

**PRESENTATION TO THE LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE ON BILL 59**  
**Thursday, March 02, 2017**

DAANS works with the public, private and non profit sectors to remove old barriers and prevent new barriers faced by an estimated 58,000 Deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened and deaf-blind Nova Scotians in a variety of areas including communication access, health, education, legal services, employment and recreation.

We are one of many organizations endorsing the Bill 59 Alliance's Principles to Redraft Bill 59. It is not our intention to repeat these principles but rather to enhance concepts behind some of those principles.

Before we talk about Bill 59, allow us to talk about a different right - broadband internet access. CRTC recently declared that to be a basic service across Canada. That means high speed internet is now a **RIGHT** not a privilege everywhere especially in Northern and remote areas.

What's involved?	Infrastructure (as in laying fiber optic cables), new technologies and new approaches.
By when?	90% of Canadians shall have access by the end of 2021. 100% of all Canadians by 2032 at the latest.
Who benefits?	Everyone – everyone now can connect with everyone else.
Who pays for it?	All of us – the federal and provincial governments, telecoms and consumers.
How much does it cost?	The cost of establishing broadband internet access for everyone is <b>LESS</b> than the cost of <b>NOT</b> doing so.

But wait a minute here! We must not be talking about the costs here. Not about who pays for what. Not if broadband internet access is means tested. Why? Because that is a **RIGHT**. That's it! No arguments there.

The concept of equality before the law is already enshrined in the UN Convention on Persons with Disabilities (which Canada ratified in 2010), the Canadian Charter of Rights and in human rights codes. Accessibility is a right of and on its own! No arguments there either! Simple as that! Indeed!

What does that mean? Accessibility is for everyone. Period.

What's involved?	Enforceable standards that remove old barriers and prevent new barriers
By when?	Yesterday! To be realistic, how does December 31, 2025 sound? At 11:59 PM that day?
Who benefits?	Everyone. Persons with disabilities (PWD) can and will contribute economically, socially, artistically and intellectually to society just like everyone else.
Who pays for it?	All of us – public, private, non-profit sectors and taxpayers (consumers).
How much does it cost?	That's not relevant! Accessibility is a <b>RIGHT</b> just as broadband internet access is. Allow us to paraphrase the Honorable Joanne Bernard - the cost of <b>inclusion</b> is much <b>LESS</b> than the cost of <b>exclusion</b> .

How can that be done? That's best done with appropriate policies, procedures and **AND funding** all to be encapsulated in enforceable standards. Bill 59 must be modified to reflect those basic concepts!

As things stand now, Bill 59 requires only a minimum of 50% of Accessibility Advisory Board members to be PWD. This Board will have 12 voting members and 4 non-voting members. We could conceivably end up with 4 voting PWD and 4 nonvoting PWD on the Board. Let's fix that by having the Bill require that a minimum of 50% plus one of the **VOTING** Board members be PWD. Let's also fix that by defining the **QUORUM** of every Board meeting to be that same number. The Board members with disabilities must reflect the cross disability community – including but **NOT** limited to those with sensory, intellectual, mental, "invisible" and mobility disabilities.

Like everyone else, we are looking forward to further consultation on this bill before it goes to the third reading in this very House.

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