TRANSCRIPT of INTERVIEW with Tony Labillois re COVID-19

MICHELLE BUCKLAND:

Well...I want to welcome Tony with us today. I'm so excited that he's agreed to you know allow me to connect with him and get an opportunity to learn more of the steps that are being taken with Statistics Canada and also just even getting some of his insights in regards of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it can um...how it's been making a lot of impact and benefits of building awareness in regards of people with disabilities and you know accessible inclusion. So, I really really want to thank Tony for taking the time out of his busy schedule for this and I am going to just give a brief synopsis of what I'll be doing and about myself.

My passion actually of doing this is to increase the awareness of accessibility...you know accommodation and inclusion...and add attention to people with disabilities. So, my passion of this is really to increase the awareness of accessibility, accommodation and inclusion and add attention of people with disabilities who in many ways have been overlooked during this COVID-19 crisis and open the door of me helping companies adapt to the new norm along how this pandemic can teach businesses to be more accessible, accommodating and inclusive.

You know there are many things that can be utilized out there that can help make this happen. So...for myself, Michelle Buckland, I am a Learning Consultant, an Accessible Advisor and also an award-winning Motivational Speaker...you know...in regards to building awareness and advocating for people with disabilities. So, this whole 15 years of my career in the Training and Development field and also this being said, I hold an extensive background in Adult Education, Information Technology, and Consulting within numerous industries. It was back in 2010 where I founded EMBRACE. This is because I really value accessibility...and it focuses on ensuring there's you know inclusion and accessibility for people with invisible and visible disabilities within the workforce, community and society as a whole. So, this will definitely entail the legislation...you know building awareness with training...you know minimizing the global and national gap of unemployed people...you know with individuals who identify themselves with a disability...and more so applying technology. You know there is so much technology out there these days where inclusion and accessibility can be optimized.

So that being said, I want to now introduce Tony. So we have Tony LaBillois. Am I saying it correctly Tony?

TONY LABILLOIS:

Oh that's fine. Many individuals say that. I would say LaBillois because my first language is French. Thank you Michelle for inviting me.

MICHELLE:

Okay...so LaBillois. He works with Statistics Canada for over 31 years...and it actually includes 20 years in the Management Team...um with Statistics Canada. And he holds a very vast experience in leadership in a variety of industries and in the organization itself. So that can entail the projects, budgets and human resources...you know developing and implementing effective tools for evaluating activities, communication...and can't forget outreach. He is a true Champion for persons with disabilities...um as he is one individual who experiences as well with low vision. He has vast knowledge and experience of disability situations and needs, well aware of effective accommodations, numerous facts of accessibility, and expand amount of solutions that he has been able to help with and actually share. I am very delighted to have him as he has been rewarded and recognized

with the Elizabeth the second Diamond Jubilee Medal and this is back in 2012...and this just demonstrates the advocacy he has, the involvement he has, the passion he has and experience he has of helping to make Canada more accessible and inclusive. So, again I want to thank you Tony.

TONY:

Thank you very much Michelle for such a great introduction and for the invitation. Ahhh...I really appreciate that we have a common passion...ahhh for all these things related to accessibility and inclusion and making sure that in everyday life everybody -- including persons with disabilities -- have a fulfilling life similar to everybody else. I believe that diversity enriches the workplace and ahhh we need to work hard and be engaged. I am thrilled to be in this conversation with you today...even with your background and my background and our common interests.

MICHELLE:

