services

Our office is in Vancouver, on the lands of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Peoples, but we can assist people anywhere in the lands known as British Columbia. The DLC's services include legal information, referrals to other

LEFT TO RIGHT: LEON THOMPSON,
MARGERY PAZDOR, ANDREW ROBB, SUE
HART, SALINA DEWAR, KENNEDY POPE

legal resources, and summary legal advice in certain areas of law. The areas we focus on include:

- · Discrimination and human rights
- Accommodation in the workplace
- Financial assistance for people with disabilities, including government disability assistance and private long-term disability insurance
- Decision-making rights, in cases where people are subject to committeeship or guardianship by the Public Guardian and Trustee

We provide services directly to people with disabilities which means we cannot generally advise family members or supporters of the person whose rights are at issue, unless they have legal authority to speak on behalf of a person with a disability (e.g. a representation agreement or power of attorney).

In exceptional cases, we can represent clients in courts or tribunals, but unfortunately we don't have enough resources to represent everyone who needs assistance, even when they have a good case.

We serve over 900 people per year and our numbers continue to increase rapidly.

Disability Alliance BC disability alliancebc.org

The DLC's services include legal information, referrals to other legal resources, and summary legal advice in certain areas of law.

Outreach and Education

The DLC also has a mandate to provide public legal education. We regularly give presentations and attend panels about legal issues related to disability, for members of the public, disability advocates and lawyers.

We love talking about disability law and we welcome opportunities to do so!

When we started up, our ability to travel around the province was limited by the pandemic, but in recent months we have regularly traveled to other parts of BC to represent clients, provide public legal education or to connect with our partners.

Not Sure if We Can Help? Get in Touch

If you are a person with a disability and you have a legal issue in one of the areas we focus on, you can contact us by phone or by email. Please see the sidebar on this page for all our contact information.

We will get back to you promptly, ask for some background information, and try to get you some legal advice as soon as possible, either from one of our DLC lawyers or from other resources in the community.

For more information about how we assist people and what types of law we work on, please see our website at disability-law-clinic/



ANDREW ROBB IS THE DISABILITY LAW CLINIC'S MANAGING LAWYER SEEN HERE WITH HIS ASSISTANT PEREGRINE PICKLE.



How to Make an Appointment with Us

Call or email the DLC and leave a message.

We will contact you for an intake interview. We will ask for some details about your situation and, in some cases, specific documents we need to help you.

After the intake interview, we may schedule an appointment with one of our lawyers. Or, we may give other advice or assistance on what you should do next.

What to Do Before Your Appointment

To get the most out of your call with Clinic staff, gather any documents related to your situation beforehand, such as:

- emails, texts or letters
- contracts or agreements
- government documents
- any previous decisions by a court or tribunal
- any documents requested in your intake interview

How to Contact Us

Local 236-427-1108

Toll-free 1-800-663-1278-

lawclinic@disabilityalliancebc.org

disabilityalliancebc.org/program/disability-law-clinic/





The Right Fit is a multi-partner service designed to address the crisis in wheelchair accessible housing. We help match affordable, accessible homes and independent living supports with people who need them in the Vancouver region.

Need a Vacant Accessible Unit?

If you are a wheelchair user or an organization representing wheelchair users, please contact: Isabelle Groc, Right Fit Program Manager rightfit@disabilityalliancebc.org
https://therightfitbc.org/

Have a Vacant Accessible Unit?

If you are a housing provider in the public or private housing market, and have an accessible vacant unit, or you would like to learn more about our

Accessibility Checklist, please contact:

Dalton Finlay, Project Manager / Navigator

Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

RightFit@IFRCSociety.org

604-777-7576

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) is the Right Fit's sponsoring organization and oversees the program. The Individualized Funding Resource Centre (IFRC) is responsible for client management.

Disability Alliance BC disabilityalliancebc.org

Work Behind the Scenes at the Disability Law Clinic

Sexual Harassment Case

When she reported the sexual harassment to BC Transit officials, their response was to ban her from using handyDART unless she brought an attendant with her.

The Disability Law Clinic (DLC) is assisting a client who faced sexual harassment while using BC Transit's handyDART accessible transportation service.

The client uses a wheelchair and is especially vulnerable to harassment due to her disabilities. When she reported the sexual harassment to BC Transit officials, their response was to ban her from using handyDART unless she brought an attendant with her.

We assisted the client to file a complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal against BC Transit and the private bus company that operates the handyDART service.

BC Transit's ban on this client using the handyDART has now been lifted and the Human Rights Tribunal decided the case can proceed to a hearing. The hearing will determine whether our client is eligible for compensation and BC Transit must take steps to prevent future discrimination against people with disabilities.

You can read the Tribunal's decision here: The Complainant v. BC Transit and others, 2022 BCHRT 6 (CanLII), https://canlii.ca/t/ilvhk

Help Sheets

The DLC has also created two specialized Help Sheets that are available for download from the DABC site:

- Help Sheet 17: Long-term Disability Insurance
- Help Sheet 18: What Can You Do if You Experience Discrimination in Health Care?

#17: Long-term Disability Insurance

This Help Sheet covers:

- · What is disability insurance?
- Short-term and long-term disability insurance
- Disability insurance and government disability benefits
- · Application process
- Eligibility for benefits
- Maintaining eligibility
- · Returning to work
- Appeals, and more

#18: What Can You Do if You Experience Discrimination in Health Care?

What can you do if you believe you've been discriminated against?

We talk about some possible steps in this Help Sheet, but it's important to know that few offer the quick solution you may need around immediate diagnosis or treatment. We discuss how to:

- Talk to your practitioner
- Complain to the health authority
- File a complaint with a regulatory body
- File a human rights complaint
- Be a self-advocate
- Write to your MLA

You can find and download all our help sheets here: <u>disability-alliancebc.org/category/publications/help-sheets/</u>.



