



## Episode 14: The State of Disability Inclusion in Business in Canada

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### Episode Transcript

#### (Main Intro — Dean Askin)

You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D, the podcast that explores the power of inclusion, and why disability is an important part of the workplace diversity and inclusion conversation. Produced by the Ontario Disability Employment Network with your hosts, Jeannette Campbell and Dean Askin.

#### Dean Askin

These days, there's more conversation about disability inclusion in business and employment than ever. It's been driven by some rapid changes in the nature and future of work. All this conversation is a good thing. But it's a discourse that's actually been going on in this country for over 100 years. Hello, there. I'm Dean Askin, and welcome to this episode of You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D. And you heard that right. For all intents and purposes, the modern conversation in Canada about disability inclusion started during World War One.

#### Jeannette Campbell

Hi there. I'm Jeannette Campbell here at the other mic. And that's right. The Disability Inclusion conversation was originally focused on wounded veterans who are repatriating home with a disability, and their employment prospects, their employability, and just how they fit into, and were perceived by Canadian society and employers of the day.

#### Dean Askin

Sound kind of familiar? Well, the nuances have changed since 1917, and 1918. But here we are in 2023. The conversation about disability inclusion and business is still going on. Indeed, not just in this country, but around the world.

#### Jeannette Campbell

These days, the disability factor is mostly rolled into the overarching business conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion. So how much has really changed in Canada anyway? And how much is the needle moved? Where is it right now? And how much more does it need to move? Questions we're going to be exploring on this episode.

**Dean Askin**

There are over 600,000 people in Canada who have a disability and can and want to work. But there are a talent group that's being overlooked when it comes to Talent Recruitment by businesses. Well, that's the state of things in a nutshell, are keep listening, because our three guests are going to peel away the layers and give us their insights about the past, present and future state of disability inclusion and business in this country.

**Jeannette Campbell**

Joining us from Toronto is Michael Bach. He is an internationally recognized thought leader on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. And he's the founder of the Canadian Centre for Diversity and inclusion. From the West Coast, we're joined by Yat Li and Anita Huberman.

**Dean Askin**

Yat is the senior accessibility consultant for the President's group. That's a network of 25 business leaders in British Columbia who are champions for more accessible inclusive workplaces. Yat's on the line from Vancouver.

**Jeannette Campbell**

And in nearby Surrey, British Columbia and Anita Huberman. And Anita has been the president of the Surrey Board of Trade for over 25 years. She's also the co-chair of the Disability Inclusion Business Council.

**Dean Askin**

Now, if you haven't heard of that, well, it's a new council created in December 2022. I think we'll be finding out more about this new council over the course of this conversation. So let's get things started. Michael Bach Yat Li and Anita Huberman. Welcome to the show.

**Michael Bach, Yat Li, Anita Huberman**

Thanks so much for having us. Thank you.

**Dean Askin**

Michael, I want to throw this first question out to you because I know you're passionate about things. Where do you think we are on the disability inclusion and awareness barometer in 2023? I mean, how would you describe the overall state of disability inclusion in business in Canada these days?

**Michael Bach**

Well, not great if I'm being totally truthful. And I say this with all intended respect for employers that are working in what I call the idea space Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility. But I, if I go back to when I started in this field, some nearly 20 years ago, I really had the naive belief that people with disabilities or diverse abilities were included in diversity and inclusion. And yet I've continued to see and I see to this day where employers are always leaving the 'a' the accessibility piece to the very end if they're including it at all. And it's, it's frustrating for me, because people just seem to leave it off. And I'm saying this as a person with a disability that I want to see employers for putting the 'a' out front

that I want to see people looking at the lens of everything they do through the accessibility lens to know that they are, including all Canadians.

**Dean Askin**

Anita you've been representing a Board of Trade out there, in Surrey for a long time, what's your perspective on on where things are right now with all of this?

