

StreamBox

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City of Waterloo

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>> **CART PROVIDER:** Captions will appear here. Thank you.

>> Hello to everyone that's new, I just noticed a lot of people joined me, it is Ryan from CNIB, we are doing behind the scenes things right now. About three or four minutes and we should be getting started. If you hear silence that's okay, you are connected correctly if you can hear my voice right now.

>> Lauren and Marina, are you guys almost ready I just need to hit the record button and we should be good to start. But it is on you guys, take your time whenever you are ready though.

>> I am all ready to go.

>> So am I.

>> **Marina Dotzert:** Excellent. I'll wait for the little sound that tells me we are recording.

[LAUGHTER] (recording: This meeting is being recorded)

>> **Marina Dotzert:** Hello and welcome to day one of our five-day Webinar series called Life Made Accessible in honour of national accessibility week which takes place May 31 to June 5 it is a time when accessibility and inclusion are promoted across communities and workplaces and the time to celebrate the contributions of Canadians with disabilities. It is an opportunity to recognise the efforts of Canadians who are actively removing barriers and ensuring persons with disabilities have an equal chance to participate in all aspects of Canadian society. My name is Marina Dotzert I work for City of Kitchener as inclusions coordinator and today I will be our host, our event Life Made Accessible is an opportunity to see into the lives being presented to you by listening, and learning we hope to give you a better understanding of paths some individuals with disabilities need to take. With understanding we hope it will lead to a world more accessible. Today's Webinar is called Accessibility 101 we will talk about what the AODA is, how you can make workplace and business more accessible for people who have disabilities. Before we begin, in a Spirit of this event, sorry before we begin [audio cut out] in the Spirit of this event is an opportunity to learn. Our panelists will be sharing personal experiences and perspectives, this is their story, they do not speak on behalf of all individuals with a disability. Our interpreters are also available for this event, please change the view to gallery view to see them, you can pin a video by clicking on three dots of top right of their video. Captioning is also available during this Webinar. To show captioning it can be selected at the bottom of your screen. A very big thank you to the City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener for sponsoring our video relay and interpreters, captioning and transcription services for today. For screen reader users, if you are joining from us from your computer or your laptop the tab key will be

the most useful one for you. The key will cycle through all the buttons on the screen, it does this from top to bottom and left to right. When you get to the end it will just cycle back up to the top and start all over again. To activate this button simply click the space bar. For voice users who are joining us from the, from an iOS device such as iPad, iPhone or iPod all the important buttons are across the bottom of the screen. These can be accessed by using swipe right and left gestures to activate the buttons you can single finger or double tap on it. If you do not keep yourself on the buttons at the bottom will announce everyone who is speaking, which may become distracting for you during the presentation. To ask questions, please use the question and answer option at the bottom of the screen. The last 10 to 15 minutes of our Webinar will be dedicated to answering your questions. Please use this opportunity to ask questions to our panelists about today's topic. I will be reviewing all the questions before presenting them, so please be appropriate and courteous. The Life Made Accessible event has been put together by the following local organizations, just belonging Waterloo Region, Canadian Hearing Services, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Community Support Connections, Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region and Kitchener Waterloo accessibility. To begin I would like to introduce our moderator for today, Andrena Lockley-Brown, independent living centre at Waterloo Region, an organization that offers a variety of programs that helps people with disabilities live independently. On top of this, like many other parents at this time, attempting to be home schooling teacher for her two children. Over to you Andrena.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** I'm so pleased to moderate today's discussion on accessibility, this is first in a five-day Webinar series, we are going to speak about accessibility in general terms today. We will look at what accessibility is, we'll address various ways it affects people's lives in our community, we will look at what we can do to help improve accessibility and also have a look back at how far we have come. I would like to introduce you to guest speakers, first we have Dan, a lifelong advocate for accessibility and inclusion in our community. His lived experience serves as a launching point to his professional pursuits where he has spent decades working in community supports for people with disabilities, including in his currently role as the Community Resource Coordinator for Independent Living Centre for Waterloo region. Dan is also a private consultant with document accessibility, he is recipient of several awards including the City of Cambridge community and inclusion award and proud father of two amazing kids. Welcome Dan.