"Rewrite the Rules" Awareness Campaign

Understanding and challenging the hidden rules that perpetuate ableism in our communities. I by Martha Solomon

n the last 10 years, 43% of human rights complaints in BC have been filed about discrimination on the basis of disability, more than any other ground protected by the BC Human Rights Code.¹

However, many people across British Columbia, especially those who are not disabled, remain unaware of the impacts of ableism.

Ableism is a significant human rights issue in our province and an area of deep concern for BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC). That's why on October 4, 2022, BCOHRC launched Rewrite the Rules.

This campaign talks about systemic ableism by framing it as unwritten rules that are so deeply entrenched that we may not even notice them. By exposing these unwritten rules, the campaign aimed to highlight the ways ableism shapes all our lives, every day, in big and small ways.

Ableism in Everyday Situations

The campaign imagery emphasized everyday places—like doctors' offices, classrooms and restaurants—and emphasized the unwritten rules that create barriers for people with disabilities.

These unwritten rules create a system that affects all British Columbians, but because these rules are so baked into our daily experiences, they can be hard to identify and change.

For example, the campaign featured an image of a doctor's office to highlight how people living with complex healthcare needs can be labeled as needy or taxing on our systems. These stereotypes impact how patients with disabilities are treated, what priority they're given, and even their diagnoses and treatment choices.

We featured an image of a classroom to highlight unwritten rules in education. These rules impact where students with disabilities are able to go to school, what activities they are able to join, and what learning goals they can meet.

Another image emphasized the unwritten rules in public spaces and showed how they impact where people with disabilities can go, how they can get around and what activities they can join.

These unwritten rules create a system that affects all British Columbians, but because these rules are so baked into our daily experiences, they can be hard to identify and change.

A Province-wide Conversation

The campaign reached people in BC in a number of ways, both online and in person, and aimed to spark conversations about systemic ableism.

The campaign included murals and banners in SkyTrain stations and on bus shelters, on big screens greeting arrivals in the airport in Prince George, posters in libraries across the province, and social media ads in 12 languages. It also included in-person events developed by community partners and funded by the BCOHRC.

We Invite Your Feedback!

Though the Rewrite the Rules ad campaign has officially ended, the BCOHRC remains committed to continuing our work around human rights and disability across the province.

Transition readers are invited to continue to engage with the campaign's resources on our website. To date, more than 19,000 people have visited the site and engaged

Disability Alliance BC disability alliancebc.org

with the materials, while tens of thousands more saw the ads during their run.

We, like all people in British Columbia, have a responsibility to rewrite ableist rules and create equitable, barrier-free systems and structures that uphold and honor everyone's human rights.

BCOHRC invites feedback on this campaign and any other aspect of our work.

If you have any comments or questions about the Rewrite the Rules Campaign or the BCOHRC, please be in touch at info@bchumanrights.ca.

Or, you are welcome to call the Office at 1-844-922-6472 and leave a message. A staff member will return your call within five business days.

To learn more about the campaign, visit https://bchumanrights.ca/ rewrite-the-rules.

Please note that BCOHRC is not a service agency and does not accept or adjudicate human rights complaints. It can only provide information and referral.

¹(Source: <u>BC Human Rights Tribunal</u> Annual Reports, 2011-2021)

MARTHA SOLOMON IS EDUCATION ADVISOR WITH THE BC OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER.



About the Campaign

Rewrite the Rules was developed with support from disability advocacy organizations from all over BC, including the BC Aboriginal Network on Disability, Third Space Charity, Disability Alliance BC, Terrace and District Community Services Society, and the Victoria Disability Resource Centre.

Leaders from these organizations served on the Community Review Committee and informed the campaign by sharing their experiences. They reviewed and provided feedback throughout each phase of the campaign.

About the Office

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in our province by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. They do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring.

BC's Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term in 2019. Since then, the Office has been working to build a strong team, to listen deeply to the concerns of British Columbians, to issue policy guidance to protect vulnerable communities and to lay a human rights-based foundation for their work.



COMMISSIONER KASARI GOVENDER

Connect with DABC

About Us

Our mission is to support people with all disabilities to live with dignity, independence and as equal and full participants in the community. We champion issues impacting the lives of people with disabilities through our direct services, community partnerships, advocacy, research and publications.

Services and Programs
Our Advocacy Access Program provides one-on-one
assistance with provincial and
federal (Canada Pension Plan
Disability) income supports
and other benefits. The Disability Law Clinic provides free

legal advice to people with disabilities about human rights and discrimination. We also offer advice to people having problems with their disability benefits. Tax AID DABC helps people with disabilities living on low incomes to file their income taxes year-round. Access RDSP helps people with the Disability Tax Credit and with opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). The Right Fit Program helps to match affordable wheelchair-accessible homes in the Vancouver region with people who need them.

Our programs and projects respond to community need

and increase people's ability to participate and contribute.

Growing Partnerships
We stay connected with a large network of community organizations across BC and regularly provide them with updates about issues of importance to the disability community.

Free Publications
We publish a range of capacity-building, self-help guides and resources for advocates, in reader-friendly language.
Resources are provided free of charge, either by mail or from our website.



Become a Member

Numbers matter. The more members we have, the stronger our voice in the community.

Please become a Disability Alliance BC (DABC) member today. You can be a voting member or a non-voting member, and we welcome both individuals and groups.

I accept your invitation to join DABC and enclose my membership fee of \$15 (individuals) and \$25 (groups). I am also including a tax-deductible donation of

\$_____. (Donations over \$10 are tax deductible).

You can also become a member or donate online at: https://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/about-dabc/become-a-member.

