

Brian Mulroney's Influence Sparks New Era of Inclusion for Corporate Boards

A Seat at the Table (SATT) was born following a pivotal conversation between **The Honourable Vim Kochhar**, Founding Chair of Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP), and former Prime Minister **The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney**, who was inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame in 2018.

"I spoke with Brian Mulroney over more than two hours at the induction ceremony," Hon. Kochhar recalls. "He commended our efforts to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities but said if we wanted to see real change in the business community, we needed to start from the top. It was a lightbulb moment for me. That conversation and his astute guidance helped me to think even more strategically and formulate a plan for A Seat at the Table, which CFPDP launched the following year."

At the time, there was little representation of people with disabilities on public company boards. In 2020, the Osler Diversity Disclosure Practices report revealed only a handful of seats held by individuals with disabilities. By 2023, that number had increased to 17, but CFPDP's goal is to see at least one percent of public board directors identify with a disability.

"We are still working hard to reach our initial goal," says Hon. Kochhar. "Once we hit that milestone, we will aim even higher."

CFPDP's SATT project is guided by an influential Selection Board of business leaders. Made up of top CEOs, executives, and university chancellors, it works to raise awareness while identifying and promoting candidates with physical disabilities for board positions. Over 30 have been selected since the SATT program launched, with candidates appointed to boards like Amex Bank of Canada and upcoming placements in 2024.

Element Fleet Management, led by President and CEO



Brian Mulroney and Vim Kochhar

Laura Dottori-Attanasio, is a proud sponsor and supporter of SATT and has two directors with disabilities on its board.

Appointing qualified professionals with disabilities to the board is "about creating a well-rounded and effective decision-making process," says Dottori-Attanasio. "When we bring qualified professionals with disabilities onto boards, we help promote inclusivity and ensure that a broader spectrum of perspectives and experiences is represented. This leads to smarter strategies and better business outcomes, driving true innovation in our organizations. Plus, it sets an important example in the corporate world about the value of diversity."

She says, "Both Element and A Seat at the Table share a commitment to creating environments where all individuals, regardless of ability, feel encouraged to contribute and lead ... I have been involved with CFPDP for

several years and am proud to be a champion for the great work they do. I'm also grateful that Element, as a Purpose-driven organization, shares a similar culture and commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging across our operations. Partnering with the CFPDP's A Seat at the Table program aligns with our goals to amplify the voices of individuals with disabilities and foster a more inclusive environment across industries."

"The lack of representation on corporate boards isn't due to a shortage of qualified candidates with disabilities," says Hon. Kochhar. "We have identified an impressive group with executive-level experience in law, finance, ESG, real estate, marketing, and more. Now, it's up to all of corporate Canada to commit to recruiting diverse talent and offering these candidates opportunities, and we are here to help."

Please contact CFPDP via whynot@cfpdp.com or (416) 760-7351 to get in touch with highly qualified board candidates or to become a sponsor of A Seat at the Table.