

The Disability Filibuster on Bill C7 – @DisabilityFili1

Disabled Canadians and our allies around the world *leave it all on the field* in the final days of the Bill C7 debate

Concept:

A live Zoom solidarity broadcast running round-the-clock, 24/7 beginning at 7 PM Eastern on Monday, March 8 and not stopping until the Prime Minister withdraws Bill C7 or adjourns Parliament and returns to the drawing board.

Context:

Parliament is scheduled to sit March 8-12 and March 22-26. Somewhere during that interval, it appears that the Prime Minister is planning to pass Bill C7 – likely sooner rather than later. The Bloc Québécois has signalled its intention to vote with the liberals in favour of Bill C7. The Prime Minister therefore has the votes that he requires to invoke closure on the current debates about Bill C7 and to force a vote that right now he knows he will win.

This proposal takes root in a desire to do everything we can to make it more and more difficult for individual MP's in all parties to support the Prime Minister and his cabinet in their shameful quest. People who have been working intensely on the campaign to stop Bill C7, and before that, the campaign calling for appeal of the Truchon decision, and before that, on the campaign to be heard in the courts that considered the Truchon and the Lamb challenges – we are angry, exhausted and disillusioned, but no one is ready to give up.

In a different era, this would be the moment to put our bodies on the line, in mass protests on Parliament Hill and across the country. In the Covid era, we will put our bodies, our lives, our passion and our culture on the line virtually, and we dare our government representatives to look away.

Finances:

The Disability Filibuster is being organized and produced with volunteer labour and in-kind contributions. Our only expenses are for disability-related accommodations – ASL interpreters, CART captioners and visual description professionals. For a 24-hour, extended broadcast, these expenses will be considerable. We invite supporters to make any contributions through our online KickStarter campaign, a link for which will be available tomorrow. We currently have sufficient funds for 24 hours of Filibuster, and we are optimistic that there will be enough support from the community to keep us going.

Ground rules

- The project is 100% conceived, developed, controlled and coordinated by Canadians with disabilities. Nondisabled allies are welcomed in supporting roles.
- Disabled people from every region of the country are invited to participate and can volunteer to engage on-screen or behind the scenes.
- Accommodations including ASL interpretation, CART and visual description will be provided.
- Scheduled segments of daily broadcasts will be presented in French, with LSQ interpretation, captioning and visual description.
- The one rule of the filibuster is that we never stop broadcasting. It is a marathon. When one person stops, another person must pick up.
- We adhere to “crip time”, which means that we prioritize the health, the well-being and the natural rhythms of everyone’s own particular body and access needs. We accommodate each other’s requirements for time and space, rather than prioritizing arbitrary practices of pacing and timekeeping.
- In our programming selections, we will dip generously into the wellspring of our lives and our culture, ensuring that there is a range of interesting topics, tones, styles and formats. A sample brainstorming list is included in this document as a sampling of possibilities. We ask only that each broadcast contributor make some direct reference to their opposition to Bill C7 during the course of their broadcast.
- The scheduling of broadcast units (30 minute segments) will be coordinated centrally by the Filibuster managers. As a general rule, at least two persons will be assigned for on-screen roles during each segment, and at least one person for behind-the-scenes support.
- Once a broadcast unit is assigned to you, you and the person or persons you are working with will have full creative control of your broadcast. Content coaching and content support will be offered as available by your Filibuster Manager.
- All content will be recorded, therefore all persons who volunteer to appear on screen must agree to future non-commercial use of their segment for educational or advocacy purposes. Broadcasters must also agree not to disclose personal information about other people who have not given permission to have that information shared publicly.
- Keep it decent, but keep it real. No need for fancy background setups unless that’s your thing. Feel free to Zoom from your kitchen, your sofa or your bed. If we are going 24/7, we have to be comfortable. Don’t feel you have to hide the messy details of your life or the stuff you have to do to keep living.

A sampler of broadcast segment ideas

This list is simply intended to demonstrate the range of possibilities for your broadcast segment. The sky is the limit – and your 30 minutes are your soapbox, or your playground! Invite your audience into your world – in all of its complexity, creativity, monotony, humour, politics and struggle.