Oh yeah it's perfect...totally perfect. So, I'm going to start off with a statistic that I'm pretty sure both Tony and I are well aware of. So, there are approximately 15% of the global population living with a disability and this is according to the World Health Organization of 2018. This statistic has been shown in so many places that it's something that cannot be overlooked. And...umm...I also wanted to indicate for Canada only that this is Statistics Canada of a data collection which was back in 2017 that 22% of Canadians had at least one disability and this actually represents 6.2 million people in Canada alone. Ummm...so this is a very large audience of a very large target market that people are totally overlooking and it can have such a big impact on the economy and just in daily lives as well. More people are getting the understanding that even with universal design, there are many things that a person with a disability may encounter that a person without one can have the same experience. So, it's very important to be aware that accessibility and inclusion with people with disabilities has a benefit for everyone. So, I wanted to take my time to reflect you know and talk to individuals who have visible and/or non-visible disabilities who have actually been experiencing true social distancing. You know it has been a word that's been shared for the past few months regarding COVID-19 and it was something that you know touched a nerve for me because I kept saying: "Okay do they really mean social distancing or physical?" because physical distancing is a very well, logical thing to say regarding COVID-19 whereas "social distancing"...this is something that people with disabilities have been experiencing on a daily life schedule or just very very common for them. So, that's why I decided to reach out to some people who have visible and invisible disabilities...to find out their intimate thoughts, feelings and experiences during this time and the similarities. So, a person living with a disability many times they experience isolation, or they may lose their job due to myths and conceptions. Ummm...they may have difficulty accessing basic needs. Limited or total lack of independence, lack of accommodation in the workplace and community. We definitely can't forget mobility restrictions...you know non-accommodation public infrastructure and definitely a financial strain...and um the ongoing stress and fear of losing your principle residence or home due to health at no fault of your own. Well, gathering all this feedback from them, so and behold this is what a lot of people now having to be isolated with COVID-19 are experiencing. So, a lot of people ending up getting this "aha" moment during this pandemic. So...um...I wanted to ask you Tony, what do you believe can be done to improve the lack of support for people with disabilities regarding COVID-19?

TONY:

Thank you Michelle. I think that COVID-19 shed some new light; but, also bring somenew challenges and some new opportunities as well. It's um an occasion to try and resolve certain things that we are seeing is important

for people with disabilities for a long time now and some new things are emerging. So, there are a number of things that that need to be done. Ah you were talking about themarket itself in terms of time; but, also market in terms of labour market. There's a lot of talented persons with disabilities; so, there's some opportunities for each and every one of us. First of all, ahh...if you listening to this so far, you're already a winner because you are getting more self-awareness...you are curious to learn more about accessibility...about inclusion. So you are already complimenting yourself...and that is the first step. It is an opportunity during the COVID-19 for people to learn more and to engage a real dialogue with people and with the experts that to help bridge the gaps which means the limitations that you see in the past and ahh solutions that we have also seen in the past...and also with the emerging things in this situation. So, in the COVID-19 context, and post COVID-19, we see that there is a number of challenges that that you have listed Michelle for persons with disabilities. There are some other challenges even ah for people that are...ah...already in the workplace and participating in activities in their daily lives. At Stats Canada for example, we use when we gather statistics a social model for defining people with disabilities basically between the limitations of activities that people have in their daily lives and the barriers...ummm that exist in society. There's socially, psychologically, physically and knowing that, again it gives a framework for finding solutions. We action-oriented....we ah were able to consult people with disabilities and the experts so that you find. For example, if you are adding a flexit glass in a store, if that flexit glass should be placed or should be marked so something like me would not hit the flexit glass. Make sure, for example, that if you um put some measures in place that those measures are...um...inclusive by design and make sure that even people with mental health issues -- or severe anxiety for example -- would not be ahh limited in their access to a service or to ahhh a sales point. Michelle: I am so glad that you used examples both visible and invisible disabilities causemany times the invisible ones seem to be overlooked; so I am really glad you brought that up as an example. That's extremely important. There's a lot of invisible disabilities including chronic pain which was in our Canadian survey in 2017 that you mentioned before. We will do that again in 2022. Those surveys are done just the year after our census of populations. And um when we do that we see that there's actually a lot of invisible disabilities. Chronic pain, exterior issues, learning disabilities.

Michelle: Definitely.

Tony: Emotional issues, developmental disabilities. There's are a bunch of things there that you don't see. If you see me, you notice that: "Oh he has strange eyes; so, he probably has low vision. So, you probably want to make me wear a mask. Yeah, well make me wear a mask. Just ask me if I need help. Don't just put the mask on my face.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony: Is one thing. So COVID-19 or no COVID-19 there is some common sense things to keep in mind. But there are additional opportunities like working from home. I have been working

Michelle: Wow.

