

Dear Filibuster Volunteers and Supporters

On behalf of the entire Disability Filibuster team, we are writing to express our heartfelt thanks for the role that you were willing to play at a pivotal moment in Canadian disability history. In the critical final days before the government of Canada rammed through an ill-conceived and fundamentally unjust amendment to the Criminal Code, you were part of an unprecedented show of resistance and solidarity for disability justice.

The Disability Filibuster was an ambitious venture that came together in just over 36 hours of intense effort and thanks to a great many “leaps of faith”. The original conversations in which the idea was incubated called for the simple but revolutionary act of disabled people taking up space and speaking our truth. We would keep it gritty and real and work on crip time, sustaining our efforts round-the-clock and across the country until the Prime Minister of Canada took notice.

By the time we paused our live broadcasts at midnight on March 11, we had achieved this goal and so much more. Altogether, more than 200 volunteers like yourself had come together to create a safe and accessible virtual space that reached across divisions of race and class and identity. You had modelled anti-ableist, anticolonial modes of conversation and mutual learning. You had elevated the rhythms of crip time to an entirely new art form. You had introduced a new generation of leaders and justice defenders and had celebrated the legacies of “long-haulers” from hard slogs and mighty campaigns in our shared history.

Our vibrant Filibuster community exposed the lie in the Trudeau government’s assertion that their expanded regime for medically assisted death was somehow a humane and progressive response to human suffering. When Bill C7 passed without regard for the objections of the entire Filibuster coalition, all of us could see clearly the craven political calculations that had prevailed. Most importantly, we would not bear this news in isolation, nor would we succumb to the despair of defeat.

We know that rest and recovery are in order, as they are after any major social justice campaign. We also know that we are there for each other, and that the stakes for mutual care and attention are higher than ever before. And, importantly, we are keenly aware that what we created and unleashed together in the Filibuster’s inaugural week of online activism, is just the tip of the spear of our struggle for disability justice. So what now? What comes next for the Disability Filibuster?

Here again, we turn to you for help. How do you envision Disability Filibuster 2.0, and your role in its emergence? What are your ideas for building from our auspicious beginnings, and how do these ideas fit with your own priorities for survival, activism and creative engagement? What is most important to preserve from the Filibuster’s original design, and what requires tweaking?

In the weeks ahead, we can expect that disability communities across the country will mobilize through courts, tribunals, regulatory proceedings, and interventions at the UN. Simultaneously, advocates and allies will undertake new initiatives in research, audits and monitoring of eugenic policies, practices and discourse. Activists will be called upon to support all of this work, and to mobilize urgent responses as conditions on the ground warrant. Are there ways for the Filibuster initiative to continue to energize and document this work, and to incubate new strategies and alliances for this critical era?

These are some of the questions we are mulling over, but you will have your own to add to the mix, and we hope that you will do so!

These are dangerous times, and surrender is not an option. As we adjust our pace for a longer marathon, we remain focused on the imperatives of mutual aid and vigilance, and the shared tasks of building, growing and organizing. You are the engine of our collective drive to #StoptheKill. As we transition into the next phase of activist work to protect the lives and dignity of all who are imperilled by ableist and eugenic state policies, please be in touch by reply email or tweet, sharing your thoughts about the future of the Disability Filibuster.

Catherine Frazee, Gabrielle Peters and the Disability Filibuster team