

***HONOURABLE CLAUDE RICHMOND***  
***University of Victoria***  
***CanAssist Program \$750,000 Funding Grant***  
July 16, 2007  
University Club of Victoria  
Victoria, BC

Thank you Ida and to everyone for being here today.

Over the last spring and summer, I've been going around the province making announcements about how the government is building the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities.

And it's true – we are.

But this wouldn't be possible without our partners, which range from community-based organizations, academic institutions, to municipal governments.

I'd like to note that Nigel Livingston, Director of CanAssist, is also a member of the Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities.

Nigel is dedicated to helping the special needs community, and I know that these types of strategic linkages with our partners will help the Province.

We will continue to build and work with our partners to make the best system of support possible.

And there's no better place to make this happen than right here on campus at the University of Victoria.

First, I'd like to thank the University Club of Victoria for generously donating the use of its restaurant today for an important announcement.

We're here as part of a special ongoing partnership.

As part of this partnership, I'm pleased to announce that the government is providing a \$750,000 grant to UVic's CanAssist team through the Victoria Foundation.

This one-time grant will help CanAssist to provide equipment and assistive devices to hundreds of adults and children across the province, the country, and even the world.

There are over 570,000 persons – 13.4 per cent of the population – with disabilities in British Columbia.

These are people who should have the same opportunities as the rest of the population.

These past few months, I've emphasized in speech after speech the desire of persons with disabilities to work.

***CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY***

Through many initiatives – like the new Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities, WorkAble Solutions, and the 10 by 10 Challenge – we’re helping this group of people participate more fully in the workforce.

But a high quality of life isn’t just about being able to work.

It’s also about being able to take part in recreational activities...and just the day-to-day activities that we – people without disabilities – often take for granted.

The research programs and projects at CanAssist are giving persons with disabilities the opportunity to experience these things.

Growing up – I never had to worry about being able to ride my bike or take part in games with other children.

But there are children – and even adults – who do worry about these things.

Thanks to the work done here at CanAssist, children with visual impairments and other physical disabilities can now ride tricycles and bikes.

Adults in wheelchairs can travel more easily in cold weather because of modifications to their equipment – such as heated wheelchair rims and windscreens.

People who couldn’t communicate before can now use technology – such as laser pointers and eye-tracking systems – to indicate their choices.

We – the government – want to make sure that these opportunities continue to be available for individuals with special needs, which is why we’re partnering with CanAssist and providing the \$750,000 grant to them.

On behalf of the government, I would like to commend the people at CanAssist – the faculty, staff, students and volunteers – for their dedication and passion for creating an inclusive community for persons with disabilities.

Thank you.