Please return your payment/donation with this form to: DABC, 1450-605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Please check the applicable boxes:

- New membership or Renewal
- ☐ Voting Member or ☐ Non-voting Member

Voting members are people with disabilities and self-help groups where at least 50% of members have a disability.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City/Prov______Postal Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

How to Support Us

If you support our work, please consider a one-time contribution or become a monthly donor. Our monthly donors help us to create a funding base we can count on.

Please visit our Support page at <u>disabilityalliancebc.org/</u> <u>support-us</u> for ways you can give.

Thank you for helping us continue our work on behalf of people with disabilities.



Finding My Way in an Ableist Profession

I by Salina Dewar

As an aspiring lawyer, my first hint of what lay ahead of me came at age 13. When I told classmates and teachers I wanted to be a lawyer to help people, almost all of them suggested I could be "a lawyer for people with disabilities."

At the time, I shied away from that idea for two reasons. First, my understanding of human rights and injustice was broader than "just disability." Second, I felt typecast. I wanted to be recognized for my ability, my talent and my contribution, not "just" for my disability.

My acceptance into law school was the beginning of my legal education. It was also the beginning of a crash course in ableism in the legal profession.

In one class, I mentioned to another student with a disability that I feared our peers would take me less seriously because I used crutches. That student responded to the effect of, "Yeah, I should probably be using [a mobility aid], but I don't want to do the disability thing."

The amount of time I needed to perform some tasks became a concern, too. I discovered that I needed more time to process and respond to information, particularly if I was under pressure. I learned later that this was an effect of my disability.

I was granted extra time to write some of my school exams and later to write the bar exams required to practice law. I had some difficulty finding articles. This is the year you work under the guidance of a practicing lawyer, leading up to being permitted to practice law.

In 2004, I brought up my disability during interviews for articles because I wanted to address any concerns head-on. During one interview with a pair of male lawyers, the older lawyer brushed off the disability, saying he wasn't worried about it.

His younger colleague chortled nervously and said something like, "Yeah, maybe it'll help us win more because the judge will take pity on you." His colleague elbowed him. I was both amused and horrified. I knew I would never work there.

Eventually, I practiced for over two years in an office that placed some weight on how much billable time you could generate. This created significant stress for me because almost everything I did seemed to take longer. I constantly felt the need to shave time off clients' bills because I wasn't sure how much time another lawyer would take.

Court appearances were nervewracking, too, because of the pressure not only to get it right but to appear perfect. I often brought a cheat-sheet I could refer to, to make sure I did not forget key points. I once had a judge say, "It will be better when you let go of the paper." I think this was genuinely intended as encouragement, but fear and even



My acceptance into law school was the beginning of my formal education. It was also the beginning of a crash course in ableism in the legal profession.

shame kept me from explaining why I had notes.

In 2013, I switched to non-practice status to focus on my well-being and on finding my way to meaningful, law-related work in the non-profit sector (I'm a member of the Law Society, but I don't currently practice law). In 2016, I joined DABC and moved over to our new Disability Law Clinic (DLC) in 2020.

In a recent conversation with an established practicing lawyer who has a disability, I learned that some BC courts have removed the option of virtual hearings for simple matters—an option widely used during

"Yeah, maybe it'll help us win more because the judge will take pity on you." His colleague elbowed him. I was both amused and horrified. I knew I would never work there.

the pandemic. This lawyer has been denied requests for virtual hearings or asked for a great deal of personal information to allow the accommodation, even when the other party has no concerns about it.

We often look to courts and tribunals when we have been wronged, but there is a great deal of ableism within the legal profession itself. I am determined to raise awareness about this ableism, so it can be addressed.

In the meantime, my experience navigating a rather rigid profession and the changes in the impact of my disability give me additional insight into the struggles, fears and frustrations of many of our clients at the DLC.

I no longer feel typecast. Instead, I thrive living as, and working with and for, people with disabilities many of whom are also members of other marginalized communities. It is both a pleasure and a privilege to do this work.

SALINA DEWAR, BA, LLB, IS LAW CLINIC ASSISTANT AND ADVOCATE WITH DABC'S DISABILITY LAW CLINIC.

Legal Professionals with Disability

by Odette Dempsey-Caputo

We need more lawyers and judges who have lived experience of disability. Without that experience, they may not be able to understand their clients with disabilities or help remove the barriers to justice they face.

In order to genuinely provide access to justice, we need legal professionals with disabilities helping to make policy decisions.

Some key issues come to mind:

- People living with disability are severely underrepresented in the legal profession. In 2019, only <u>2.16%</u> of lawyers identified as having a disability, while <u>25%</u> of British Columbians identify as having a disability.
- People with disabilities who do enter the legal profession are often forced to use strategies to cope with the prevailing attitude of our profession that "lawyers with disabilities do not belong."
- Lawyers with disabilities experience burnout from using these strategies to "fit" into traditional legal workplaces.
 As a result, some leave an area of law or exit the <u>legal</u> <u>profession entirely</u>.
- Accommodations for lawyers with a disability that could create more inclusive workplaces include: flexible work options, more comprehensive medical leave benefits, modified work responsibilities, integration of assistive technologies, and the creation of trauma-informed inclusive and accessible office spaces.





Changing BC's Outdated Mental Health Act I by Kevin Love

Why are detention, force, and coercion still the centrepiece of BC's mental health system?

Content Warning: This article looks at the treatment of people who are involuntarily committed to mental health facilities and may be disturbing to some readers.

The number of people being detained under BC's *Mental Health Act* is skyrocketing.

Back in 2005, <u>roughly 12,000</u> people were taken involuntarily to hospital. By 2021, that number had more than doubled to over 25,000.

In that same period, the number of voluntary admissions has stayed roughly the same and, in fact, has decreased accounting for population growth. Far more people are now admitted involuntarily under BC's *Mental Health Act* than voluntarily.

What Happens if You Are Involuntarily Admitted?