Tony: As a public servant, we have been productive. We have resumed our activities at Stats Canada for all essential services and for core programs...and a bunch of others are getting on board right now. And ahh we have proven to ourselves and to others that some day we can work from home. And that that in itself opens a bunch of possibilities for persons with disabilities.

Michelle: Oh definitely. I am so glad you brought that up.

Tony: Think of persons to the environment. Think of ah a person with mobility issues in a snowstorm. If they can work from home, the person that is allergic to light or to chemical products is in their own environment so she's more productive...she's able to contribute as efficiently or probably more efficient than she was in the office. If you think of a guy within a snowstorm for example...I mean he's not worried that morning to be stuck in a snowbank for getting to work. He can work from home for that day. He can go back to work the next day when the office will eventually be open again. So, we need to preserve some of the opportunities that that we grab immediately.

Michelle:

Well I am glad that you even brought that up in regards of employment because what that does that people don't realize is the more people with disabilities that get hired, it adds more to the economy and it also will bring more income...more revenue to companies because then more people can be accommodated in that sense because you have to accommodate your own. So, therefore, it opens their eyes to ensure that they are accessible and then there comes the untapped target market right there in regards of companies making more money. When they have accessible and inclusion getting people with disabilities into the workforce. That adds to the economy. So, it is a whole big nine yards...you know market that people are not realizing it. That's why I really had this passion to have this done today so we will really build more awareness...you know not just to the general public; but, for companies as well. You know now that this is the perfect experience they had being working from home...that even take for example they now will...let's say people have to buy things on line. Well buying it online, you want to ensure that it's accessible for a person who may have a disability to actually go online and purchase it.

So, this is where it actually even leads to one of my next questions how businesses have been impacted....cause many of them have been impacted due to the pandemic. So, how do you believe of making...people making their businesses more accessible can benefit them...you know whether financially and/or competitively?

Tony:

I think it will benefit financially for sure if they make a small investment....especially at the planning stage. When you do take accessibility at the planning stage, it is not more money...it's actually probably as equally expensive or cheap depending if they have the internet...ah than if you would not consider accessibility. But you don't have to make corrections after so that becomes a bunch of savings that you're doing it. That also becomes...that can also bring a lot of clients. Take for example the website for example or you take the example of the physical space. If your physical space is accessible, you will have more clients that will feel more comfortable and can come in...and want to come in to your point of sales or restaurants or whatever because suddenly they feel included.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony: They have an accessible place to go to. And they actually will support you and probably mention it to their social networks. So, that will give you even more free advertising. So, there are a bunch of benefits there...and think of the part that is more relative to the website. I mean that's the key when you design a website...to follow certain standards. And, unfortunately, some people are saying they're building accessible websites; but, they don't follow exactly the right standards and that becomes an issue because again as a business owner or manager sometimes you don't have to know or you can't do all the details of the standards.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony: You have to make sure you trust the whole source for giving you advice and be useful. In fact if you take the example of the federal government, it's been years where we've been proud to have outward facing information that is accessible to our website. And, also with Stats Canada, we have a Web Accessibility Centre where they they test also an addition to our ah dissemination products...they test our questionnaires...and our questionnaires are fairly used to gather information from businesses also these days. And um they they they make sure that ahhh these things along with other tools that we use are accessible. So, if you don't have your own Web Centre that's fine. It exists out there...some people out there can give you advice and ah planning suggestions...or making sure your site is accessible.

Michelle: Definitely.

Tony: Make sure that when...when you basically want to convey information that it's -- even when using images...that's always attractive and nice -- make sure that all that information is also available in text format. For example, with an image you put alternate text to describe the image...that even if you put the text in the image, make sure you put the text below somewhere. These are some basic things. Make sure that the colors will follow the color scheme of the users.

Michelle: Right.