**Anita Huberman**

Well, I think we have moved the needle when it comes to larger businesses, really ensuring productive pathways and supportive mechanisms related to hiring persons with diverse abilities. However, I think the gap still remains. So you know, I, you know, we started this work, really in the early 2000s. And with the small and medium sized businesses, they're still challenged, in terms of hiring persons with diverse abilities, and accessing those supports, there's a lot of support. But for some reason, the gap is still there. And we still have a long ways to go. And that's why we're working. I'm representing the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, our national chamber on really impacting meaningful outcomes for small and medium sized businesses, which actually drive Canada's economy, and they don't have the resources actually, that large businesses do, you know, such as large financial institutions, or huge corporations. There's a gap. And we're trying to understand why and to make meaningful outcomes across our nation. In addition to here in Surrey, British Columbia an the Metro Vancouver region.

**Dean Askin**

Yat, what are you seeing out there, you know, amongst the President's group?

**Yat Li**

You know, in recent years, there has been a growing focus on disability inclusion and awareness, of course, in Canada, but also in the Lower Mainland here in British Columbia, we recognize that diversity, of course, is inevitable. But we recognize that attitudes over the past decade that Anita had just mentioned, has shown us that there is greater awareness, tolerance and acceptance of greater diversity, we see that in some of our President's Group employers, we see that in our community, and we're living in a world that has really never been as connected as we are today. So we are seeing some of the employers leading this change. Now, of course, we see this commitment from the, from the Disability Inclusion Business Council, as one of the examples, we are starting to see that in smaller organizations across Canada as well too. Smaller businesses do need that support, and those training and good business practices to hire people with disabilities. And with that said, we are still seeing some hesitancy from businesses. And that could be limited resources, lack of awareness, and also really, the main sometimes main practice of it could just be the ingrained attitudes and biases. So these are some of the accessibility gaps that still exist attitudinally and also in physical spaces, digital platforms, for example, and services, which hinder participation from people with disabilities.

**Jeannette Campbell**

And, you know, Yat, sort of jumping on to, to that idea, you know, all three of you have mentioned, these different ways that this conversation, for lack of a better term is occurring. And, you know, Michael, you talked about some of the challenges around, you know, the 'A' is being left out of a lot of a lot of the conversation. And Anita, you referenced the fact that, you know, there's still these gaps with

the small to medium businesses, larger businesses are starting and those large global corporations and national corporations are, are on the right track. And, and then and then Yat, you're talking about, you know, this, there's growing awareness, there's, there's, you know, I think you said, there's more acceptance, there's more tolerance. So, one of the what I'm wondering about is, you know, if there's all of this business conversation, you know, and we're saying there's more than ever before about diversity, equity and inclusion. You know, what, what are your thoughts on on? Does it tend to focus? Often do businesses tend to focus on gender and ethnicity and disability sometimes just completely gets left out of the equation and, and why do you think things like that keep happening and do you have ideas of how we can change them? I open that question to anyone.

### **Anita Huberman**

I think you know what today, at least in British Columbia, there is a leadership paradigm shift. And especially with the leadership of the BC government around environmental, social governance principles, procurement activities, all of those pieces. So, you know, the actual cultural shift is happening, and it's in progress. I think, you know, when it, you know, businesses are so strapped in terms of cost of living pressures, and human resources is just so complicated for them to navigate, especially if their only modus operandi is really, you know, delivering a service or making a product. And then they rely on others to really ensure the HR, financial, marketing all of those other pieces. But if you're a five-person business, you need a skilled talent right away, you have no time for training. You know, I don't think, you know, I think employers, especially today in today's economic environment, will take the time to, to really ensure the training, you know, but employers are in a rush, you know, they're desperate to find labour, and they want someone ready to go. And I think, you know, especially in Metro Vancouver, where we're a very multicultural society, you know, ethnicity, you know, gender, you know, from my perspective. You know, really, it's, it's the skills that people will bring to the job, and to the overall organization that is most important in today's economy by having that person ready to rock and roll right away is that the number one priority for that employer.

