



Emcee,  
Suhana  
Meharchand

*As we celebrate our 36th year, the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons continues to evolve and take on new challenges in its ongoing mission to improve the lives of Canadians with physical disabilities*

When we held our first Gala back in 1985, our ambition was to build a community of like-minded individuals and organizations dedicated to transforming Canada into the best place in the world for people with physical disabilities.

You, our supporters, are that community – and, together, we have made real progress toward this goal.

For proof, look no further than the federal government’s grant of royal assent last year to the Accessible Canada Act.

“Much work still needs to be done before the Act fulfills its promise,” notes the Honourable Vim Kochhar, founder of the Great Valentine Gala and chair of the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons. “Nonetheless, its



back row: George Przybylowski, Hon. Vim Kochhar, Dorothy Price, Duncan Sinclair, Dr. Mohamed Fahik, John Betts  
front row: Hon. David C. Onley, Todd Nicholson

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE BLACKBURN



passage into law was a monumental event for people with disabilities. It creates a framework for future progress and places Canada firmly among the foremost nations that are striving to give everyone an equal chance at success.”

We’re proud to say that, with your backing, the CFPDP contributed to this grand achievement, along with so many other dedicated organizations and individuals.

### RAISING AWARENESS

Since its inception, the foundation has worked tirelessly to increase awareness among Canadians that people with physical disabilities have both specialized needs deserving of our support and untapped potential to contribute to society, if only given the chance.

Significantly, our awareness programs — from prestige events such as the Great Valentine Gala and the Disability Hall of Fame to high-impact initiatives like Rolling Rampage on the Hill — have been aimed not only at the public but also at decision-makers in business and government.

“By targeting CEOs and elected officials, we are attempting to create change from the top down,” said Kochhar. “As

opposed to starting at the grassroots and working our way up, we believe a top-down approach can be a more effective way for us to use our resources.

“That’s because when you influence the thinking of someone who is a leader, that person can have a big impact on the thinking of those around them. Moreover, leaders have the ability to change policies in their areas of influence, and changes in policies are often essential to removing barriers and creating environments that are fair for everyone at all levels of society.”

The CFPDP’s newest undertaking, “A Seat at the Table,” is a social-change program aimed at persuading corporations to begin appointing qualified people with physical disabilities to their boards.

“Currently, there is basically zero representation of people with disabilities on corporate boards,” said Kochhar. “Given that roughly four million Canadians live with a physical or developmental disability, this is clearly a case of a segment of society being excluded from key decision-making roles, and they deserve to have a voice.”

A Seat at the Table is slated to begin rolling out in early



Attendees from 32 Service Battalion, 4th Canadian Division accompanying The Hon. Peter G. MacKay (L-R) Maj. Wade Sett, HCol. Hari Panday, Capt. Neil Gagnon and Capt. Mercedeth Bowerman



The Tombolloners





Todd Nicholson  
and Emily Glossop



2020, and Kochhar describes it as a textbook example of strategically attempting to create change from the top down.

For example, the program will kick off with an advertising campaign in the Globe and Mail aimed at senior executives and CEO's. The campaign will inform its target audience of the lack of representation of Canadians with disabilities on corporate boards and encourage them to do something about it.

As well, anticipating that companies are likely to have difficulty finding qualified candidates on their own, the CFPDP has established a candidate pool that will be made accessible to board-member selection committees.

The pool consists of qualified candidates who have been vetted by a selection committee.

Convincing corporations to change their behaviour is never easy, but Kochhar concluded this was a battle worth fighting because the potential benefits for people with physical disabilities are so substantial.

“By adding someone with a disability to its board, a company gains a new perspective on the specialized needs as well as the capabilities of employees and customers who may have disabilities. This can lead to changes in policies and services that have far-reaching benefits for those with disabilities, while also proving to be an advantage for the company,” he said.





## 2020 Great Valentine Gala Committee Members

**GALA CHAIR**  
George Przybylowski

**FOUNDATION CHAIR**  
The Hon. Vim Kochhar

**EVENT  
COORDINATION**  
Deborah Lewis

**IT MANAGER**  
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**MASTER OF CEREMONIES**  
Suhana Meharchand  
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Rob Snoek  
Mark Lecker  
Faye Blackwood  
Cindy Accardi  
Beverly Ivany  
Tony Wight

**TOMBOLA**  
Ava Paulin  
Dorothy Price  
Jennifer Robbins  
Jan Verboom  
Kelly Verboom



**Hon. Vim Kochhar, Suhana Meharchand, George Przybylowski**



**Malik Ahmad  
and Joanne Smith**

Kochhar said he felt that the CFPDP was the right organization within the disability advocacy community to take on this challenge since it has deep and longstanding connections with many leading corporations, due to their support over the years for the CFPDP's various programs.

For a more detailed look on A Seat at the Table, turn to page 14.

You can also learn more about this exciting CFPDP program at [www.aseatatthetable.cfpdp.com](http://www.aseatatthetable.cfpdp.com).

The CFPDP creates and supports a wide range of initiatives designed to improve the lives of peo-

ple with physical disabilities. In its efforts, the foundation consistently seeks to put the emphasis on a person's abilities — rather than disabilities — and to recognize and celebrate their achievements and contributions to society.

More than 600 guests of the CFPDP are expected to gather for the 36th annual Great Valentine Gala at Toronto's Fairmont Royal York Hotel. Through the years, the Gala has raised more than \$35 million dollars on behalf of people with physical disabilities, and more than 22,000 people have attended the event.