

Hello mayor and council,

Response requested of Sheryl Armstrong from the Accessibility and Inclusion committee please. Is Nanaimo aligning with the federal 2040 accessibility plan?

Recently I became a stakeholder for measures on the Accessibility Act of Canada by the Senate based off a letter I wrote and a feedback form filled out.

Every federal department has to provide their own required changes under the act, several government office have feedback forms for the public still open. Surprisingly, every department has gotten back to me, a couple by phone at that.

Today I had a conference call lead by the Senate Accessibility Officer, a role created through the Accessibility Act in December alongside the Parliamentary Accessibility Officer.

I discussed using the percentage of people on disability as a set minimum for all government offices to employee people with disabilities. Even if only 3 hours days. Many of us cannot handle more but still wish to accomplish employment goals in life. Amazingly, Senate HR will be working with me on Wednesday to further discuss creating as many as 7 new part time roles for people with disabilities at the Senate. Because of little ole me. Feeling pretty good here today. There's more that Senate is acting on and other suggestions they are looking at too.

I asked for hiring people with disabilities not only be mandatory for federal offices but for all levels of government. Which is why I write you. If a bare minimum of 15% of City of Nanaimo employees do not identify as PWD's, we are doing the community an injustice. I know Nanaimo has made better efforts than most communities with programs for removing litter from our parks and streets. With the feds only a few months into the 2040 plan, there's still lots of opportunity for feedback, organizations funding and acting to make a more equitable world for people with disabilities. A Senator brought this up in their social affairs committee after my feedback reached her.

Hiring people with disabilities most often sees the money going right back into our communities as we generally need the income more than most. It helps to alleviate burdens to those supporting us with our needs. Families rest easier when loved ones are not struggling to get to the next assistance or pay cheque.

I suggested the federal govt create a CPP incentive program where the CRA would rebate the employers portion of the CPP back at the end of the year for hiring people that are on govt disability programs like CPPD, AASH in Alberta or BC PWD.

I also asked the government to fund any level of government to provide JAWS software if they hire a visually impaired person.

Braile documents for the federal government while soon be available in the same time frame, rather than having to wait up to 45 days for Braile documents when regular press is completed in 10 to 15 days. The SAO tells me this will be changed to similar timeframes but not until next budget because a contractor prints Braile documents for the government. Lil' ole me again.

I asked for consideration of parents on disability who have their child less than 40% of the time, still get help for their child

Having government's provide gainful employment for People with Disabilities sets an example for the rest of the community.

Here's some of the feedback forms that got me a response:

<https://sencanada.ca/en/accessibility/>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/campaigns/accessibility-plan/submitting-feedback-about-accessibility.html>

<https://www.cas-satj.gc.ca/en/publications/afp.shtml>

<https://sencanada.ca/en/newsroom/soci-senate-committee-enhances-accessibility-for-disability-bill-study/>

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/corporate-services/transparency/accessibility-transport-canada/transport-canada-s-accessibility-feedback-form>

When I filled out these feedback forms, people from the Senate and respective government offices actually phoned and emailed me back. They need people like Sheryl who has seen and heard a wide range of issues to help them understand. I even wonder if we could convince a government office in Nanaimo to be a test run. A few more federal jobs on Front street or at the airport help fill a huge gap. By federal average there are approximately 15,000 of us with various disabilities living in Nanaimo alone. All levels of government need law to provide employment in that gap for PWDs

Thanks for your consideration while reading this.