- A personal rant about your fight to survive, your opposition to Bill C7, your real priorities for living with dignity. You can combine this with doing some kind of chore or activity, or with some kind of “show and tell” using photographs, music, stuff on your bookshelf, art on your wall, memorabilia in your drawers, clothes in your closet, etc. Share a part of your life to make the point that your life matters!
- A conversation with friends about some aspect of Bill C7, or with someone you don’t know, or an interview with someone whose opinion or advocacy or research or justice work you value, or a Q and A with an MP or Senator, or....
- Read some poetry, perform some music, DJ from your music collection, read the letter you wrote to your MP, or host an open mic session inviting others to share music or letters or writing or stories with you, or....
- Play a clip from the parliamentary hearings and discuss it, critique it, make fun of it, call the MP from the clip on your speakerphone and leave some questions for them on their voicemail. Or team up with a couple of other participants and play “Stop the Clip” – playing a random 30-minute segment from the debates until someone calls “Stop!”, because they have something they absolutely cannot wait to say about what they have just heard. Once they have said what they wanted to say, and others have chimed in, then resume the tape. This way, you get to be the interrupters, and make yourself heard. Or...
- Play a segment from the committee hearings when a disabled person was asked a question and not given time to respond fully, or when a disabled person was not asked a question as another way of silencing them, and take the time you want to answer the question fully, or invite someone else to. Or...
- Pick a topic and host a call-in show for others to weigh in. Or organize a teach-in on some aspect of social justice work (e.g. antiracism, colonial history, disability justice, working across class, etc.). Or...
- Or start from a favourite genre and see where that takes you. For example:
 - Comedy – create a Bill C7 sketch, produce a mock parliamentary hearing, do some improv or a favourite comedy routine about ableist absurdity. Or...
 - Food – do a cooking lesson, and reflect at some point about the favours and aromas you would miss if you are forced to move to an institution, or say something about the culture or personal history from which this recipe comes. Or unpack your groceries from the food bank and talk about how you manage dietary restrictions. Or...
 - Dance – host a dance party with your favourite protest music. Or...

- Read a “bedtime story” from the canon of disability culture. Or...
- Horror – work with a few people to share ableism horror stories, or DNR or MAiD horror stories. Or...
- Adventure – same idea with the adventure theme, adventures in ableism, adventures in hospital, adventures with my doctor on my shrink. Or...
- Entertainment – host a watch party to watch a segment of something on TV, and talk with each other during the commercial break about anything that made you flinch from ableism, or laugh about abled’s or how good it was NOT to think about Bill C7 for half an hour, and why. Or...
- World – especially good for late-night broadcasting – invite someone who is still awake somewhere else in the world to see what they think about Canada being poised to violate the CRPD, or about to introduce a special path for doctors to end the lives of people with disabilities who are not otherwise dying. Talk to someone in another country who has also fought this fight, or to whom it is completely and utterly foreign to speak of ending lives instead of permitting lives to be lived with dignity. Or...
- Art – show it, make it, talk about it, do it – your choice. You know what to do!
- History – talk or teach or ask questions about disability history, disabled people who are no longer with us, events or conditions in the past that still matter today.
- Beauty – take some of the objects in our lives that nondisabled people are so afraid of – ventilators, feeding tubes, catheters, “diapers”, bedpans, wheelchairs – and make them beautiful. Or do a make-up demo or a fashion show on the theme of “Looking good for living, not for dying”. Or...
- Game show – invent a disability version of the Price Is Right or a Bill C7 version of Jeopardy. Or...
- Tech – do a teach-in or a game show on hashtags and memes, or a demonstration of state-of-the-art enabling technologies that too few can afford, and that could save people from giving up on disabled life. Or...
- News – if you find our stories missing from the news, take things into your own hands, and produce your own news report, or adopt a favourite news reporter and call or tweet them creatively. Or...
- Variations – Forget the telethon, do a hackathon, sharing favourite life hacks. Or...
- Just find something on this list, or some variation, or something totally new, and bring it on! We need 100 volunteer broadcasters and 50 volunteer supporters at least! And if we keep going, we will need more every day.

Recruitment

- **BLOCK MANAGERS:** We start with a core group of six or twelve or more Block Managers. A Block Manager takes responsibility for a four-hour block of time – eight half-hour units. This means coordinating the block, being the primary contact for all volunteers assigned to that block, attending the block and being on hand to jump in if there are Internet problems for one of your broadcasters or any other kind of intervention required. The Block Manager may not have all of the skills required, but they will be responsible for calling the shots in an unexpected situation and stepping up if needed to keep the filibuster going. Current thinking is that the Block Manager would also work with an elder to open some of the daytime blocks, or introduce the nighttime blocks with an appropriate land acknowledgement. The Block Manager then basically fades into the background keeping an ear open as the broadcasts continue. Toward the end of the block, ideally the Block Manager would say a few words by way of wrapup, pulling some of the threads of the preceding segments together, and/or making a few observations that tie the segment to the Bill C7 campaign.
- Suggested blocks are, in Eastern time:
 - Daybreak Block – 6 AM to 10 AM
 - Long Lunch Block – 10 AM to 2 PM
 - Rush Hour Block – 2 PM to 6 PM
 - Primetime Block – 6 PM to 10 PM
 - Twilight Zone Block – 10 PM to 2 AM
 - Graveyard Block – 2 AM to 6 AM

Block Managers are welcome to get creative with renaming their blocks.