Being involuntarily admitted under the *Mental Health Act* has serious consequences beyond getting locked up in hospital. Involuntary patients lose all ability to control their own psychiatric health care. The hospital can force psychiatric treatment without any meaningful assessment of the person's actual ability to make decisions.

Even people who are eventually released to live independently outside the hospital on extended leave have no right to make their own decisions. Involuntary patients also have no right to involve a friend, family member or appointed representative if they do need help making psychiatric treatment decisions.

The Mental Health Act explicitly allows hospitals to enforce compliance using discipline. Physical restraints that tie the individual to a bed are frequently used to deliver medications. Although courts have ruled that solitary confinement in prisons is largely unconstitutional, it is still routinely used in our hospitals.

Who Provides Oversight?

One might assume that rigorous legal oversight exists to supervise this use of force. It doesn't.

The Mental Health Review Board (MHRB), tasked with reviewing involuntary admissions, has no power to review non-consensual medical treatment or the use of force by hospitals. The MHRB only decides whether the person must remain detained.

The hospital can force psychiatric treatment without any meaningful assessment of the person's actual ability to make decisions.

The Community Legal Assistance Society's Mental Health Law Program (MHLP) can provide legal help to people trying to get released from hospital, but there is very little that MHLP or anyone else can offer to people who experience forced psychiatric treatment or solitary confinement while detained.

Disability Alliance BC disability alliancebc.org

The Mental Health Act allows a detained person to request a second medical opinion, but this is rarely a useful option. A second medical opinion has nothing to do with whether the person should be allowed to participate in their own treatment. It only asks another doctor to make a recommendation about what treatment will be forced on the person.

The lack of legal options to challenge a hospital's use of force is a big problem because hospitals regularly ignore even the limited safeguards that do exist to protect the rights of involuntary patients. A 2019 Ombudsperson report found that hospitals regularly do not fill out the forms required under the Mental Health Regulation to document why the person is being detained, what treatment is being forced on them, and that the individual has been notified of their right to challenge the detention.

Are Force and Coercion Effective?

And are these methods even working? Is our increasing reliance on detention, force and coercion keeping people healthy and creating safer communities?

Despite the mounting evidence that a health system based on force and coercion doesn't work, BC continues to double down on involuntary care. All the while, voluntary care and services remain inaccessible and out of reach to those who desperately want them.

BC's reliance on detention, force, and coercion is even spreading beyond the *Mental Health Act*. The BC Supreme Court recently <u>reviewed the case</u> of an Indigenous woman with disabilities who was detained for 11 months under the Adult Guardianship Act without legal authority, review or compliance basic under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

She was locked up because the health authority thought other people were abusing her. In other words, they locked her up for being a victim.

We Must Chart a New Course

BC literally stands alone in the country, clinging stubbornly to a regressive mental health model that has long been abandoned by every other jurisdiction in Canada.

CLAS' Community Law Program – with generous pro bono assistance from lawyers at McCarthy Tétrault LLP –continues to represent the Council of Canadians with Disabilities in a <u>Charter challenge to BC's forced psychiatric treatment laws</u>.

But we firmly believe that real change happens outside the courtroom when we listen to those with real-life experience and bring stakeholders together to build a better system.

A mental health system based on force and coercion will continue to fail and, in the process, will continue to alienate and ultimately harm the very people it should be serving.

KEVIN IS A LAWYER IN COMMUNITY LEGAL ASSISTANCE SOCIETY'S COMMUNITY LAW PROGRAM, WORKING PRIMARILY IN THE AREAS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WORKERS' RIGHTS. KEVIN HAS REPRESENTED CLIENTS AT ALL LEVELS OF COURT, BOTH FEDERALLY AND PROVINCIALLY, INCLUDING THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA.

Contact the CLAS Clinic for Support and Information

The CLAS BC Human Rights Clinic provides free legal services to people with a provincial human rights complaint.

Short Service Clinic. This clinic operates every Monday and Wednesday (except public holidays) for 30-minute appointments with a lawyer or legal advocate.

Legal Services. Find out if you qualify for summary advice, 1-2 hours of legal assistance or legal representation.

Education and Workshops. The clinic offers public legal education workshops, seminars and training sessions on topics related to the BC Human Rights Code.

Contact CLAS to Learn More

Local 604-685-3425 • Toll free 1-888-685-6222 contact@clasbc.net • https://clasbc.net/

disabilityalliancebc.org Disability Alliance BC

Update on the Accessible BC Act

by Helaine Boyd

We continue to engage with the BC Government to ensure the implementation of the ABCA will create meaningful positive change in reducing barriers for people with disabilities in our province.

n Transition's <u>Summer 2021 edition</u>, DABC provided our review of the new Accessible BC Act (ABCA), outlining our six key concerns. Many of those concerns are still outstanding.

We continue to engage with the BC Government to ensure the implementation of the ABCA will create meaningful positive change in reducing barriers for people with disabilities in our province.

Since that Summer 2021 edition, a new regulation under Part 3 of the ABCA came into force on September 1, 2022, requiring more than 750 public sector organizations to establish:

- 1 An accessibility committee
- 2 An accessibility plan
- A tool to receive feedback on accessibility

There are further criteria that public sector organizations have to meet related to these requirements. For instance, at least half of the accessibility committee should be people with disabilities or represent a disability-serving organization. The committee should also have Indigenous representation, and the accessibility plan and feedback tool must be made available to the public.

Other than these criteria, the requirements are quite broad. For instance, public sector organizations can establish these requirements on their own, or jointly with others in their sector or across sectors.

Which Sectors are Covered by the Act?

The public sector organizations that must meet these requirements are:

- Municipalities and regional districts
- Post secondary education institutions
- Public libraries
- Municipal police departments
- Francophone school districts
- Independent schools
- School districts



- Health authorities
- Public sector boards, agencies, tribunals and commissions

All of these organizations have a one-year deadline of September 1, 2023, to meet the three requirements, with the exception of the health authorities and some of the boards, agencies, tribunals and commissions which have until September 1, 2024.