### **Michael Bach**

Just following on, on what needs to just said, I think part of the problem is there's a perception still, for some reason, that hiring a person with a disability or reversibility means you're going to have to make massive changes, you're going to have to spend 10s of 1000s of dollars to get that person up to speed, and working. And, you know, all of the studies tell us that's not the case, as a person with a disability, I don't need any accommodation. But there is the perception, because they think of people with disabilities as somehow requiring accommodation, that it kind of taints the picture. And I think that's the case with smaller employers. I think once you get into the, I don't know, where we draw the line at medium to large employers, but let's say 250 employees, I don't know. I don't think there's a lack of want, I think most of them, get it, they're not you know, they're looking for talent, regardless of of what package it comes in. But they there seems to be this perpetual forgetting of the accommodations. And it is. No, I'm not gonna say always, but, you know, the majority of times, that need for accommodation is left to the person with a disability, so they have to ask for it. So, you know, there's going to be a conference, and no one has thought to make sure that there's an ASL or cue ASL interpreter. They're going to, you know, they hand out printed materials. No one thinks that they need to have an accessible PDF or or a braille version. There's just this continual forgetting that you're, you're not always pitching to the majority. And I think of I'm going to, I'm going to tattle a little and talk about the City of Calgary

which I spent a lot of time in and I I'm a big fan of, but when in my former organization, we were looking for an office in Calgary, I said to my real estate agent, we need a fully accessible office building. And I had to outline for him what that meant. And I cannot tell you the number of buildings we went to where it was not accessible because there was no ramp or the only wheelchair accessible entrance was through the basement through the parking garage. One building that it was through the parking garage, and I said what if the person doesn't drive and they just looked at me, like I had just told them the secret of the universe. And, you know, bathrooms that didn't have assistive devices to open or weren't wheelchair accessible, you know, Braille on signage, the fundamental basics of accessibility. And they're just not thinking about that. And it's not to say that Calgarians, the province of Alberta, isn't, doesn't want you to be an inclusive place for people with disabilities. But they are not necessarily thinking about the barriers to access for our communities.

### **Yat Li**

I'd like to build off of what Michael and Anita had just mentioned, very important to focus on the fact that there is still a lack of understanding awareness, and stereotypes and people just, you know, not knowing what to say you're asked when a person self-identifies in the workplace. I've come across situations on a personal level, where I self-identify as a person with disability, I have a congenital disability, I'm deaf and hard of hearing, I read lips and I wear a prosthetic ear, I go into an orientation tour at the at the office at a workplace, and I see all these headphones that I can't use, because I can't wear physical headphones and headsets. And I use an assistive tech. But had I not, you know, muster some courage to share and self-disclose, and also at the same time risk, kind of potentially, you know, being vulnerable, really. I don't know what to wear, I was like to be provided a job job accommodation unless I asked. So if I didn't ask, I would have to really just fake it along the way, and find my own methods to cope. So you know, with that being said, we recognize that, you know, 22% of the Canadians self-identify with a disability. So imagine going to dinner next time, and getting a table for four, one of you could have a disability, and that's a huge number. So organizations need to really focus on people with disabilities in the workplace. We often see them left out of this conversation, predominantly due to lack of education, awareness training. So we continually need to bring this into the forefront for employers in Canada.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And so Yat, and thank you all three of you for for those insights into that, you know, building on this, then we've pointed out some of the some of the challenges and some of the problems. So let's flip this around for a second and say, what what is it the businesses are doing right, today around disability inclusion that maybe they weren't doing five or 15 years ago? What's the progress that you've that you have witnessed?

### **Anita Huberman**

I think certainly, businesses are, you know, really ensuring they're taking advantage of grant opportunities to make their businesses more accessible. They're taking advantage, some of them have certification programs, you know, through the Rick Hansen Foundation, for example, even our city of Surrey, whenever the largest municipal employers, I have been a leader in that regard. I think, certainly, from a human resources standpoint, whether it's from a policy perspective, you know, those HR manuals, you know, really ensuring that the culture of inclusivity of their workforce, you know, I, I've

been in this position as president for 17 years, with the organization, that fear for 30 years, and I've seen a significant paradigm cultural shift in in the recognition of hiring persons with diverse abilities, and creating those supports the HR policies to really support everyone, every single person matters in this economy. And never before has that been so top of mind and prevalent in terms of moving our economy forward. Yat, what do you think?