>> **Dan Lajole:** Thank you, glad to be here.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Also joining us today is Sharmeen Khan, a licensed Ontario lawyer and works as manager of learning services at college. Also blind, a guide dog user and a parent of preschooler prioritizing accessibility is a cornerstone of her identity both personally and professionally and this is reflected in her work in ensuring that students at [Name?] college have access to accessible and equitable education as possible. Sharmeen is also great to meet at a party, enjoys many varieties of red wine and promises to recommend you a book you'll enjoy. Welcome Sharmeen.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Thank you for having me.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** So let's just get started by jumping right into accessibility. Let's talk about what accessibility is. Sharmeen can you describe how you, what you think accessibility

is?

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Yeah I can take a stab at it. So I think, when I, when I think about accessibility for me more than um, more than accessible design, more than even I would say Universal Design um I would say that accessibility is a meaningful attempt to anticipate the needs of a variety, of a variety of people. And so by that I mean it's an active and ongoing process that involves a continuous evaluation and reevaluation of the needs of a variety of people who might be patrons of your business, who might attend your workplace, who may be your colleagues but I think that would be the aspect of accessibility that I would highlight most is that it is an evolving landscape and a constantly, it is an active process.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Great, thanks Sharmeen. Dan what, but?

>> **Dan Lajole:** Yeah I mean certainly Sharmeen worded quite well, you know I I think that for somebody living with a disability I think accessibility is more than just guidelines or legislation or sort of list of things to do. I mean the accessibility is something that I encounter every day. If something is accessible or barrier free I can use it or participate in it, if it is not then I don't. So it is pretty, it is pretty intertwined in my daily fabric so um, you know, I think it is for anybody who experiences disability.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** So Dan we had spoken before about what soability is but also what it is not. Can you speak to that?

>> **Dan Lajole:** Sure, absolutely. I mean I think a lot of people, you know, especially with the AODA and other pieces of legislation which we can talk about later and certainly been helpful, I think that it is important to know accessibility is not just about some checklist that you can sort of go through to make your business accessible, accessibility is fluid. It is always evolving, it is always changing. The reality is that not one size fits all. There are different types of disabilities or different ranges of abilities and even those who may experience the same disability have different individual needs. So accessibility is always changing, every situation needs to be looked at individually, not to say there aren't things that a business can do to sort of, you know, eliminate some of those more notable barriers up front but at the end of the day it really is about the individual need and being able to respond to that.

>> Yeah I think as well um that I think what people need to know is that even organization that is are focused on accessibility see it as a work in progress, you never get it done. We're always looking at what we've missed or what could help more people and improving on it all the time. It's more, you said it perfectly, it is not a checklist but it is something that is a commitment Sharmeen said active ongoing process, that's the perfect way to put it. It is something we are constantly working on. So now we want to talk to you about the work you do, Sharmeen we know you are at [Name?] college can you tell us more about your role there?

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Yeah, sure so I currently work as the manager of accessible learning services, so what that means is that I oversee the department that evaluates, it does a few things. One of the things they do is they evaluate eligibility to register with accessible learning for students with disabilities or conditions that might pose barriers to learning, so we evaluate eligibility for use of our services and then together with the students through a combination of documentation that they submit and an interview or initial appointment that's done between student and advisor, determine the most suitable academic accommodations that the students going to need to be successful in college life. This obviously varies from student to student, it

varies by disability and certainly a large part of determining appropriate accommodations is figuring out what accommodation a student is going to need in a given program. Not ever having attended a college myself, it was certainly a learning curve to encounter the various ways in which people with disabilities interact with a very hand environment with a lot of technology, a lot of labs, shops using tools, et cetera, et cetera. So sort of always har, ening back to what accessibility means we are constantly having to revolve our concept of academic accommodation. And I tend to come from the perspective that accommodation begins where accessibility ends. So we have overramping principles that we use and we do try to incorporate as much Universal Design for learning into, into lessons but we will always be able to acknowledge that it will never be able to meet the needs of every person. So I think constantly being prepared to listen um with humility is such an important aspect of the job. Another thing we do is connect students to technology and other resources they might find supportive at the college.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Great tanks Sharmeen. Dan can you speak to the work you do?