DABC's Role

In May 2022, the BC Government provided \$3 million over three years to Disability Alliance BC. These funds are intended specifically to support public sector organizations in meeting the requirements.

This funding is called the Accessible Organizations Project. As this funding has a specific purpose, it cannot be used to directly fund accessibility initiatives that are implemented as a result of an accessibility plan.

DABC continues to advocate to the BC Government to set up a more robust granting system that can allow the public sector to receive funding to implement their accessibility plans.

We suggest reaching out to your local library, city hall, school district, college, etc. to ask directly what progress they have made in meeting ABCA requirements.

We also hope to see the ABCA extend to the private sector in future. Full and equal participation for people with disabilities goes beyond accessing government and public sector services.

Community Outreach

Since Summer 2022, DABC has been conducting presentations, workshops and meetings with public sector organizations on the three requirements, as well as providing ongoing direct support.

Through this outreach, we came to understand that cross-sectoral resources were needed as an initial step to support public sector organizations. In August 2022, DABC developed our first iteration of a cross-sectoral resource—the BC Accessibility Hub website: https://bcaccessibilityhub.ca/.

In November 2022, DABC hosted a workshop attended by representatives from each sector to co-design an accessibility plan template and identify any barriers they may have in reaching compliance.

Developing Resources

In March 2023, DABC produced the Accessibility Toolkit that was co-designed with people with disabilities and public sector organizations.

The toolkit contains templates organizations can use to develop their own accessibility plan, including:

- guidance on how to identify barriers to accessibility
- how to identify stakeholders
- how to engage the disability community
- how to identify and prioritize actions to include in an accessibility action plan
- advice on appropriate disability terminology and language
- how to make committees accessible, and more

Since March of this year, DABC has been working with public sector organizations to set up training and further sector-specific resources. We want to make sure the public sector has all the information and support they need to meet the three requirements by the September 1 deadline.

Add Your Voice

You might wonder, "What is the general public's role in all of this?"

DABC's view is that the community, including advocates, family members, people with lived experience and disability-serving non-profit organizations, has a role to play in holding the BC Government and the public sector to account in being compliant under the Accessible BC Act.

We suggest reaching out to your local library, city hall, school district, college, etc. to ask directly what progress they have made in meeting ABCA requirements.

By September 1, 2023, is their feedback tool easy to access? Have they posted their accessibility plan on their website or another public place? You can also offer to join committees seeking input from the public.

If you have any questions or concerns about these three requirements in your local community, please do reach out to DABC at aop@disabilityalliancebc.org.

HELAINE BOYD IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF DABC.



disabilityalliancebc.org Disability Alliance BC

DABC's Recommendations on the **Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy**

n April 28, 2023, DABC submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) for consideration in updating TogetherBC: BC's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

In addition to the recommendations, DABC engaged with MSDPR as they sought feedback from community organizations on TogetherBC.

In one meeting between DABC and MSDPR staff in February 2023, we outlined many of the recommendations in our report. We also hosted a small group discussion between clients and members of our network and MSDPR in March of this year.

Our recommendations are based on direct feedback from our clients and our membership, most of whom are people with disabilities living on low income.

We have witnessed how our clients and our community are affected by poverty.

- 24.7% of BC's population are people with disabilities¹ and, for many of them, they face two times higher poverty rates, worse housing outcomes and incur higher and additional expenses for basic needs of daily living than people without disability.2
- A large majority (71%) of people accessing social assistance in BC are those who receive Disability Assistance (colloquially known as PWD). PWD also accounts for 88% of new clients under social assistance.3

DABC wishes to echo West Coast LEAF's recommendation in prioritizing Indigenous Poverty Reduction Measures and, in particular, wishes to highlight the recent report titled, Income Supports and Indigenous Peoples in BC: An Analysis of Gaps and Barriers, produced by the First Nations Leadership Council.

DABC Recommendations

- 1. Establish PWD as a separate program from Income Assistance
- 2. Broaden criteria in the PWD application to reflect the wider implications of disability
- 3. Expand qualification for designated medical professionals to complete the PWD application
- 4. Expand qualification to apply for PWD as a prescribed class
- 5. Increase the social assistance rates indexed to inflation as guaranteed in legislation
- 6. Expand Plan C extended healthcare coverage
- 7. Reduce income-testing requirements for people on PWD
- 8. Ease clawbacks on unearned income for people on PWD

You can read the full DABC report here.

¹Canadian Survey on Disability (2018). Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories (Table 13-10-0374-0). Statistics Canada.

² Scott, C.W.M., Berrigan, P., Kneebone, R.D. et al. Disability Considerations for Measuring Poverty in Canada Using the Market Basket Measure. Soc Indic Res (2022).

³ Maytree Social Assistance Summaries **1**





Yes, I'd Like to Donate to DABC

Your support will help us continue our advocacy and frontline support of people living with a disability.

- □ \$50 will contribute toward the cost of matching a disabled family with accessible housing
- □ \$100 will help fund disability education workshops for doctors and social workers
- ☐ \$500 will support legal representation for a person with a disability who has experienced discrimination

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How to Donate

You can donate by cheque or online by credit card. You can choose to make a one-time or monthly donation. We will send a charitable tax receipt for any donation over \$10.

Cheque donations can be sent to our office, along with this tear off donor form. You can make a secure online credit card donation in seconds at CanadaHelps.com. Or, call us at 604-875-0188 and we will help you make your donation.

You can also support our work with an annual membership fee. Memberships are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for groups. Join at disabilityalliancebc.org/ support-us.

Thank you for your support.

More Places to Find Legal Information and Support

Nidus Registry

The BC-based Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry is the world expert on Representation Agreements. Nidus has led the education on the concept of planning in case of incapacity and other support needs.

