

Bespoke Plus

If Your Work Speaks For Itself, Don't Interrupt!



**WHEELCHAIR
ACCESSORIES**

Participation - Viabilité

After three plus decades of meeting the former President of Participation I remember a great Canadian every time their newsletter pops up in my email. Russ Kisby passed away July 20th, 2007. I had the pleasure of working with Russ on a national social marketing initiative called Viabilité (a program of ALACD designed to encourage active living within the population of people with a disability) a number of years ago. He had tremendous achievements with Participation, shared all he could and was open to all means and methods of presenting positive change material for all Canadians. He would be disappointed to hear that just 46% of adults in Canada are meeting national guidelines of 150 minutes of weekly moderate-to-vigorous physical exercise. He would be pleased that we are sharing the latest information from the Participation Newsletter (Lets Make Room to Move) and the scoop on ["The Generational Barriers to Physical Activity in Canada"](#). The frustrating five are: 1. Lack of Motivation 2. Fatigue and Tiredness 3. Time 4. Cost 5. Weather. Russ would remind us that those reasons are a matter of choice!



Let's make room to move

REE Success

The Rehab Equipment Expo (REE) held on March 3, 2026, at the [Richmond Olympic Oval](#) was by all accounts considered a success by attending organizations and participants. Exhibitors and healthcare professionals highlighted the event's value for networking, hands-on equipment trials, and educational collaboration.



While end users were not allowed at the event, they were represented in at least one presentation led by an occupational therapist who had two individuals with lived experience providing a real-world consumer perspective within a clinical discussion format.

Wild West Front Power



Current municipal laws are struggling to keep pace with mobility technology. While most cities cap sidewalk speeds at a pedestrian pace (6–15 km/h), modern power add-ons for manual wheelchairs can easily hit 32 km/h. This creates a legal "no man's land": is the user a pedestrian or a vehicle operator? Once a user crosses that speed threshold, they may fall under e-bike regulations. This leads to confusing, localized enforcement—some jurisdictions demand the user ride with traffic, while others acknowledge them as pedestrians and they ride facing traffic. Because the rules are vague, users are left at the mercy of an officer's personal interpretation of the law.



The solution exists in technology—manufacturers can build Class 1 medical devices with adjustable speed limits—but regulators may have a biased perspective of what medical device means. They appear to be categorizing front power add on equipment as power wheelchairs and they are not. By trying to force these innovative tools into rigid "power wheelchair" boxes, medical authorities are effectively limiting the freedom of people with disabilities and placing them in a dangerous position where speed and momentum is required to safely navigate some terrain. Ultimately, the choice to transition between pedestrian and "e-bike" pedestrian speeds should belong to the user, not a regulatory body.

Key Points

- **Speed Limits:** Most municipal speed limits for pedestrians (this includes manual and power wheelchairs and Motorized Mobility Aids (MMA) including power add-ons) to between **6 km/h and 15 km/h**. The MMA category may be unique to Quebec, but it certainly has solved the problem for the world by affording all products noted above Class 1 medical status as pedestrians whether you

are using that equipment on the sidewalk or on the road and you are always using pedestrian rules and regulations!

- **Legal Grey Area:** Exceeding Medical Device Regulators speed limits can change a user's legal status. At speeds up to **32 km/h**, users may be reclassified from "pedestrians" to "e-bike operators." And if they go over 32 km/h they may be recognized as an unregistered vehicle and subject to traffic laws.
- **Regulatory Friction:** While manufacturers legally build dual-mode Class 1 medical equipment for the pedestrians they are, (pedestrian-safe for sidewalks, high-speed for other terrain), regulators are currently providing restricting standards power wheelchair related.
- **User Autonomy:** There is a strong argument that speed and usage should be at the **discretion of the user**, rather than restricted by medical regulations that may inadvertently put users at risk in a lack of traction situation and momentum shortage thereby stifling independence. Current municipal bylaws regarding power add-on equipment for manual wheelchairs create safety risks and legal uncertainty, as these devices can reach speeds of 32 km/h compared to standard 6-15 km/h pedestrian limits. Regulatory inconsistencies are forcing users into conflicting traffic rules, while proposed restrictions threaten to cap the mobility of individuals with disabilities, argue advocates like us.

Prairie Seating 2026

The Prairie Seating Workshop is on again this year April 14-15 in Winnipeg MB. This event started in 2004 to advance knowledge and best practices in seating and mobility through education, shared learning, and professional development in Manitoba. This was also the founding year for Therapy First.

Corinna Klassen a founder, co-owned Therapy First until 2019 when her partner moved on to other things. Today, Therapy First is a full-service OT/PT operation with a team of 10 individuals covering the full gamut of services in this industry. Therapy First has a special interest in spinal cord rehabilitation, community integration, assistive technology, wheelchair seating and mobility assessment and prescription, pressure sore prevention, management, and home accessibility. Their tag line "Together We Can" indicates, they believe that together, with clients, family members, caregivers, funders, and other team members, they can work towards achieving maximum functional independence for all.



Updated Web Site Info

After months of work behind the scenes, we are thrilled to say that the brand-new 49 Bespoke Inc., web presence will be live Saturday March 21st.

Remembering Gifts

The world has lost more wheelchair basketball players, coaches, enthusiasts in the last few weeks. We remember the gifts they brought to our lives.

Dennis Pottie 1948-2026 was a former teammate with the Halifax Flying Wheels. He was predeceased by his wife Debbie. We are thinking of his friends and family.

Paul Bowes 1960-2026 coached at every level representing the London Forest City Flyers, team Ontario, Team Canada, and international teams as well. We are thinking of his wife Laurie, their extended family, and all their friends.

Anne-Louise Sabo (Tonello) 1960-2026 was predeceased by her husband Jerry Tonello long time wheelchair basketball player and coach. Anne-Louise was a fixture at Toronto Spitfire Tournaments. We are thinking of Matthew (Laura) and Zachery (Sienna), friends, and family.

Bits and Bytes

- 49 Naidex March 25-26, 2026, Birmingham, UK;
- 49 Abilities March 27-29, 2026, Los Angeles, CA;
- 49 Motion Rehab Series start April 6, 2026, Ottawa, ON;
- 49 Prairie Seating & Show April 14-15 Winnipeg, MB;
- 49 Annual Accessibilities April 15, 2026, Oakville, ON;
- 49 ANLWBS 50th & 40th CWBL April 17-19, Edmonton, AB;
- 49 CSMC/MHMPA April 29-30, 2026, Moncton, NB;
- 49 Abilities May 1-3, 2026, New York, NY;
- 49 Adapt Expo May 9, 2026, Carleton U, Ottawa, ON;
- 49 Abilities June 12-14, 2026, Chicago, IL;
- 49 Abilities July 31-August 2, 2026, Houston, TX;
- 49 IWBF World Champs Sep 9-19, 2026, Ottawa, ON;
- 49 Abilities September 11-13, 2026, Phoenix, AZ;
- 49 CSMC September 15-16, 2026, Toronto, ON;
- 49 Rehacare September 23-26, 2026, Dusseldorf, DE.

BESPOKE PLUS is the newsletter of 49 Bespoke Inc., which markets products from around the world designed to better meet the needs of people with a disability.

We have grown up in sport, have a social service background, and have adopted an advocacy role in our business practice. **Comments are welcome.**