>> **Dan Lajole:** Yeah so, you know, I sort of well I suppose I wear many hats as we all do, but the ones I'll focus on for today um I work for the independent living centre, Waterloo Region, alongside Andrena in our community resource program and that program helps to connect individuals with disabilities to the community so whether that's to find information about a specific service or resource or whether it's just helping them to connect in a meaningful way into socialization, you know, obviously a challenge by our current global pandemic but we are learning ways to connect people as we are today. So that's sort of the work I do with independent living and it is a magnificent program. The other job I do I have a private consultation business where I work with companies who want to develop accessible documentation. So whether that documentation is through websites or whether it is through PDF or word documents I work alongside them and I can audit their products, I can make their documents accessible. That's the work I do and I'm fortunate to be able to sort of have that niche where my lived experience has sort of transitioned nicely into my profession so um you know I enjoy both of those, both of those titles.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Well that's a perfect segue Dan my next question was about your experience working with disability. Because not only do you work to remove barriers from other people in our community but you have lived experience of these barriers. So Dan can you speak about your experience with accessibility personally at work?

>> **Dan Lajole:** Absolutely. So, you know, I've been very fortunate over the years so growing up I never wanted to really be involved in accessibility, it wasn't really a concept that I really even ever understood. I obviously required things to be accessible, being a wheelchair user as a kid, but never really thought of it as a job um but, you know, throughout my life I learned more and more that for me to connect to agencies that were open to accessibility was important so connecting with independent living centre has been fantastic. Not only do I support the sort of agency beliefs, but they have gone out of their way to make sure that the environment is as accessible as possible and so practically that would include things like making sure the office space is physically accessible, so things like door openers and accessible washers, but they've also allowed me to work from a home office which is something that we're all doing now, but wasn't necessarily that common even just a few months ago. So these are the types of small

adjustments that certainly I've taken advantage of from my career, but also I can really sort of mean the difference between having an employee, having the best employee for the job despite maybe certain limitations. And then having somebody who, you know, maybe isn't able to work for you simply because, you know, they can't open the door. Right. Or transportation doesn't fit in the exact schedule of work. I think a lot of companies are sort of going that way now they are being more open to those ideas but even ten years ago that would be certainly a challenge for anybody who needed workplace accommodation. So those are the types of things that certainly I have taken advantage of and it has allowed me to succeed professionally so yeah --

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Great thanks Dan, Sharmeen I'm wondering if you can speak to your experience with accessibility at work?

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Yeah just to elaborate a little bit on what was just said I think it is prg, I didn't grow up anticipating having a career oriented towards accessibility either, although I needed things to be accessible as a blind child and I mean also as a blind adult, that hasn't changed. And I find it interesting, it's so important I think for people in um, in role that is are oriented towards accessibility it is so incredible to see um the presence of lived experience and how that, how that informs policies and the work we do, because so many times I think people who live in communities that experience any sort of marginalization often critique a lot of the policies that apply to them because they weren't created by people with lived experience and they weren't created by people who had these, these actual lived experiences and so it sort of made me realize that I don't want to speak out of both sides of my mouth by saying I want to insist on accessibility, but then don't see myself as having a role to play. So certainly not to say that we are all sort of end up in a given field just because we have a disability. But it is just to underscore the importance of the lived experience in fields like this and I would argue another fields as well. For my job in particular, so I um accessibility at work. So I travel with a guide dog and certainly need, I had to orient myself around the campus. This is an evolving, this is an evolving skill there are always parts of the campus I need to go to that I have never been to before. So there are definitely times I'm drifting around, you know, wondering if I'm at 4B or 4A or something like that. My employer is similarly I think one of the advantages of working for a larger organization is that certainly funding is typically not an issue for them in terms of being able to resist accessible requests and so I was very easily able to get adaptive technology on my computer, not that there was any resistance, just saying one of the advantages or can be one of them. I was able to get speaking technology on my computer so it converts everything that's on the screen into text and then I can then navigate all aspects of my online work life independently. Of course there are always aspects of as we were talking about accessibility being an evolving concept our office uses prioritary software as I'm sure most offices do, right. Whether it is to keep track of notes or files or store things, et cetera, et cetera and it is always important for us to ensure that those pieces of software are accessible as well because I'm always reminded of people who have an accessible experience and then their company decide to shift software and the software is not accessible and suddenly a job that was completely accessible becomes a lot more difficult to do at no fault of the person with the disability. I also take advantage of um, so ons that have been developed specifically for blind people. Some of these apps are scanning apps that um allow me to take pictures of images and have the text converted into speech. Some of these apps connect me to directly to a trained sighted agent if I

need to navigate inaccessible experience or environment. Which is certainly really handy but can lead to other accessibility issues. Just try to go think of other things I do. Then you know, the small on going things, there are when I am several of my colleagues are sending e-mails with a lot of questions in them and another colleague replies and says, you know, okay got your questions, my answers are in red. Then somebody says got your questions and answers and my now my answers are in green. Well they are in, I'm sort of always trying to decipher which person's answer corresponds to which person's question and that type of thing. So it is accessible but there is always work to be done. And as Dan was saying often minor tweaks you make along the way, but the work is never over. Fortunately working in accessible learning as an office our advocacy position is to assist in only using accessible things. That also ends up working in my favour. I feel like I have talked enough now so I'll stop.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** That's fine --