The centre uses a self-help approach to assist people in creating Advance Directives, Health Care Consent, Power of Attorney, and other crucial personal planning documents.

Nidus does not offer personal appointments with staff at this time. However, you can find a range of detailed information, FAQs and more on their site at https://www.nidus.ca/. See an overview of legal planning on their YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/7pSICaXUSFU.

Kettle Society

For 40+ years, the warmth of The Kettle Society has empowered people living with mental illness, substance use, poverty and/or homelessness by providing housing, employment, community services and enrichment programs in Vancouver, BC.

The Kettle's Outreach and Advocacy Program can provide one-to-one support to people living with a combination of mental illness, mental health problems, low-income or homelessness to address both individual needs and systemic issues that may impact their mental health and well-being.

The program can help you access services or resolve issues around income security, financial hardship or the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).

Since the Kettle is a mental health organization, in order to use their advocacy services, you may be required to provide information about your mental health. Staff are friendly and will keep your information confidential.

They are also mandated to provide assistance to people living in Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster, or people who are already reliant on services in Vancouver. If you live outside of this area, please seek assistance through services which are located in your municipality.

Learn more about the Kettle Society advocacy services at https://www.thekettle.ca/advocacy. They will also be glad to hear from you by email advocacy@thekettle.ca or by phone 604-253-0669. 604-253-0669.



KSW Lawyers

Phone: 604-591-7321 Email: info@kswlawyers.ca

Surrey Office #220-7565 132 Street Surrey, BC V3W 1K5 South Surrey Office #206-15300 Croydon Drive South Surrey, BC V3Z 0Z5

Abbotsford Office #307-32615 South Fraser Way Abbotsford, BC V2T 1X8



Is Your Legal Issue Federal or Provincial? I by Andrew Robb

DABC's Disability Law Clinic (DLC) represents clients with cases in both provincial and federal jurisdiction. This means we assist people who have legal issues that are covered by laws created by Parliament and people who have legal issues covered by laws created by BC's legislative assembly.

These two levels of government have powers, or "jurisdiction," in different areas of law. So, if you think you have a legal action, it is important to know which level of government has jurisdiction. This will tell you whether you need to pursue your issue with a federal tribunal or a provincial one.

Here are some examples of areas that are in federal and provincial jurisdiction.

Federal Jurisdiction

- Air travel. If an airline failed to accommodate your disability, you could make a complaint to the Canadian Transportation Agency.
- Banking. If a bank discriminated against you, you could complain to the Canadian Human Rights Commission.
- Employment insurance and Canada Pension Plan. Legal issues related to these programs are addressed at the Social Security Tribunal.

Other legal issues under federal jurisdiction are the RCMP, cell phones, internet providers and First Nations governance.

Provincial Jurisdiction

- Income assistance and the Persons with Disabilities program.
- Most stores and private businesses (with some exceptions, like banks, cell phone companies, and airlines)
- Housing. You can make a complaint to the BC Human Rights Tribunal.
- Other legal issues under provincial jurisdiction are healthcare and education.



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The Work of BC's Ombudsperson I by Jay Chalke

Do you believe you've been treated unfairly when using a public program or service? The BC Ombudsperson may be able to help.

ave you received unfair treatment from the provincial government, a local government or another BC public body? The provincial Ombudsperson may be able to impartially investigate your issue. This could benefit you and lead to improvements to public programs and increased government accountability.

Unlike advocacy organizations, our office does not advocate for individuals—we are not on anyone's "side" on an issue. Our role is to impartially investigate a situation or complaint to determine if unfairness has occurred. If it has, we make recommendations for improvements.

Our office also investigates allegations of wrongdoing in the work-place from current and former employees of certain public bodies under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

"You may believe a decision impacting you has not been explained, or you have been denied a benefit you think you deserve, or it could be you can't access the services you need in a timely way, or you believe the rules in your situation are not being followed properly.

"These are all things we may be able to look into in our oversight role as we hold government to account," Chalke said.

Some Disability-related Cases at Our Office

- We received a case involving grandparents caring for their Indigenous granddaughter. They believed they were treated unfairly when trying to receive federal disability benefits. <u>Our investigation</u> resulted in the family being compensated money they were owed, as well as compensation to other caregivers in the same situation.
- Another complaint was raised by a parent whose son was relying on consistent transportation while training for the Special Olympics and was having challenges with his TransLink Bus Pass. Our office facilitated communication between the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the parent. The issue was <u>resolved</u>.
- A senior came to us concerned that his disability benefits were unfairly rejected. <u>Our investiga-</u> tion resulted in a reimbursement of \$1,720, after it was determined that his file was incorrectly closed.

"I would encourage anyone who believes they have been treated unfairly by any provincial or local public body to give our office a call," said Chalke. "And if the complaint results in a change in public administration, one complaint can benefit many people."



JAY CHALKE
OMBUDSPERSON OF BC

"We receive complaints from members of the public who face a range of issues, including those who are living with disabilities," said Ombudsperson Jay. "It's our job when those complaints come to us to listen very carefully and determine if an unfairness has occurred and to make things right if so."

Contact Us

To find out more about our office or make a complaint, please visit www.bcombud-sperson.ca or call 1-800-567-3247 between 8:30 and 4:30 weekdays, excluding statutory holidays. Translation and TTY services are available.

JAY CHALKE HAS BEEN THE
OMBUDSPERSON OF BC SINCE MAY 2015.
IN THIS ROLE, HE HAS LED SEVERAL WIDEREACHING SYSTEMIC INVESTIGATIONS.
JAY HAS AN EXTENSIVE BACKGROUND IN
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP, CONDUCTING
FAIR AND INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS
AND THE USE OF MODERN APPROACHES
TO DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

disabilityalliancebc.org Disability Alliance BC

Other Benefits of The Disability Tax Credit (DTC)

You may know that being approved for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) can enable you to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). But did you know about the other benefits and credits it can help you access?