### **Yat Li**

You know, we are starting to see a bit of a shift from this compliance to inclusion mindset, naturally, that Anita just really focused on in spotlight on which I really appreciate employers recognizing this, because instead of seeing this, you know, as a legality of work, disability accommodation, they're not embracing this as a more of a proactive and inclusive approach by recognizing that, hey, there is value to a diverse workforce, and they're actively trying to create this inclusive environment. One of the principles that are really important to recognize is nothing about us without us. And this particular principle really ties in deep to an organization's intent on hiring practices, inclusive hiring ones, development of employee resource groups, which I see many employers adopting. So employee resource groups or homogenous groups, pertaining to potentially accessibility or disability groups where they share best practices, and some of the successes and challenges upstream back to senior leaders on what's working, and maybe what's not working in the organization. And, of course, I'm seeing a lot of great collaboration from employers with disability service organizations. We're also seeing leadership commitment, of course, from the President's Group, and there is support for the pledge to measure. And we're seeing, you know, a great number of accountability as well, too.

### **Michael Bach**

I would add, certainly, from larger employers, very much resonating what a need is says that their larger employers right now are recognized, they cannot overlook any talent pool, that it is, you know, I mean, we have historically low unemployment. And they look at the data around unemployment for people with diverse abilities. And they say, oh, there's a tap pool of talent. So I think, in general, and it's not all employers, but they're getting it right, that they recognize that this is a potential talent pool that can really work to their advantage, if they can get it right. And that's the question I agree with Yat that they've moved away from legislative compliance. Things like the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and and Employment Equity Act. That's less of their motivation now. And now the motivation is, we need people, and we'll take any person we can get.

### **Dean Askin**

You know, on the one, it's good to hear, but all these things that you've indicated, you know, that people in the business world are doing right out there, and then things in the 21st century are changing. But what do you think still needs to change the most? Is it attitude? Is it awareness? What's the what's the what's the big thing?

### **Michael Bach**

I will say that I think the things needs to change, the most would be the employers positioning of that request for accommodation. Like as a person who say like Yat who has a hearing impairment of some kind, should not have to ask for an ASL interpreter. At an event, like those requests shouldn't be

special, they should just be commonplace. You know, I can't tell you the number of events that I've spoken at, where there's a stage and no ramp. And they are only going to put in a ramp, if someone asks for it. And that shouldn't be the case, it should just be standard, that facilities are fully barrier free. And I mean, I think about a story to former employer, where it's a long story, but I'll I'll summarize it, we were doing an event in a restaurant, the restaurant was called Seven Steps, I'm sure you can guess why it was called Seven Steps. And a person showed up for the event, who used a wheelchair. And bless his heart, he said, You know, if someone can carry my chair in and carry me in, then I'll be fine. The basement, the washroom, of course, was in the basement. And I immediately said, there's no world in which we're doing that. The humiliation of having to carry someone in, is just not going to accept it. So we moved the event at the last minute to another restaurant, and it cost several thousand dollars. But the default should have been, we're not doing events in restaurants that are not completely accessible. Because if big companies started to do that, then those facilities that aren't accessible, would figure it out fast.

### **Yat Li**

And I'd like to add on to this as well to Michael and his mention of accessible requirements in the physical space and also job accommodation. This also ties in directly, you know, part and parcel with attitudinal barriers. Should the employer should the restaurant or the manager of the restaurant have this awareness and education? There wouldn't have been, you know, a discussion with the organizers about the accessibility of the space. For example, had you know, previous employers I worked at had, you know, have a list of opportunities and provide potentially job accommodations right there for not just myself, but for others, it will make for an easy accommodation process. You know, we're also seeing some things that need to change the most, which includes tech, accessible technology and communications. So closed captioning, on Zoom, for example, needs to be on default. Live close cap, live captioning at events, equally important at conferences. There's so many times I've requested for captioning at conferences only to go awry and not having to be provided. And not just myself. But I can see other people as one of my colleagues who do not have a hearing disability also, you know, find it hard sometimes to follow along in events. And it helps with retaining of knowledge as well. But just one particular example I come across working with employers is once you hire a person, let's say that person that has a visual impairment, you bring them on, you provide the job accommodations. But if your technology and communication is not accessible, it is almost not impossible, but it's very difficult for that person to work in that environment. So say, Yes, you take on this, this champion to higher person with disabilities, you find someone that has an imaginative skill set, and they you invite them into your organization. But if your IT, or if your tech is not accessible, it becomes a really tough environment for that person to excel at.