>> **Dan Lajole:** Sorry Andrena can I just touch on something that Sharmeen said that I wanted to just elaborate on a little bit. You know, Sharmeen you mentioned sort of need for funding and how often times our funding, you know, is obviously a little easier the larger the organization then perhaps they have access to more funds. So certainly I agree with you and that's something that, you know, we see and I think that's something that a lot of businesses are curious about, you know. They want to know okay so, you know, yes I want to be accessible but how do I do that, how much is it going to cost me, is it going to cost me 200 thousand dollars to build a whole new will go building. So I think if you look at the statistics, average accessibility workplace accommodation is around 500 dollars, right. That number will be up and that number will be down but I think the point is that, you know, for those businesses out there who maybe don't have a large sort of budget that, you know, increase accessibility of their workplace, you know, again it is about the individual. What are the individual needs and what accommodations can be made? Often times that are in fact don't require a lot of money. So just want to, that on there.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** That's a really good point Dan certainly and it is true, I would just add it is so important to be able to speak to the individual, individual about what it is they actually require because I think sometimes not living with a disability you imagine like Dan was saying, dispro mortgage gnat efforts, like building a whole new building, making sure the walls talk so nobody crashes into them. They tend to be very well intended but remember too that the person you are accommodating is the expert on what needs to be done and it is often less than you think.

>> And hopefully as, you know, as buildings are built in the future, so as per the AODA again that's an important piece of legislation for those who are familiar with, stands for accessibility, with disabilities act and basically that piece of legislation helps to guide businesses to become more accessible. And one of the pieces when we think about physical space, at least, as buildings are built in the future the new Ontario Building Code sets out guideline that is are more universal, right. So they open the access without sort of adding on things that retrofitting is often times a bit more cumbersome, so I just wanted to bring in that piece there as to what the future holds as far as designing spaces that are universal, accessible for everyone and not a matter of accessibility after thought.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** So technology as usual in, plays a huge role in all of our lives, we

are using technology right now to communicate with each other. I'm wondering if you want to speak in more detail about the role in plays in your work and your life. Dan let's start with you this time.

>> **Dan Lajole:** Oh, okay, um yeah so you know again I think back to when I was a kid, I hated computers um I mean I wanted to be outside playing of course not to date myself but my first computer was a monoChrome screen Apple 2e you can imagine it wasn't exactly a fun tool. You know I never wanted to work with computers, I wanted to work with people. Technology though, as I learned as an adult is a fantastic tool to enable me to do that. So when I look at my work, whether it is with independent living centre or my consultation I mean it's, it is all about accessibility it is all about technology um I operate a business, I work, I play video games, I communicate, I do everything with literally my index finger, right. So one finger allows me to take, communicate, type um manage, manage my world, use my phone. So I mean all of this would be impossible without technology. And that technology improves, improves, I mean obviously with the advent of Google home and the voice activated systems that we are seeing now um I'm able to turn off lights, turn on lights, open doors literally and that I never could before with technology. So um it's been absolute key for me personally and in my business it is what I do. I mean I, I'm able to help corporations sort of institute this accessibility into their own systems so that they can have a wider climb, so it has been I would say definitely a key point for, for my life.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Thanks Dan, Sharmeen what about you? What roles does technology play in your life and your work?