Contact DABC's Access RDSP Staff at Local: 604-872-1278, Toll-free: 1-800-663-1278 or rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org.

If you're employed

The DTC will allow you to claim:

 Up to \$713 through the supplement to Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)



If you have children

The DTC can help you claim:

• The Disability Amount for Children



- The Child Disability Benefit amount of \$2.886
- Increased child care deductions
- Age limit extension to Children's Fitness and Art amount (no longer available after 2016, but may be claimed for the previous year)

If you have a trust

The DTC might help you save on the taxes you pay on your earnings through:

- Eligibility for qualified disability trust status
- Preferred beneficiary election option

If you own a home You may be eligible for:

- Home Buyer's Amount of up to \$5,000! People with DTC do not have to be first-time home buyers
- The Home Accessibility Tax Credit, which covers certain expenses concerning accessibility-related renovations



If you have medical or caregiver expenses

The DTC can allow you to claim:

- Certain medical expenses (can also claim a Disability Supports Deduction)
 e.g. Attendant Care Services
- Caregiver Credit: People with DTC do not have to provide another supporting document from medical practitioners

If you're a full-time student

The DTC can allow you to claim:

 Certain education-related benefits, such as the \$500 Scholarship Exemption



www.rdsp.com





Woman Makes Human Rights Complaint Against Maple Ridge

The DLC is assisting a woman who is blind and can no longer navigate her home city safely.

would never have been able to come this far without DABC's law clinic," Maria Kovacs said.
"Making a human rights complaint against a city would be hard for anyone, but especially for someone who is blind."

Maria is no stranger to advocacy. She has been volunteering for many years on her community accessibility committee. She received an award for her community service on a range of disability issues.

Still, she had been trying unsuccessfully for four years to resolve an issue in her home city of Maple Ridge. New public infrastructure, like bike lanes and roundabout intersections, have made it difficult for her to continue to move around her community safely and independently.

Her local bus stop is one example. There are no physical markers where the sidewalk ends and the bike lane begins. So, Maria is unable to tell when she is in a safe place to wait for the bus, away from bike traffic. A few years ago a bike ran into her as she was getting off a bus.

Maria believes these changes in her community amount to discrimination on the basis of her disability. To date, the City of Maple Ridge has denied any discrimination. It claims that bus stops are designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities, including people who are visually impaired.

"I filed a human rights complaint in 2018," Maria said. "In 2019, the BC

Maria believes infrastructure changes in her community amount to discrimination on the basis of her disability. To date, the City of Maple Ridge has denied any discrimination.

Human Rights Clinic (BCHRC) took on my case and helped me negotiate with Maple Ridge's lawyers." However, the BCHRC was not able to continue with Maria's case.

Soon after, Maria heard about DABC's Disability Law Clinic (DLC) and made an appointment to discuss her case.

Andrew Robb, managing lawyer of the DLC, met with Maria in the summer of 2022. "When Maria came to us, her human rights hearing was just a few months away," said Andrew. "She'd already been looking for help for a long time, so we wanted to support her if we could. And we felt she had a strong case."

The DLC team got up to speed quickly and assisted Maria with her tribunal hearing starting in October 2022.

The hearing was held virtually and the process was very stressful for Maria. "I had to testify for about three days," Maria said. "I was asked questions about maps and official documents that were read out to me. It was very hard."

Andrew said that, "the online hearing presented serious challenges for Maria. I don't know how she could have managed the questions and

the information if she didn't have support."

A decision on Maria's case is expected later this year.

"We hope for a good result for Maria's sake," Andrew said. "If the Tribunal does rule in her favour, it could order the city to upgrade areas and infrastructure deemed inaccessible."

And the case could set a precedent. A good outcome for Maria would encourage other municipalities to take proactive decisions, to ensure broad accessibility for citizens.

"Maria's case is about public infrastructure and that's something covered under our Accessible BC Act," said Andrew. "If she wins, it may be easier for people to convince municipal governments to make public infrastructure more accessible in the future."

Maria is very grateful for the DLC's support. "Andrew gave me so much great help, and lots of compassion and understanding. He gave me a voice. Everyone at the DLC treated me with respect.

"Now, we wait for the decision."

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TransLink Launches Accessible Navigation Project

TransLink is testing an accessibility tool—the first of its kind in Canada—that can help customers with visual impairment better navigate the transit system independently.

The tool works through an app called NaviLens that you can download for Apple or Google devices.

The app scans specialized coded decals that provide audio instructions to guide you to bus stops and exact points of pick-up. The app can also identify nearby amenities, such as elevators and provide real-time information alerts.

Some app features:

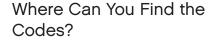
- Codes can be scanned from up to 14 metres away
- No focus is required to scan the codes

The NaviLens system is in use around the world, in cities like New York City, Liverpool and Madrid, to help people with visual impairment find their way in public spaces.

- Codes can be scanned in all light conditions
- The app can be used while you are moving

"By bringing this advanced wayfinding technology to Canada for the first time, we're aiming to create a more inclusive experience and empower our riders to navigate the transit system with ease and safety," says TransLink CEO Kevin Quinn. "These types of innovative projects demonstrate our commitment to improving accessibility for all customers."

The NaviLens system is in use around the world, in cities like New York City, Liverpool and Madrid, to help people with visual impairment find their way in public spaces.



Sixteen NaviLens codes have been installed at three TransLink locations:

- Ten bus bays at New Westminster SkyTrain Station
- Four bus stops near the CNIB office in New Westminster
- Two bus stops near the VCC campus on East Broadway in Vancouver

"Implementing this test technology shows TransLink is working to ensure its customers with sight loss can travel independently and confidently," says Rob Sleath, President of Access for Sight-Impaired Consumers.