Tony: Even on mobile devices. It's not just on computers. And again....there are...we can provide some resources for guidance.

Michelle:

Yeah...I'm definitely going to do that at the end. Some links that you sent that will definitely that would add to it which would be really great. And, you know, everything that you are sharing is such a great passion of mine as I said earlier as it...it has allowed me or even led me to even start my own business in that regards. So, many of them that you actually even identified, I'm happy to even share some on the services that I provide in that regards where one of them that I have to say is one of my biggest passions is...um training, which I am actually taking this opportunity regarding Zoom is actually helping to build that awareness with training. So whether it's a webinar...actually coming on site to train or even curriculum development. People don't realize that there is accessibility and compliance in regards of documentation for people with different various disabilities and that's where, you know, as you're saying with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and it kind of goes in hand with digital accessibility because you want to make sure it's compliant. So, take for example, you may have someone...just to give an example a person may have hard of vision and you have a photo and they won't even know necessarily what's in that photo. So, you would want to make sure that it's described so a person who may have hard of sight in any capacity that their screen reader can read it to them. So that's one example. You know another one in regards of the legislation is vital. That is vital, and a lot of people are ignoring it where many of the deadlines to become accessible and compliant are very close. And, people or companies can be facing legal risks not realizing it; so, that's another area where people can reach out to me. As well as...even um...in regards to assessment; so, even take a look at things you may have and want to ensure that it is compliant. And so and behold, even with the Keynote Speaking as I can even give my own personal story of me having to experience some of those barriers and it really helps to build people's awareness and open their eyes to see how it can just be a natural part of life.

So, I am going to go to the next slide here where...you know I was talking about digital...and digital accessibility and just plain accessibility cause there is a big difference. Digital accessibility is now important than ever before. Many people are relying on digital services for everyday activities including shopping...um online shopping, it can be remote work where a lot of people with COVID-19 having to work from home. You know

schools now having to do online education. Healthcare...you know...banking as well. So, there's many services out there many than ever before that really need to have accessibility compliance, and...you know...that would be your websites, videos, and audio conferencing where you may have real-life captions...umm...electronic documents. Even so and behold people are not even aware that there is social media accessibility out there in regards of digital. So, um it is really important for people to understand the difference and significance of both. So, speaking of digital accessibility...umm...is there any benefits that you can share above what I said in regards of digital accessibility for compliance and inclusion...and what you believe that does for revenue and how that can open the target market to sell products and services?

Tony:

Well...thank you Michelle for asking. This is a question that when you do it for persons with disabilities you also make your product usually much more usable, much more user-friendly, much more useful for everybody else. What you do usually to make sure that it's open...that it's letting people have the right functionality and the right information quickly will make it totally useful for everybody. It's a question of increased productivity that is certainly essential for people with disabilities; but, is a bonus for everybody else. If you take the example of a cell phone, I can speak to my cell phone to...ahh...for it to type for me a text message. You can do that too. If I can listen to something on the go with my cell phone because it's communicating text aloud for me. You can do this...I mean if you can tell your cell phone to translate...to ask your cell phone to translate something like I do with just pressing the little microphone from Google, or from Siri, or what ever....I mean it's something that suddenly adds value...it adds value for your regular customers or regular employees; but, it also adds value obviously for people with some limitations.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony: And I am not saying people with disabilities here on purpose because with that COVID-19 crisis we see...I see a champion in my organization and as I ...I see my daily life, let's say in my everyday life outside work. There's many more people facing limitations right now. They're not considering themselves traditionally as people with disabilities.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony:

But, now it is also your clientele, your employees that is with an apprehension of certain things or with limitations visibly certain other things. And, these people count and make that statistics that Michelle mentioned at the beginning even bigger in terms of the percentage of the population that you're targeting when you make your digital accessibility better and your...ahhh...that's a physical or regular accessibility better. That's...that's...a world of possibilities for organizations right now and again I'm talking about the challenges because there are challenges out there. For example, you don't want to have a ghetto of people that only use certain things from home and can't get out of their home when they could before COVID-19...and other people that can still freely do what they had to do. But, again that's redefining the frontier of what we tell the traditional and between persons with disabilities and without disabilities.