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Oh that's so cool about Google Home I never thought about that being able to TURP on lights and that kind of thing for so many of the population, that's a great idea. So similar to Dan I group sort of resisting technology. I would not describe myself as the most technically competent person which when you are a person with a pretty significant disability um it is always, always a bit of an extra barrier if you are not super comfortable with technology, I mean I'm comfortable enough but like I said earlier I use speech to text, no hold on, Text-to-speech technology on my computer um so that the stuff that's on the screen is read out loud and I can navigate that independently. So I'm not only dictating, I do type and navigate the Internet and all the software that we use in the office as well. I would say that's probably the largest portion of accessible technology that I use and then I also use an iPhone which is accessible right out of the box. And I think that can't be over stated sort of what Dan was saying about Google home and that type of thing to be able to, historically um when trying to find technology often they were add ons that were quite costly people had to look for additional sources of funding, but it is becoming increasingly the case that you can purchase an accessible piece of equipment right out of the box with the needs of different types of disabled people anticipated in sort of built right into the software. I find it very interesting though because from my perspective the accessibility of technology is careening wildly into opposite directions. On the one hand, we are finding so many more efforts to build accessibility in from the ground up. Which is so important like Dan was saying, not just sort of retroactively be like think we can stick a ramp here somewhere. It's so important and it is being done, but at the same time you are also seeing technology go the other direction where for example from a blind perspective or the perspective of a blind person there is a increasing reliance on touch screen technology and, you

know, laundry machines that used to be accessible because they had buttons and dials now have touch screens and toaster can also make phone calls and your fridge can tell you when you need new groceries t can be really overwhelming too. I would say large segments of the population but so I find that it's, it is definitely moving in the right direction when that intentionality is there. But when it is not, definitely perceiving it, careening in another direction as well.

>> **Dan Lajole:** That's really interesting Sharmeen I mean it is, you know, and it is still true. I mean I think of my it is self so for those who can't see me I'm a wheelchair user and I don't have a lot of mobility in my, in my arms. So you think of all the virtual reality things that are am coming out now. Wearing the goggles and move about the room and do all these things but for me that's completely useless. It is true sort of a pull between technologies, the hope being one day we all have just a chip in our brain and we can do whatever we want.

>> It may happen.

>> **Dan Lajole:** I don't really know if I want a chip on my brain --

>> Yeah, no kidding, right.

>> **Dan Lajole:** I've seen too many Sci Fi movies --

>> You already touched on this in 2005 [audio cut out] came into effect, the purpose of that legislation was to improve accessibility with a goal of making Ontario as accessible as they can by 2025, that date is coming up quick. There is a list of requirements for businesses and organizations to comply. Ontario was the first Province to pass this legislation, such legislation. We are not going to go into too much detail about the recommending racial here you can visit Ontario.ca for more information. Whether it was the Act itself or awareness in general, social media representation in movies maybe, one way or another it seems like there is more awareness now about accessibility than there used to be and it seems to be thought about more than it used to be. I'm wondering if you can speak it that. If you have noticed improvements, where have we improved what, are we doing, what are we doing right, what are we getting right? Sharmeen let's start with you this time.

>> Okay sorry I was just about, I was just sitting back and resting on my [Name?] drinking my coffee letting Dan take this one. I will take a stab at it. So for me actually I would say the biggest way in which I've noticed it for myself is in physical design so I know that at the college it's certainly prioritized when building new spaces um the college is actually a bit of a hot mess when it comes to physical layout and accessibility for the original buildings and all the add ons but certainly for any of our newer projects that's a priority and that's reflected in a level of consultation that I'm seeing and I mean even just from a more basic level braille in elevators, right. Like that's, if there is no braille in an elevator and it doesn't talk you virtually have no way of knowing what floor you are on. So some changes like that have been ones that I've noticed and I think it can be sort of a tendency to latch on to these tangible things but it is a good thing because it is meant that there has been some noticeable changes for a lot of people.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Dan can you speak to some of the --

>> **Dan Lajole:** Yeah so I think of two things, so you know the first for me again um, you know, I don't require a software to assist with reading text however that is, that I wear in my consultation business. I would say certainly technology and accessible technology has come a long way. I will hazard a very small percentage of the population even would hands that meant

five years ago, where now businesses are through the legislation being encouraged to make their documentation and their projects accessible. So I would say that's certainly one area where I have noticed a significant improvement but you know Andrena you touch on something that to me is the real advantage of the AODA and, you know it can be debated as to, you know, the particulars of the various standards or how enforceable are they, are we going to reach our goal by 2025. I think for me the greatest thing the AODA has done has made accessibility part of the conversation. Businesses, organizations and groups of people again ten years ago weren't even thinking about it. You know, it wasn't even on their radar where as now from a Corporate infrastructure down companies are looking at okay how do we implement this. How do we make our employment practices accessible where would of never thought of that before. How do we make our websites accessible? How do we remove systemic barriers to our employment and our sales procedures. So I mean these are things that we're not discuss or rarely discussed. 10 or 20 years ago. Certainly not in the world I grew up in. So the fact that conversation is happening, even if all of the goals aren't obtained by 2025 um I would say is perhaps the greatest thing of the AODA has accomplished.

