



**BARRIER
FREE
CANADA**

**SANS
BARRIÈRE
CANADA**

The Barrier Free Canada – Canada Sans Barrières December, 2019 Newsletter – Fourth Quarter

Dear Friends,

Barrier Free Canada-Canada Sans Barrières would like to thank you once again for your continued support and words of encouragement for it is only with you and through you that we as an organization can continue to thrive and to encourage others to speak up, speak out, and engage each other in meaningful discussion and constructive criticisms, feedback, and suggestions.

[The President's Perspective for 2019, A Year of Revitalization](#)

By Donna J. Jodhan

2019 was a year of revitalization for Barrier Free Canada - Canada Sans Barrières. Our mission remained the same; to collaborate with others to ensure the safe passage of Bill C-81 and we were successful in accomplishing this.

On May 1, 2019, we presented to the Senate standing committee and we were part of Minister Qualtrough's Parliament Hill celebrations on June 20, 2019 as well as being a witness to the Royal Assent ceremonies when the bill was acclaimed on June 21, 2019.

Social Media Initiatives

2019 was also a year for us to launch some new social media initiatives as part of our revitalization efforts. In late 2018 we created a Facebook Group named "BFC Advocating For Change"; designed to encourage persons of all disabilities to speak up, speak out, and share their thoughts with others from

coast to coast and we are pleased to report that at the close of 2019 our membership had surpassed the 300 mark.

We also revived our efforts on twitter (@barrierfreeca), and on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/barrierfreeca), and we are happy to report that at the close of 2019 our followers on Twitter stood at almost 3,000 and our likes on Facebook went well past the 1,000 mark.

Our New Look Website

Thanks to a huge push greatly assisted by the support of Aaron Di Blasi (<https://www.facebook.com/aaron.dibiasi>) of Mind Vault Solutions, Ltd. (<https://www.mvsltd.com/>) our website at <https://barrierfreecanada.org> underwent a huge face lift and because of this we are proud to share that our weekly reaches, engagements, and shares have spiraled significantly; ranging anywhere from a low of 200 to well over 1,000.

Our website now contains up to date news, appropriate images to reflect news items and submitted articles, but most of all; it is extremely accessible and navigable especially to persons with disabilities.

We also initiated an article submissions page to encourage persons to submit their thoughts on various aspects of accessibility and at the close of 2019 we had managed to post 9 submissions. We will continue to encourage persons to submit their views as we believe that this is yet another way and opportunity for persons to have their voices heard.

You can make your submissions to us at info@barrierfreecanada.org.

Participating and Collaborating

2019 also saw us continuing to participate in tele-conferences hosted by the **HRSDC** (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development.html>, **CHRC** (Canadian Human Rights Commission) <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng>, **CCRW** (Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work) <https://www.ccrw.org/>, and **CAG** (Consumer Access Group) <http://www.cag-tccdv.ca/> along with face to face meetings hosted by the **CTA** (Canadian Transportation Agency) <https://www.canada.ca/en/transportation-agency.html>, **Elections Canada** <https://www.elections.ca/home.aspx> and **FALA** (Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance) <https://www.include-me.ca/federal-accessibility-legislation-alliance/about-us> and 2020 will be the same.

Comings and Goings

2019 was a year where we were challenged to ensure that our board continued to be on track.

We lost three board members due to unexpected circumstances; medical problems and a conflict of interest.

It was with a heavy heart that we said so long to **Robin East** as he assumed a new position with the **CHRC** thus putting him in a position of conflict of interest with us. Then we also had to bid a sad farewell to **Brenda Edel** and **Kevin Boutet** due to their medical challenges.

On the positive side of things, we welcomed **Albert Ruel** and **Michelle Buckland** to our team bringing our board to a total of six members.

One of our priorities for 2020 will be to add three additional members to our board with the emphasis on finding someone who lives in Ottawa or close to Ottawa, and persons who are either the parent of a child with a disability or someone who can bring us perspectives from those with a special need other than being blind or vision impaired.

I will close by wishing everyone the very best of everything for 2020.

We thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely,

Donna J. Jodhan, President

Barrier Free Canada - Canada Sans Barrières

[News Items and Article Submissions Posted to our Website](#)

The following is a list of news items that have been posted to our website from October to December, 2019.

October

Diversity at Law Firms A Work in Progress, Analysis Finds Women Remain Underrepresented at Partnership Level, Data Shows

<https://wp.me/p5UIAU-lz>

Silicon Valley's Motor City: As Big Tech Adds Fuel to A Housing Crisis, Poorer Residents Live in RVs

<https://wp.me/p5UIAU-IC>

Toronto Looks into Cost of Disability Accommodation

<https://wp.me/p5UIAU-IV>

Open Letter to the Attorney General

<https://wp.me/p5UIAU-IR>

Why the Fate of Online Accessibility May Rest with a Domino's Pizza Lawsuit

<https://wp.me/p5UIAU-IO>

Airlines Putting the Squeeze on Safety

<https://barrierfreecanada.org/airlines-putting-the-squeeze-on-safety/>

November

The Barrier Free Canada - Canada Sans Barriers October 2019 Newsletter

<https://wp.me/pbmLAU-ol>

My Role as a Professor with a Visual Impairment: A Retrospective on My Career

By: Leo A. Bissonnette, Ph.D.