### **Anita Huberman**

I think also, in addition to those two pieces that Michael and Yat articulated, there also has to be a communication between the employee and the employer, it's difficult for the employer to know everything. And if an employee does need something, then there should be this win-win type of open communication. An employer wants to do the right thing. They want to be able to provide the correct support systems. And then you know, if they're a smaller employer, sometimes they're going to need, you know, other types of resources in order to make that accommodation. But we can't, you know, it's not something that is intrinsic. You know, we're all learning this is a journey. And, you know, it's, you

know, we, you know, even when we're working with our diverse communities, whether it's a multicultural communities, you know, we're learning about the backgrounds of people, and every person matters in this economy. But you have to have that one-on-one conversation in order to make it work in that workplace.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And he to sort of jumping onto that, and leading into another question you were talking about, you know, the importance of communication between employer and employee. And recently, something has started that I think is starting to generate a lot of conversation and there's a lot of interest, and it's the disability inclusion Business Council. And, you know, that was appointed by Federal Minister Carla Quatro. And Anita, you're the co-chair of this council. So can you tell us a bit about why this council and for you being on it is so important and what you're hoping this council is going to achieve?

### **Anita Huberman**

Well, the candidate disability business inclusion Council, I co chair it as a representative I represent the Canadian Chamber of Commerce or national chamber that represents 230,000 businesses 430 chambers of commerce, boards of trades in our country. Our other co-chair is Paul Clark from TD Bank. And and then there's 11 council members that have been appointed by the federal government. Why does it exist? Because there's still a gap. You know, there's lots of organizations that support companies to hire persons with diverse abilities, whether they're visible abilities, sorry, invisible disabilities, visible disabilities, but the gap still exists. And certainly, it was said right off the top of this podcast. There are 600,000 people in this country that are a part of a labour pool, but are not able to tap into the available employment opportunities to maximize their skill sets to maximize the support. And so our minister is finding a pathway towards a really results-oriented Workforce Strategy through the consultation and not only the council members, but a national consultation and roadmap to ensure success for small and medium sized businesses that are not really focused or we're not realizing the focus of hiring persons with disabilities, that gap is still there. And that is what we are trying to, you know, really work on a pathway to ensure different ingredients in the overall recipe towards success for those 600,000 people that matter in this economy. And, and so we're in the infancy of our work. And we are going to every single province and territory, engaging in consultation to hear from small and medium sized businesses to see what's working, what's not working, you know, why aren't they capturing the supports that currently exist? Why is it so confusing to navigate the supports, and, and knowing that we have a very diverse industry base, throughout the nation, whether you're in manufacturing, development, and construction, retail, financial, whatever it may be, every single industry has an opportunity to realize that employment pool potential. So that's the purpose of the Canada Disability Council. And it is a huge endeavor, a huge responsibility. But we're all working together. And that's where it all begins working together.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And speaking of working together, then Michael, and Yat I'm wondering, you know, were you aware of this council? And what are some ways that you would if you were aware of the council? What are some



ways that you're maybe envisioning interactions with them in your roles, because both of you really represents some large, large groups that are very interested in this as well?