>> Yeah well said.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Thanks Dan, I think as well since onset of COVID we have learned some the think about accessibility and how quickly organizations and businesses can make accommodations to use that term. Because we were forced into working from home and having flex work hours and the technology that you need to be in place for us to do this, it happened pretty quickly, I think that's something a lot of people with disabilities have been asking for a long time, that kind of flexibility just proves that um we really can, we can become more accessible and more inclusive if we are focused on it. We are going to talk about accessibility or rather COVID and impact of COVID I think tomorrow's Webinar is going to focus on that and the mental health piece as well. But I think it is something, it is something that I find really interesting. Some of the womans that have been around accessibility that have come out as a result of us being forced to work differently than we have ever really worked before. Lastly I would like to offer our listeners today some tips and suggestions. I think a lot of people feel a little bit of anxiety and stress around accessibility and like the idea of being more inclusive and want to be more accessible but just don't know how to start. They certainly can go to Ontario.ca and look at the legislation but if people want to do more or if they want to um start thinking about accessibility and maybe want to take it back to their board and talk about what they can do as an organization or a business, what, where would they start? Do you have any tips or suggestions for what business owners and organizations might consider when they are thinking about improving accessibility?

>> **Dan Lajole:** Well I think, you know, first and foremost it needs to become a part of the thinking, a part of (phone ringing in background) sorry that's my home phone ringing if you can hear it, sorry. Is to become part of the culture. We hear about Corporate culture, what does that mean and what does that entail? So I think making accessibility and inclusion a part of your culture is an important for step at least. The willingness to learn what that means as you said. From there you know it's depends I guess on what the goal is. If the goal is to accommodate a specific individual or situation then as we have all said today, you know, talk to the individual themselves and find out what will best suit their needs F it is about building a barrier free

environment um or inclusive product then I would say, you know, by all means reach out to any so of the experts in our community, there are many agencies that do a lot of great work around this CNIB, I happened. ^Living Centre to name two that, do a lot of work on helping to interpret the legislation and to go above and beyond that to build inclusive place so I would say reach out to the experts that are already, you know, doing this every day in the community.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** That's great Dan, thank you. Sharmeen, what about you, what tips or advice might you give?

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Yeah so I think um sort of elaborating on what Dan was saying, I think really what this is going to involve is asking yourself the hard questions, so are we prepared to accommodate a client customer who is blind, deaf, a wheelchair user, a service dog user. And if you don't know, that's fine I think that's when it is helpful to connect to those user groups and sort of can this, what would be their experience? What would they prioritize as an accessibility concern when visiting an establishment like yours? And if the answer is no I'm not prepared to, as in we're not actually prepared to accommodate this group really try to identify the barriers r there physical barriers, is it a staffing issue? Is it a training issue? Is it resources? Do you even have all the information you need to decide whether or not you can be accessible? You know, I think about how my husband and I go grocery shopping we call [Name?] down the road and say we would like to shop today. Can you let us know of a good time we can come in and they say okay around 2:0 or 3 o'clock is our shift change and it tends to be quieter then, we go in then and walk around the store. We generally have a good idea of what the layout is like. But walk around with store employee who helps us find the specific items we're looking for and it is a pretty sort of low tech, low tech solution that already takes advantage of the resources that they already have. They didn't have to hire like a whole extra slew of people or anything like that on and I really recognise that the extent to which people can do this will vary. But I think it will always start by asking the questions are we prepared to accommodate these types, these communities and can we get information on what these communities would seek. We do need to be able to accommodate people going about regular course of what would be expected in the businesses that we provide. And then really saying like if these are the barriers, what can we do about them. And so I think a lot of it really is dyeing Lockley-Browning and and they can be really uncomfortable conversations because the fear is that it will come back and reflect negatively on you that I'm not accessible and I don't want to be accessible and it is not my fault, we just don't have a big budget. But I'm really hoping that one of the things you can take away from this conversation is the importance of dialoguing and how that can often lead to some really creative solutions that won't tank the entire economy.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Excellent those are excellent points --