Michelle: Right.

Tony: That's to keep in mind.

Michelle: Definitely, cause one thing you said...one of my favourite phrases is user experience which is so true.

Tony: Oh yeah.

Michelle: Because you know...one that you even brought up or I think we spoke about is even closed captioning for example.

Tony: Yes.

Michelle:

So, right now a lot of people made the assumption that okay...closed captioning is just for people who may have some capacity of hard of hearing or who may identify themselves of being deaf. However, you can just be in public right now and it's very loud and a person may have their phone and watching a video listening to music and they can just decide to put the closed captions on because it's loud in the background, it could be because a noise. Or another one a lot of people these days even use their smartphones or tablets on the subway and they're actually watching something and because they want to be able to hear it, and they can't because of the noise, they'll have their closed captions on. Or even sometimes people prefer the closed captions because it keeps them more engaged. So, its' very...umm...universal in many ways. So a lot of these...you know...these...um...features out there are very very very much well utilized as you said for people both with and without disabilities. So, I am really glad that you brought that up and you touched upon that.

Tony: Think about flashcards for learning multiplication and additions and stuff like that. Some kids need the flashcards because they need to see what you're asking. Some kids need to hear; so, we are all different in the way we learn.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony: So, your example with closed captioning is exactly like that. Some people will absorb better with that support in addition to the voice.

Michelle: For sure...for sure...for sure. So...umm...I'm going to just quickly...just touch upon actually, as I was saying, legislations...umm ...because the legislation have been out there for quite a while. So, we have the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, you have the United Nations Accessibility Guidelines which actually came out back in 2008. We have Universal Design for Learning, we have User Agent Accessibility Guidelines. One I wanted to indicate because I know you and I specifically being in Ontario, they have the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act which was established in 2005 and I'm really excited because the new one that just came out last year is the Accessible Canada Act.

Tony: Yep.

Michelle: And that's just from 2019. So, I'm really really excited about that one. So...umm...that being said, have you gotten any...you know...updates in regards to the Accessible Canada Act...umm...that was just established last year...so, progress in any way?

Tony:

Well that's a progress in itself that suddenly we have this legislation in Canada. I think that's a very big plus to raise awareness and also to make people and businesses and other organizations aware of their obligations in their...their...advantage...the competitive advantage they can have if...if...they follow the guidelines that is established by this Act and by the regulations and other things that are established. There's been a number of things established for the public service for example in terms of strategy for accessibility in the public service. The team itself for that strategy says a lot..."It's Nothing Without Us". I think without talking to the people with disabilities and having them at the heart of the conversation...keeping them engaged in making sure that they provide input needed to making things progress. So, that's something we all have to keep in mind. I was mentioning that at the beginning that you have to ask yourself: "What can you do personally to make things change?" You have to ask others as well...your potential clientele or your potential employees and what they want to see in terms of accessibility...and...and I have to admit that's it extremely heterogeneneous. It's also a challenge especially when you think that sometimes the accommodation for one person may be the barrier for another person. A simple example is that the person...a person sensitive to light. Well if we're in the same meeting, she wants as little light as possible and with my low vision I have.

(Michelle and Tony giggle)

Tony: I would want as much light as possible. So, there are some very simple examples that illustrate and so much more complex that illustrates that we have to be cognizant of the reality of each other and I often deal with a number of compromises or a number of "beacons in the graves" only if I may say; so that you navigate between...you safely for everybody within those parameters. Like right now we're imposed in the number of health measures and; there for our own good bringing some more challenges for some of us and some more opportunities for others...and just being aware of that.