### **Yat Li**

Yes, that's a great question, Jeannette, you know, at the President's Group, we've come to establish the 25 business leader model and principles 10 years ago, and founded by two business leaders, whom are really well known in the industry **to my room and**, and Craig Richmond. And in growing this, we recognize that, you know, this is a great opportunity for others to follow and to emulate some of the business models. And in our discussions with, you know, ESTC, you know, of course, I think, you know, with the presence of being in Minister Qualtrough's own backyard in the Lower Mainland, there's a great opportunity and appetite to build off of this before national level. So I'm, I'm aware of the of the of the of the proceedings for this council. And I'm very excited to see the potential work we can do together. But not only that, but also what it means from a national level for other provinces as well, who do not have this principle model. And seeing this apply to different provinces and territories, is going to provide a wealth of not only opportunities, but for Canadians to voice their feedback, and to talk about how they can be part of this ever-changing and ever growing landscape in our economy.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And Michael, thank you, Yat. Michael, what about you? Well, I'll confess that I hadn't heard of it. But I think that actually speaks to something that I have had conversations with the Federal Government about, and that is the challenge of communicating in a very noisy environment. And it is so difficult to get the information out to penetrate to all employers in the country. I remember when AODA came out 170 years ago, or whatever it was, and I would talk to employers, and they didn't know that they were subject to the Act. In fact, they were sure they weren't subject to the Act. And it's, it's so challenging for governments to communicate messages like this. So broadly, it's tough for governments to communicate any message so broadly, but it is such a challenge. And I think that's the that will need to be a focus of the council and I'm, I think it sounds exciting, you know, as an advocate, I'm really excited to hear what comes out of this, but I think the challenge for the counsel is to figure out how do you get the message out in the broadest possible way through every possible avenue. To the point, frankly, where people are just tired of hearing about it. But it's the old infamous, you got to tell people the same the same thing 10 times for them to remember it and that will be the challenge.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

Well so I'm glad and hopefully out of this conversation, there's some new connections, possibly that have been made. And Anita, you've got some, some strong allies, that maybe your counsel you can lead your counsel over to. And so that also that makes me think about looking forward now, right, we've talked about sort of where we were, where we are, and now where we're going. So I don't, you know, we've had the opportunity to have some really interesting guests on here we actually are, I think it was our first podcast, or our second podcast was with Paul Clark, who's your co chair and Anita. But we also had the opportunity to have Caroline Casey, and the chair of The Valuable 500, on one of our podcasts. And that was just last year. And if you're familiar with Caroline Casey, she doesn't she doesn't mince words. And she was she was pretty serious about saying that, you know, CEOs can't bury their their head in the sand anymore. They can't ignore disability inclusion, and everything that

you've all three of you have been talking about, is really confirming that and that those conversations and that thoughts and culture shift is happening. So with that in mind, I'm going to bring us back to the first question, but ask it in a bit of a different way. What do you what do you think? Or do you hope the state of disability inclusion in business in Canada is going to look like in the next 5,10, 20 years?  
Michael?

### **Michael Bach**

Sure, I'll start, I think, from my perspective, what I would like to see is just complete integration. So that, again, coming back to the point that the person with the reversibility doesn't always have to stick up their hand and ask for the accessibility for the accommodation. That's not to say there aren't going to be moments where there has to be a conversation, it's absolutely going to happen. You know, if a person lives lives with, say, Crohn's or Colitis, and they're going to need accommodation related to that, that's just those things happen. You can't answer everything. But we would see every building in this country is accessible for people who use wheelchairs, or who use mobility devices, we would see, just as a default, ASL interpreters captioning on every single event, it wouldn't be something, you know, at the last minute, someone say, oh, no, we need a captioner we need an interpreter. No, that's just happens. That's what I would like to see is that it is just part of the way we function as a society. And people recognize that we do those things, not for special treatment of those poor people with disabilities, it's to say, we want to include everyone in society, so everyone can contribute to their fullest potential.

### **Anita Huberman**

I think what I'd like to see in five years is really, you know, the 10-person business, the the 25-person business, you know, really, you know, a blended workforce, where you're, you're visibly, you know, you know, seeing HR policies that are intrinsic to where everyone matters, where hiring, job postings are available to everyone, you know, everyone has an opportunity to, you know, really be interviewed for that position. And where there's a conversation, where you're, you're visually seeing, you know, that this workforce, that is not only multicultural but also you're seeing this approach for persons with disabilities whether they're visible or invisible. And, of course, if it's invisible, you're not going to see it intrinsically. But I want you know, more people to talk about their disability, you know, as well, you know, don't hide it. And that way we can work closer together. You know, make sure that our communities are more accessible. And as a city building business organization here at the Surrey Board of Trade, and what Michael is speaking to you to ensure that our buildings are acceptable, you know, we have a thriving development and construction sector here in Surrey, to ensure that, you know, everyone has the opportunity for livable community f that's in addition to the that workforce that is intrinsically in tune with, with everyone's needs, through conversation, and through communication.