>> **Dan Lajole:** Yeah I don't want to tank the entire economy, COVID has done a good enough job.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Yeah, my online shopping should help though.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Making up for it. I think and Dan already touched on this, we want to remind people there are resources available in your community to help you, he we don't expect you to be experts as a small business owner or wherever it is that you work. We don't expect you to know what all the answers are and what the solutions are, but there are resources and we would like you to connect for place to start would be the organization that is they are

involved in this Webinar that you can find the list on city website, folks in the community that are there to help, help you with some of these resources and connect you with other resources I highly recommend you reach out and get some of the support to make your, more accessible.

>> **Dan Lajole:** Can I elaborate really quickly.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** I want to say even people in disability community don't know about all the supports and resources that are available. I know a friend of mine we went to the Kitchener market once, what's that one that happens at Christmas, like Chrysa and she called the City of Kitchener and there was just somebody who was there who was able to walk around with her. We never would of known that was an option. I think the need to ask questions goes all directions.

>> Right and that's, you know, Sharmeen I know has programs that help direct people to those types of resources and as do we. That's literally my job with independent living centre, helping to find out what's out there and sort of be that buffer for people that maybe don't have the same sort of access to information that maybe we do. So certainly I wanted to sort of elaborate or agree with Andrena that, you know, our agencies it is a bit of a shame, this plug or whatever.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** I'll call you.

>> **Dan Lajole:** We do have these services and to be honest, you know, we are here to help. So I know it is our pleasure to do so.

>> **Andrena Lockley-Brown:** Thanks I'm now going to pass it back over to Marina for our Q and A period. Marina are you there?

>> **Marina Dotzert:** I'm here Andrena. [LAUGHTER] So great thank you very much to everyone who submitted questions, so I'll just start off with the first one. So what is the best way to include people with disabilities in the accessibility process without creating an extra burden on the user and the customers with the disability. And Sharmeen do you want to go first or do you want me to repeat the question?

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Um yeah I can take a stab at it, if you want to elaborate Dan feel free to. I think that is actually a really good question a lot of times people with disabilities are contacted and asked if they can test the accessibility of a website or something like that. In my experience um having disabled representation on a board is a pretty good idea. It is sort of a built in um accessibility lens that can be helpful. Another thing that I've noticed that some companies and smaller organizations have been doing is contacting people with disabilities and simply asking if they can observe the person with the disability try to interact with a portion of the business or website and just give their feedback and then compensate with a gift certificate or something like that. The honest news isn't on them to tell them what to do but you are watching them as a way to figure out what barriers they are encountering and then they can just give you that feedback and then your experts can sort of incorporate that. But it is a good question, Dan do you have any thoughts?

>> **Dan Lajole:** You know, absolutely Sharmeen I hear what you are saying and I mean I think that for me when I think about a business maybe trying to incorporate those types of ideas into their, into their planning I mean again maybe a bit of a broken record but reach out to the experts, reach out to those who have experience, who work professionally in the field. You know, I know that through my consultation business um a lot of there is a real need and appreciation for someone who is familiar with the products, you know, in one way or another I think that it is

important um to when not just stand in a boardroom like you said with nobody, with a disability. I will caution that because as we all know, you know, it's disability is not, doesn't mean using a wheelchair. Disability doesn't mean having a cane there is in fact, may in fact be individuals with a variety of abilities existing in your Corporation but certainly if approximate somebody comes forward as having that to really embrace that and to take advantage of the living experts who are in our community to provide some sort of feedback on to your business.

>> **Marina Dotzert:** Thank you. Then another question that came in, can you guys just touch on how you guys landed on the jobs that you have right now. What was the process to get there. I know you guys mentioned that, you no I, you didn't think [audio cut out] you were going to work in accessibility, how did you end up here anyway?