- **TECH WIZARDS:** We also need a core group of six or more people with technical skills to advise about what can be managed in a broadcast unit, to be familiar with and help to coordinate the essential accessibility functions, and to be on call for an assigned three or six hour shift to assist with any technical glitches that occur..
- **BROADCASTERS:** This is the category for everyone who will be on camera presenting content – presenters, performers, interviewers and interviewees, everyone who signs up for air time. Some Broadcasters will recruit their own friends or contacts to participate with them to fill their 30 minutes. Some will be skilled and sufficiently confident to do a segment solo. As a general rule, however, we should generally have at least two people on camera and contributing in every segment. A working estimate is therefore that for 24 hours, we should have 100 volunteer Broadcasters.

- **SUPPORTERS:** This is the category for everyone who will be helping out behind the scenes with an individual segment. They can be asked to do preparatory work, lining up interviews or promoting the segment on social media, they can help give cues to Broadcasters during the broadcast, manage Zoom chat, monitor ASL and captioning services, assist with visual description – basically anything and everything for a single 30 minute segment. So for the first 24 hours, we will need at least 50 volunteer Supporters.
- Those are our recruitment targets, but if we fall short in any category we adjust our ambitions accordingly. Ideally, we would exceed all of these recruitment targets, in which case, that's great, we are in good shape for Day 2 and can handle some inevitable attrition after Day 1. We want people to have fun at the same time as they are keeping up momentum on the campaign. We don't want people to flameout in the first 24 hours, because our hopes are that volunteers in each of these categories will be willing to return again, 24 hours later.

NEEDED NOW: PEOPLE!

Some of these critical assignments are frankly too much to ask people who are struggling to undertake in their "spare time". Some individuals who don't have family, employment, or other competing demands for their attention and who are fortunate to have their support needs met, can and will volunteer to assume some of these leadership roles. But that won't be enough. We are also going to need temporary secondments from disability and allied organizations of paid hours of skilled and dedicated staff to fill some of these roles.

- Someone to take the lead on volunteer recruitment – Take what is essential from this document and make it plain and simple and IRRESISTIBLE. Work with other team leaders to beat the bushes for volunteers in every category.
- Block Managers – must be super responsible and committed team players with good people skills and able to handle a four-hour shift. Able to act as mentors, collaborators and troubleshooters. Does this sound like you?
- Someone to take the lead on fundraising – promote and promote and promote our KickStart campaign to keep the Filibuster going. Encourage support from disability and allied organizations that oppose Bill C7, medical and other professional groups, friendly members of Parliament, wherever there are opportunities for people to contribute financially to operating costs.
- Someone to take the lead on French language content, community engagement and public promotion.
- Someone to take the lead on indigenous outreach and outreach into northern communities to maximize opportunities for content, engagement and broad promotion.

- Someone to take the lead on outreach to maximize opportunities for content, engagement and broad promotion within:
 - disability communities that are often overlooked and unheard
 - ethnocultural, linguistic and faith communities that have not been heard from in this debate; and
 - the broader human rights and equality sector.
- Someone to take the lead on external communications – Can we find a media partner or partners? Can we get CBC to feature the Filibuster in their coast-to-coast programming? We need to generate press releases leading up to the Filibuster and maybe twice daily once it is ongoing. Can we cultivate interest among journalists who are well respected, well read, well connected and followed on social media? Can we sustain media interest for more than 24 hours? Can we get off-mainstream media – specialty press, local news, lefty publications – to pay attention?
- Someone to take the lead on communications within and across the coalition of individuals and organizations that have pledged their support. What’s the best medium for doing this, to keep people informed and enthusiastic?
- What are we missing? Is it something you have to offer? Then let’s talk! You can reach us at DisabilityFilibuster@Gmail.com or contact Catherine Frazee or Gabrielle Peters directly.

*The Disability Filibuster on Bill C7
is a spontaneous, community-driven enterprise
spearheaded by Catherine Frazee and Gabrielle Peters
and made real by hundreds of passionate and talented volunteers
who are members and supporters of Canada’s diverse disability justice movements.*