<https://wp.me/pbmLAU-op>

No Barriers to Understanding

Contributed by Debra Walker

<https://wp.me/pbmLAU-ot>

Opinion: Blocking the Disabled on the Web Means Blocking Innovation

<https://barrierfreecanada.org/opinion-blocking-the-disabled-on-the-web-means-blocking-innovation/>

December

Moving Forward Together Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the Forty-Third Parliament of Canada

<https://barrierfreecanada.org/moving-forward-together-speech-from-the-throne-to-open-the-first-session-of-the-forty-third-parliament-of-canada/>

Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion Mandate Letter

<https://barrierfreecanada.org/minister-of-employment-workforce-development-and-disability-inclusion-mandate-letter-office-of-the-prime-minister/>

The Accessible Canada Act Represents a Shift in Mindset – From Reactive, to Proactive

<https://barrierfreecanada.org/the-accessible-canada-act-represents-a-shift-in-mindset-from-reactive-to-proactive/>

Removable Barriers

This section of the newsletter contains brief descriptions of major barriers encountered.

Without access to legal representation

This is what appears to be taking place in Ontario at the present time.

It appears that instead of attempting to fully understand a complainant's complaint, Human Rights Ontario lawyers are choosing to strongly encourage complainants to accept financial compensation from respondents.

The perception is that in return for continuing to have our rights being ignored and trampled upon, we are being practically strong armed into accepting payoffs.

With very little opportunity to find either pro bono or affordable legal assistance, we find ourselves in a helpless and desperate situation.

Barrier or no barrier?

A definite barrier!

A violation of rights?

A definite violation!

Access to online health card renewal in Ontario for certain persons is non existent

If you are a person with a disability who does not have a driver's license and you are thinking of renewing your health card online, then you are more than likely out of luck!

For many persons with a disability, especially for those who are blind, vision impaired, or for those with a physical or mental disability, the luxury of a driver's license simply does not exist.

So, here comes the all-important question.

If a person with a disability does not have the means to visit a Service Ontario office, and are being denied online access to carry out a health card renewal because they do not possess or cannot possess a driver's license, should this not be viewed as a violation of a person's rights?

Barrier or no barrier?

A definite barrier!

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A definite violation!

Editorials

Service Ontario Negligence...

By Albert Ruel

January 6, 2020

An active and contributing Ontario resident who lives the experience of disability recently ran into a scenario of missing accommodation from the provincial government, which appears to be an easily removed barrier to full and respectful participation. Will it require a Human Rights complaint to resolve?

This is what happened. She learned through an attempt to book a medical appointment that her Health Card needed to be renewed, and when it was revealed that such a renewal can be done online she attempted to do so. It seemed like a perfect solution as she had been struck with the flu and through this process could avoid going outside.

As she attempted to complete the online form, she came to realize that it would not process because a valid driver's license is required in order to complete the online renewal process. She doesn't have a Driver's License as her medical condition, seizures don't allow her to drive a vehicle.

She then contacted Service Ontario and was informed that using a valid Driver's License is the only way to renew it online. Needless to say, she was not happy with that outcome and informed them that many Ontarians with disabilities aren't able to drive due to the physical limitations of their disability, as well as many who choose to not drive; therefore, they should not be excluded from the same opportunity/privilege to renew online.

A call was made to Service Ontario to seek guidance and support for the task at hand, and sadly she was given the usual platitudes, "...still in process of revamping...will take into consideration...etc.".

When she asked how to express her concerns about this matter, the following email address was provided.

accessibility@ontario.ca. <<mailto:accessibility@ontario.ca>>

If others wish to voice their concerns as well, please join us in advocating for inclusion on this and other access issues.

Social Media Initiatives

The BFC Advocating for Change Facebook group continues to have ongoing active chatter and posts. We have a total of 297 members. We have also been continuing to use twitter for both BFC4Change and @Barrierfreeca to tweet and retweet relevant articles and messages.

Contact Us

If you are a person who would like to stay up-to-date in the disability world, we would like to invite you to contact us in one of the following ways:

Email: info@barrierfreecanada.org

Webpage: www.barrierfreecanada.org

Twitter @barrierfreeca or @bfc4change

Facebook at <https://m.facebook.com/barrierfreeca>

Barrier Free Canada – Canada Sans Barriers Executive

Donna Jodhan – President, Ontario

Anthony Tibbs - Secretary/Treasurer, Quebec

Charlene Young – Director, Saskatchewan

Louise Gillis – Director, Nova Scotia

Albert Ruel - Director, British Columbia

Michelle Buckland – Director, Ontario

Respectfully submitted by:

Charlene Young and Albert Ruel