Last year, TransLink <u>began installing braille signage</u> at every bus stop – roughly 8,400 stops throughout Metro Vancouver. In addition, tactile walking surface indicators are being installed at every bus stop on TransLink-owned and leased property.

The Accessible Navigation Project will run for six months and be evaluated for future expansion throughout the region.

Join the Pilot Project

Please visit https://www.translink.ca/accessnav for more information or to participate in the pilot project.

NaviLens website: https://www.navilens.com/en/



Disability Alliance BC disability alliancebc.org

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO THE DISABILITY TAX CREDIT



Created by Access RDSP in partnership with Island Health Authority, with thanks to our funders BC's Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Vancouver Foundation. Download the booklet at: https://disabilityalliancebc.org/1-a-practitioners-guide-to-the-dtc-rdsp.pdf







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Contact Tax AID DABC for Free Income Tax Assistance

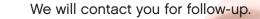
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Program Manager I Disability Alliance BC taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org https://taxaiddabc.org

Book Your Appointment Online

You can book your appointment with DABC online at https://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/. We offer our services by phone, videoconference, email and mail.

Please send your tax slips and photo ID to taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org.



Tax AID DABC helps people with disabilities in BC to file their income taxes. Please see details on the opposite page for our eligibility criteria.









CONTACT THE TAX AID REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- METRO VANCOUVER & FRASER VALLEY I VANCOUVER I DABC | 236-477-1717 | Toll Free 1-877-940-7797
- INTERIOR | KELOWNA | Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society | 250-763-4905 ext. 215



Yes, our income tax services are FREE.

Am I eligible for Tax AID DABC services?

We provide free tax-filing support to people receiving disability supports including: Persons with Disabilities (PWD), Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB), Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D), WorkSafeBC (WCB) or the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). We also assist individuals with income below \$35,000 and those with family incomes below \$42,000.

What if I Haven't Filed Taxes for Years?

We help prepare simple income tax returns for the most recent tax year, as well as for previous years. One of our specialties is to help people who have multiple years of taxes to file.

What if I Don't Have All My Tax Documents (T5007, T4s)?

Don't worry! We'll contact government agencies to help you find them.

My Income is Low. Why Should I File Taxes?

There are many advantages to filing your income taxes! Our clients usually receive \$400 to \$600 in income tax credits for each year they file. People eligible for an income tax refund, and those with dependent children, often receive much more.

If you haven't filed your taxes for multiple years, your refunds may grow dramatically.

Other benefits you may be eligible for include:

- **GST Credits**
- BC Sales Tax and Climate Action Tax Credits
- Canada Workers Benefit
- Child Tax Benefits
- Registered Disability Savings Plan Grants and Bonds

Income tax filing can also help you qualify for MSP Premium Assistance coverage, subsidized housing, and other income-tested benefits.

New Drop Off Service

Have all of your tax slips ready? If you are living in Vancouver and your tax situation is straightforward, you can now drop off your tax information to our advocates for faster support. Bring in your ID and tax slips to our office. You can pick up your package when your taxes are ready.

What Should I Do Next?

Contact Disability Alliance BC or one of our Regional Partners. We'll set up an appointment to meet with you. Call us today! We're here to help.

CONTACT THE TAX AID REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- VANCOUVER ISLAND I VICTORIA I Together Against Poverty Society I 250-361-3521
- NORTHERN | PRINCE GEORGE | Active Support Against Poverty Society | Toll-Free 1-877-563-6112

Disability Alliance BC disabilityalliancebc.org

How to Access DABC Services

Advocacy Access

If you need help with provincial disability benefits or CPP Disability, contact Advocacy Access:

advocacy@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

Tax AID DABC

If you are a person with a disability who needs assistance filing your income taxes, contact Tax AID DABC:

taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org

236-477-1717 or 1-877-940-7797 (Toll-free)

Book an appointment online at <u>disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/</u>

Access RDSP

If you need help with the Disability Tax Credit or Registered Disability Savings Plan, contact Access RDSP:

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org

https://www.rdsp.com/supports-and-services/

Disability Law Clinic

Our Disability Law Clinic can help with legal issues related to disability rights:

236-427-1108

lawclinic@disabilityalliancebc.org

The Right Fit

If you are a wheelchair user looking for wheelchair accessible housing in the Lower Mainland, contact The Right Fit: 604-777-7576

rightfit@ifrcsociety.org or rightfit@disabilityalliancebc.org www.therightfitbc.org

Learn More About Us

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I TRANSITION

The views and opinions expressed within the pages of TRANSITION are not necessarily those held by the total membership or Board of Directors. The material presented is meant to be thought-provoking and to promote dialogue.

Planning Team Helaine Boyd, Cynthia Minh, Lauren Stinson, Ann Vrlak

Editing and Layout Ann Vrlak
Cover Designer Fiona Gamiet
Administrative Assistant Lynda
Bennett

Proofreaders Chloe Krause, Danielle Gauld

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Contact Us

Disability Alliance BC 1450-605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3 T: 604-875-0188 F: 604-875-9227

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TRANSITION general and advertising: transition@disabilityalliancebc.org

Online:

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DABC general:

feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org

transition

digital only advertising rates

DABC's quarterly magazine, Transition, has gone 100% digital! Along with this new format, we've reduced our advertising rates.

For full details or to make a booking for your organization or business, please reach out to transition@disabilityalliancebc.org.

All ads are still 35% off for not-for-profit organizations (minimum cost per ad \$50)!

Transition Publishes 3 Times Each Year Prices Shown are Per Edition							
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Outside back cover I 7 3/8"W x 6 1/2"H	\$1,238	\$1,069	\$956				
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Suite 1450, 605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3 (604) 875-0188 • fax (604) 875-9227 transition@disabilityalliancebc.org • disabilityalliancebc.org