Michelle:

Mmm...hmm for sure...for sure for sure. And you know talking about legislation, I want to even touch upon...and I know you and I kind of reiterated a bit about...you know...digital accessibility of how it benefits everyone. You know...those closed captions is pretty well self-explanatory. But, one where it really does also give advantages is that it increases engagement. Right...it gives clarity of comprehension, it helps even with recall...you know...a person can have a short-term memory disability, and it's something that they can go back on and then to reflect and you know get some insight...okay what was actually mentioned or noted. Ummm...then also I know even a person who has a disability Dyslexia and one feature that really helps is not only the fact of the closed captioning; but, also in the aspect of transcriptions. So, you know you get that attachment or you can have the transcription provided after the fact or you even have the type of built-in feature whereas the person is actually speaking, the word is highlighted across the screen. So, this is one friend of mine who has Dyslexia that uses this digital feature which helps him tremendously. Then we have of course color coding like you noted very much...so there's people who may be colorblind and may need to have...ensure that their websites are compliant in that respect. One thing that I'm really really ecstatic about that I have to give a lot of credit for is Microsoft. Their applications are extremely accessibility-compliant. They have so much features in Windows that people aren't even aware of that they can be utilized in the highest capacity. So umm....those are even some examples in regards of digital accessibility... how it benefits...so....

Tony:

Absolutely. I think you mentioned great examples Michelle. At the same time, it's a question of when you take up digital accessibility, it's a question of procurement when you choose to provide to your clients...to your employees or other stakeholders. Well you make sure in the procurement that accessibility is as important as other features like security or official languages...whatever else. So, it's a key that you think about that in that stage or in development when you develop your own software or make it compliant or something. Make sure that it follows the right...the right standards. It's also a question of making sure you test the early versions of your or app or your portal...whatever the website. You can test with some variety of users and they will give you feedback. In fact, they will give you useful feedback for themselves; but, certainly useful feedback that will go much further and that will augment the value of the product. That's something you should keep in mind. And it has to work with adaptive computer technology.

Michelle:

Big time. And you know, that is one thing that you said earlier and I'm glad that you brought it up again, is all about early. A lot of people think of it after the fact and unfortunately when you do that, it's only gonna cost more money because it's gonna take time to go back and to assess...and if you have to hire someone to come and fix it for you whereas if you do the assessment up front - as you said early in the development cycle - it's more cost-effective know it's gonna run more smoothly than having to...you know...having to do some much testing and going back and fixing. That's something I really try to navigate and educate and...you know...passionate of telling companies that don't look at it as an afterthought because it's not only the financial expenses that it's gonna cause; but, also it just shows that you have that customer loyalty. You have that aspect that you have that better understanding of how it's actually going to benefit everybody.

And this is actually what would take me to the next slide is where it actually gives you know...I share some of the tangible and intangible benefits of digital accessibility. So, one of them as I noted earlier...it definitely demonstrates customer loyalty, it drives innovation as we know technology is the way to go these days and if it's gonna...you know...you're going to be utilizing it more and more, it just shows how innovative you are. It will definitely enhance your brand because something you said earlier...a person can be looking for a product or a service and if your particular company offers that, you're gonna get a lot of accolades for that. People are going to acknowledge you and recognize you. A lot of companies out there saying okay...they're all about building inclusion and diversity...well don't forget the aspect of people with disabilities because this will just put you again ahead of the game. And then of course we know that you'll be minimizing legal risks. It'll definitely increase your market reach...a bigger audience. And then also the user experience...umm better competition in regards of your competitors, better access in the mobile environment...you know even with search engine. A lot of people aren't aware; but when you have an accessible...let's say website or products, yours...your results will rank higher in a search engine which...I means that's definitely a big plus in regards of getting yourself out there and marketing. And of course, as we know, the more accessible you are, the more people are gonna purchase your products and services; so, that will only increase your ROI...and it really does open to a new market altogether.

Tony:

Yeah, again it opens to a new market and it makes your existing clients more satisfied and more...and inclined to come back and to make sure that they promote your brand as well as you do...and um it's also very important to think of the labour market. Again, your current employees...your future employees. What will then say about your business? How will they feel through that and how will they be able to contribute to your

company goals...the organization goals? I mean that's a key thing to keep in mind and for us anyways cause with this competitive labour market...for we're all competing for talents right now and COVID-19 or no COVID-19, that will be the case in the years to come because of the demographics that we see in Canada. We will all want to attract and retain most importantly retain after training our employees. We want to retain them for a long time. Employees that are able to learn, to contribute and feel fully included are more engaged and are more prone to stay in your organization...or our own organizations. We really care about that at Stats Canada and I mean that's something that probably made me stay for more than 30 years now.