### **Yat Li**

What I'd like to see over the next 10, 15, 20 years is, of course, again, the ongoing, greater awareness, understanding people with disabilities in the workplace and in our media as well, too. So it starts with two top and I think we need representation is often overlooked as a as a medium, and conduit to share the communication, that of the representation of our current landscape in the workplace to so I mean, just recently, in 2021, there was a stat that showed Canadians spent on average of what five and a half hours with digital media each day. So every day, every moment, every five hours of your waking hour

time in your day, you're spending on scrolling your phone, and among other things, and what are you seeing on your phones? Are you seeing people with disabilities in the workplace, are you? Is there an inclusive model that is appearing on your phone is a brand associate themselves with an inclusive model as well to perhaps a person who uses a wheelchair, a person who's wearing a visible hearing device, or a person who's signing on the advertisement as well, too. So I think, you know, we need to continue to be front and center, like when Michael mentioned earlier about, you know, a really saturated space needs to be front and centre of Canadians and wherever they are, we need to be there as well, too. And another thing, I think it's important that I hope in the next 10 to 15 years, we realize is to focus on career mobility for people with disabilities. And when I speak about career mobility, that these are persons with disabilities who self-identify in the workplace, and also kind of their job potential in terms of receiving or attaining a promotion and working upwards, within the organization, or being primed for future work at other organizations. There's still a really kind of new kind of area for research, when I understand is that there is still a lot of focus on career mobility for persons with disabilities are often left to themselves to kind of seek opportunities within the organization or at other organizations as well. So I'd like to see more conversations and research on this in the next 10 to 15 years.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And you know, it's that's interesting, because really what what all of you are speaking to if all those if all those things are realized then this concept Yat that you're finalizing with around this employment lifecycle. Right, the challenge isn't just about and, and the call to action isn't just about securing a job. We're talking about a lifelong integration, and an activity within the economy within your communities. So we are talking about the employment lifecycle. And you know, Anita and Michael, to your points about, you know, visibility and accessibility and just the everything becoming sorted, the default way that things are done is going to ensure as well disability for addressing the employment lifecycle of a person. I think I'll I'll pause there. Before I get on my soapbox, Dean, what were you going to say?

### **Dean Askin**

I was going to say that, Yat you gave me a little bit of shot of a good shot of adrenaline there when you talked about, you know, the importance of disability representation in the media, because we're actually doing a two part series on that that's airing later this year. So what I'm wondering is, you know, you've, you know, told us what your vision is, and all the things that that are possible, then they're perfectly reasonable expectations. So why how do we get to that future state of disability inclusion that you're envisioning? What's your main message? What sort of one key call to action for businesses to help us all get there in the next 5,10, 15,25 years?

### **Yat Li**

Start measuring Dean. Peter Drucker has a famous quote, we can manage we can measure. So start measuring today. It's it's not that hard to measure. At the President's Group we have a pillar campaign, where we measure organizations within British Columbia, we're part of what we call the pledge to measure. We asked two simple questions on our survey. Do you self-identify with a disability? And are you a senior leader? The senior leader component is very important to us, because it shows us year over year, that benchmark, but also a benchmark for persons to people with disabilities within that organization, and how they're growing year over year in terms of numbers, or perhaps they're not growing. And we can start asking questions, why and how and how can we support them in that growth,

and to meet those goals. So, again, my main message for organizations that are thinking about being on this path or perhaps wanting to take this next step, to be part of this inclusion, inclusive workplace, I encourage you and recommend them to start measuring today.

### **Anita Huberman**

You know, the call to action to businesses, is to contact supportive organizations like the President's Group, like Chambers of Commerce, boards of trade and other organizations that can offer that support to businesses, I think there, there really needs to be that collaboration between the business and support organization. And, you know, I'd like to see more of that. To ensure results in action.