>> **Dan Lajole:** Well I bribed somebody, no, wait, sorry. [LAUGHTER] No. You know what I have a long history with the agencies that I've worked with um I think in those regards there was a real dedication on behalf of those agencies to seek out people of all abilities to sort of be engaged so we just spoke about, you know, how do you bring accessibility into your business. I think that the independent living centre is an example of organization that actively seeks, sorry actively seeks to bring accessibility into the discussion. And my first job with ILC, because I work there three times over the past 25 years my first time there was as the administrator assistant I was young and I don't think I did a very good job with it. So but the relationship continued over the years and, you know, I was always an active volunteer with the agency. So that's sort of how I got my job. As for the consultation business um when I was the administrator for ILC many, many moons ago back in the beginning of websites somebody asked me hey Dan can you do work on our website, we need to update it. I knew nothing about websites at the time but I'm a yes man so I was like sure no problem, I'll do that. I accidentally over the past, you know, over the next ten years anyway self taught about technology and that's where I am now. A variable expert.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** I, when I realized I was not going to be a Broadway star um thought about going to law school and I went there at the University of Ottawa and then I articulated in the area of family law because I thought that's what I wanted to do, but actually realized it is a very inaccessible area of the law firm for a variety of reasons. And wasn't a good fit. So after getting called to the Ontario Bar I sort of was in that job seeking stage when um the posting for an accessibility advisor at [Name?] came up. And I applied for that and got that job um then after working directly with the students I transitioned into, into this management role which kind of Webbed my accessibility background to legal parts come in when we talk about advocacy and dispute resolution and that type of thing that comes up with students and instructors and that type of thing. So definitely not what I thought I was going to do, but here I am.

>> **Marina Dotzert:** Great, thank you. One last question. You guys both obviously mention that accessibility is fluid and whatever needs depends on an individual but how can small businesses keep up especially if they feel they are low on resources? Dan I know, Dan I nominate you to speak.

>> **Dan Lajole:** Yeah, sorry I'm having some technical difficulties here.

>> Oh do you want me, I can jump in.

>> **Dan Lajole:** Yeah.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** I think it sort of goes back to what we were saying about it not being a

checklist. I think so much of accessibility because just really boil down to what can I do to be helpful and a lot of the time what you can do or what is needed is so much less than you might have ever anticipated. Whether it's reading out loud the instructions on a box or offering to retrieve the items yourself. You know, accessibility is not an end goal. There is a process and I'll always say that approach matters almost as much, I would say in many cases even more than outcome. So there are, there may be store that is are not completely accessible or conducive to large devices sort of navigating the aisles but second best thing you know what they aren't really wide enough, I'm truly sorry about that, you are not going to be able to navigate this independently but you know what, if you can give me a general idea of what you are looking for or even a list of specific items, I'll walk around the store and pick them out and I'll bring them to you. So there is a second best and a third best and a fourth best, so it doesn't have to be, it really doesn't have to be perfect.

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>> **Dan Lajole:** Can you guys still hear knee?

>> Yeah.

>> **Dan Lajole:** My video is totally gone so I'm not sure if you can see me but um sorry. I'm going to have to pass on the question because I don't even remember what it was because my total software is crashing as we speak.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** It's okay, it is very distracting.

>> **Dan Lajole:** But you gave a good answer from what I heard.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Thanks. [LAUGHTER]

>> **Marina Dotzert:** Well thank you, so that's all the questions that we have today unless something pops in last minute. But I really want to thank everyone for your participation today. If you wish, if you wish to learn more about the topics talked about today or provide any comments or feedback please don't hesitate to reach out or maybe some thoughts come to you after this Webinar but feel free to e-mail us at access at Kitchener.ca also there is great organizations in our region looking to assist you and we can help you find them as well. Just a few of those organizations help us plan this event today with them being just belonging, Canadian Hearing Services, CNIB, City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Community Support Connections, Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region, Kitchener Waterloo accessibility and closed captioning and video relay interpretation and transcription services has been possible by City of Kitchener and Waterloo. Video copy of this Webinar will be made available on Kitchener Web page, not immediately but by the end of this week we hope.

Kitchener.ca/inclusion where you all went to register. And I would also like to say a big thank you to our panelists for taking time to speak with us today. Dan and Sharmeen that was great, thank you. It was a pleasure to hear your knowledge and wisdom on accessibility and inclusion.

>> **Dan Lajole:** My pleasure, thank you.

>> **Sharmeen Khan:** Thanks for having us.

>> **Marina Dotzert:** Andrena thank you for moderating. And thank you for everyone for attending today. Please again another shameless plug, but please be sure to, excuse me, register for any or you will a of our remaining Webinars happening this week running from Tuesday until Friday from 1 until 2 pm for more information or to register please visit us Kitchener.ca/inclusion, hope everyone has a nice day.

>> Thanks everyone. (recording: The recording has stopped)

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