Michelle: Oh that's great.

Tony: Because I felt welcome...I felt able to contribute...I had a fruitful career there. And, they didn't choose me because I had a disability. They chose me because...

Michelle: Exactly. I'm glad you said that...that some people have to be aware of as well. You're a perfect testimonial...for sure...for sure...for sure. So, I'm actually going to end off with this video which I really like and it was actually done by um Government Canada. It's actually...so, I'm going to play it now.

Michelle starts to play video – What does an accessible Canada mean to you?

VIDEO SCRIPT:

Accessibility in Canada to me means respecting that everyone has different abilities.

A barrier-free Canada will be a very inclusive society. We all have access to the same services and programs without them necessarily being considered special. Now I realize that in Canada there are people with disabilities who stay at home because that's what they know. Understanding accessibility needs for wheelchairs, everything Canada-wide we need to advocate and support more.

An accessible Canada means to me that anyone who wants to participate has the opportunity and access to do so in the fullest way. Everybody is unique in their own way. They can do it. You just have to give them the opportunity.

Accessibility for us would mean the official recognition of sign language. It's a country where everybody feels fully inclusive and where all possibilities are within reach for all.

Whether they be in a chair, whether they have a cane, whether they have no vision, whatever their special abilities are, they deserve a right to be part of Canada's future.

[Graphics on screen: What does an accessible Canada mean to you?]

[Graphics on screen: Canada wordmark]

Michelle: And this is a video that was actually established by Service Canada. So, I actually got it off the Service Canada website...so you have the opportunity to hear a few of the Ministers actually provide their comments in regards of making Canada accessible; so, I had to make sure I include this video.

Tony:

Good...good. Thank you for that. The other thing to mention is that the wealth of statistics...that Statistics Canada produces, we were mentioning the Canadian survey on disability and all the products

that came out in 2017. There will be another one in 2022. We're also having a lot of information from our Canadian Community Health Survey that was started to be collected before the COVID-19 crisis and we'll be resuming soon and so there will be very useful data out there as well. So, keep watching our site. We're also going to do a crowdsourcing survey. I started a series of crowdsourcing surveys for COVID-19 on different topics and different clientele. We're going to do one for persons with disabilities asking them questions about how their experience has been since the lock down period and started and there will be a number of facets that will be addressed. There's...we also have an interest in episodic disabilities; not just in permanent disabilities. We tend to think...we're talking about visible and invisible disabilities; but, important to mention that disability can come for certain episodes of our lives...and fortunately sometimes they are not always there. But, it's unfortunately a characteristic that can be acquired. With the aging population, there's more and more people with activity limitations that need to be considered. So, I want to leave the audience with that thought and in that it's also an important consideration for making sure that their processes, their systems, their physical space of business or work are accessible. I think that's something because it could be ourselves. It can be our family members.

Michelle: Exactly.

Tony: ...or anyone. And, what we do here for an accessible Canada is something that will make life better and more fulfilling for many Canadians including ourselves and our loved ones.

Michelle: I'm so glad...I'm so glad to hear you to mention all of that. I'm so so appreciative and excited of you allowing us to do...to have this...you know...the little short call; but, very very very invaluable information to share and I'm looking forward to receiving some of those results and the links and the updated information of the work that Statistics Canada will be doing. So, I'll definitely keep in touch with you so I can add the links and even share the new information that is collected.

Tony: Good.

Michelle: So I thank you.....

Tony: Thank you very much for inviting me. Thank you very much for...to everybody who listen to this. You've been very patient with us and you can see we're both very passionate. Then I hope we've been able to transmit some of our passion to you.

Michelle: Ahhh thank you.

Tony: Take care.

Michelle: Take care.