### **Michael Bach**

I would say that, a bit of a reminder, to every employer to everyone, and that is that everything in life is a form of accommodation. It just depends on whether or not it's an accommodation for the minority or the majority. If you go to a meeting, and someone provides you a chair to sit in, that is a form of accommodation, because the person who shows up who uses a wheelchair doesn't need it. If you go into an office, and there are lights, that is a form of accommodation, because a person who is blind, the Needham, everything is a form of accommodation. It's just whether or not you're accommodating the many are the few. So if we can get our brains around that. And this is where we focus on the E in idea, which is equity. Recognizing that people have different needs, we don't all start from the same place. So if you want me to be successful in your environment, you're going to have to potentially treat me differently. And that may mean that I need a screen reader, it may mean that I need a ramp it may mean any number of things. But if you treat everyone the same, then you are naturally excluding people.

### **Dean Askin**

Prolific insights. You've all had some great insights is, is there anything that we haven't talked about, that you think is important to mention?

### **Anita Huberman**

I was just going to say that we need to talk more about what is working well. And we need to send that out through our different as businesses send that out through our different marketing channels, social media, even as a, you know, a short, you know, tweet, tweets, even to celebrate, you know, what is going on in our society right now. We all need to be role model for each other. And by being role models, we can learn from each other, and even be better.

### **Michael Bach**

I was just going to say, if you think that it's going to happen on its own, it's not. Disability Inclusion requires work. And if you're not willing to put in the work, nothing's going to change. It's sort of like getting a gym membership and not going. It sounds like a good theory, it just doesn't work. So you have to put in the effort in order to make your environments accessible and inclusive, so that everyone can participate fully.

### **Yat Li**

I co-post what Anita and Michael had mentioned and also the part about legislation I think, you know, we're gonna employers need to get on you know, before there's some extra an additive to the legislation and it becomes not an insurmountable place to start this work, but up behind the eight ball. And I think employers need to be proactive if they wish to to be part of this and they should be and I think it goes hand in hand with the celebration, of course with national accessibility weekend International Persons with Disabilities Day, which we can mention as well.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And you know, I'm glad that you mentioned that Yat, cuz I was thinking of it. I needed what you'd said about talking about what's working well, and and that is, I mean, in in our calendars right now we know that we know that there's the entire month of October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. And that's really the theme of that every year alters depending on if you're in the States or in Canada, or if you're part of ODEN because we make our own theme. But you know, that is specifically around celebrating and acknowledging the contributions and talking about what's going right and learning from other people. So, you know, I thank you for those for those closing thoughts. And I'm sure I'm not the only person who's thankful for this. I think other people who are who are listening, are going to be thankful for being able to sit in on this conversation. And you've probably given people a lot to consider about both the past the present, and this future vision of the state of things and how disability inclusion is going to fit in to keeping employer businesses. So employer businesses in Canada, there's approximately 1.3 million of them in this country. So how this is going to keep them successful, both now and in the future, as well. So Anita, and yet and Michael, thanks so much for coming on the show, to have this important conversation and share your insights with us.

### **Anita Huberman/Yat Li/Michael Michael Bach**

Thanks for having me. Thank you.

### **Dean Askin**

Thanks for me, as well, Michael, and he did and yet, you know, we mentioned off the top of the show that this whole discourse about disability inclusion and Canadian businesses has been going on for over a century. And part of me wonders whether it's going to go on for another 100 years. I mean, let's hope not. But I'm an idealist champion personality type. So I'd like to think the progress that the progress that still needs to be made. As you've all talked about in this great conversation will happen within the next few years, or at least in our lifetimes, for all of us here today.

### **Jeannette Campbell**

And on that optimistic note, the present state of things comes to an end, at least for this episode of You can't spell inclusion without a D. I'm Jeanette Campbell.

### **Dean Askin**

And I'm Dean Askin. Thanks again for listening, wherever, whenever and on whatever podcast app you're listening from. Join us each episode as we have insightful conversations, like the ones we've had on past episodes. Have a listen to some of those, like the present one in this conversation. And like the

conversations we'll be bringing you on future shows. As we explore disability inclusion in business and in our communities. From all the angles.

**(Main Show Extro — Dean Askin)**

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