

# AT Banter Podcast Episode 294 - Stop Gap Foundation

📅 Mon, 7/18 9:18AM ⌚ 1:10:52

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ramp, people, disability, rob, accessible, sidewalk, step, metaverse, spaces, barriers, understand, business owners, bylaws, luke, ryan, community, access, patio, rant, building

## SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, Luke Anderson, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury

---

**R** Rob Mineault 01:23  
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

**S** Steve Barclay 01:27  
Banter, banter.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:30  
Hey, I don't know what that was. Hey, this is the podcast of course where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. And joining me today, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:48  
Hello.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:50  
Mr. Steve Barclay.

**S** Steve Barclay 01:52  
That would be me.



Luke Anderson 01:54

And I don't know is she here or did she leave the room already? Is there a Lis Malone in the house?



Lis Malone 02:03

I'm gonna change my name to Hurricane Harriet.



Rob Mineault 02:05

Is that what happened last week? You you were hit by a hurricane?



Lis Malone 02:10

it wasn't actually a hurricane it was just a nasty nasty thunderstorm.



Luke Anderson 02:16

Really? The power went out with just over a thunderstorm?



Lis Malone 02:19

It's because there are so many damn trees in Charlotte. They love their their trees.



Luke Anderson 02:29

I think last time I lost power because a squirrel crawled into the transformer and like short circuited the whole thing.



Ryan Fleury 02:41

I love our infrastructure.



Lis Malone 02:47

Yay, dinner.



Rob Mineault 02:53

 Rob Mineault 02:55  
Yeah, that's right. How are you guys?

 Ryan Fleury 02:56  
Ducky.

 Steve Barclay 02:58  
Better and better.

 Luke Anderson 03:01  
Okay, good. That's, that was our update. We got a ducky and I don't even know what the other thing was.

 Ryan Fleury 03:09  
Alright, I'm gonna I'm gonna do my little new monthly Ryan's rant segment.

 Lis Malone 03:16  
Monthly segment?

 Ryan Fleury 03:17  
I'm sure I can come up with some rants monthly. Absolutely.

 Luke Anderson 03:20  
Okay, well, you have to You're in charge of the jingle. You have to write the jingle.

 Ryan Fleury 03:30  
Works for me.

 Rob Mineault 03:31  
All right, go.

R

**Ryan Fleury 03:32**

I'm ready. All right. So the last week, of course, most of our I think most of our listeners who was recorded maybe I don't know, basement had a really, really bad smell while we went up in the ceiling, and we found a dead mouse and one of the rat traps. So yay, got rid of the dead mouse smell mostly gone. Okay, so we reached out to Strata. Because we live in a townhouse complex and ask them to send pest control back. And they get back to saying yep, they'll be there Monday between 8am and 5pm. So I'm like that's quite the window. 8am to 5pm. Okay. So they eventually come and they get up in the ceiling and they find another mouse. So he's gone. So yay, we're most free. I have another I have a device I have to send back to a manufacturer. They arranged for a dispatch for a courier to come today between 9am and 7pm. They're not here yet. So there's an eight, nine, ten hour window. So I have to thankfully say that I work from home so it's not a super inconvenient. But where did the companies think that giving people a eight to nine to 10 hour window to be around is feasible? That just ludicrous to me.

L

**Luke Anderson 04:50**

Yeah, you know, I actually I'm going to agree with your rant this month.

R

**Ryan Fleury 04:53**

I got one more. Okay. My wife's looking for a new laptop. So we go to Best Buy on The weekend. And we look at a bunch of laptops, she finds someone that she wants. So we go up to the counter and we say, okay, we want this computer. Oh, we don't have it in stock. Okay? So they say, you can order it and we'll arrange delivery. So that's fine. She orders it. And in the process of ordering it, you know, you can get an extended, you know, two or three year warranty for like, \$400. Like \$400 for an extended warranty. That's ludicrous. Oh, and you can also for such and such dollar amount, getting antivirus software. I said to the lady, I said, you know, Windows has its own firewall and antivirus software, right? Are you qualified to work here? And just the whole idea of not telling people what comes on the systems and just, I wonder how many people they're taking advantage of, by not giving them the information? Yeah, that was just really frustrating. Yeah, I hate Best Buy. And, you know, Amazon could have delivered it today. So I'm sorry Best Buy and big box stores, but if you're gonna have a product on the shelf, at least put something on there that says not in stock. Because then I understand that there's going to be a bit of a delay getting it.

L

**Lis Malone 06:16**

Well, there's another sponsor, we can scratch off the list.

R

**Rob Mineault 06:19**

In other news we'd like to welcome our new sponsor BestBuy to the show...

R Ryan Fleury 06:23  
No, are you kidding me? Jeff Bezos, he'll sponsor us.

R Rob Mineault 06:28  
He'll just shoot us the space.

R Ryan Fleury 06:30  
I'll go. So that's my rant.

R Rob Mineault 06:34  
All right. That was a good rant.

L Lis Malone 06:38  
Yeah, that was that was rant worthy.

L Luke Anderson 06:41  
Yeah, you're right, that they're not even trying to schedule you when they give you like a nine hour window.

R Ryan Fleury 06:45  
They'll get there when they get there.

R Rob Mineault 06:49  
Yeah. Be thankful that they gave you a day.

R Ryan Fleury 06:54  
That's right. Yeah.

L Luke Anderson 06:56  
Now, so anyway, now customer service sucks these days.

- R** Ryan Fleury 07:01  
Retail sucks. Unless you're Amazon. Just take you to the post office and boom, it's gone. Done dealt with.
- S** Steve Barclay 07:10  
So when you shop at Amazon, can you go look at their laptops? And actually put your hands on them?
- R** Ryan Fleury 07:17  
They are actually opening Amazon retail stores.
- R** Rob Mineault 07:19  
Are they? Interesting.
- R** Ryan Fleury 07:21  
That is the plan. Like Steve said, you can go put your hands on stuff if you want to. And then they just dispatch it from their warehouse.
- L** Lis Malone 07:34  
Are you just talking about their pop up stores?
- R** Ryan Fleury 07:37  
No, I think they are actually going to launch some retail outlets, not just their warehouse or pop up stores.
- L** Lis Malone 07:43  
So they're going in the opposite direction of their original successful business model.
- L** Luke Anderson 07:47  
Yeah, I'm with Lis on this one. Lis is on the right track here.

L Lis Malone 07:55

Yeah, the whole thing was that they were the alternate source from brick and mortar. Yeah. Now they're like, no, actually, we want to be brick and mortar.

R Rob Mineault 08:05

Yeah, it's dumb.

R Ryan Fleury 08:06

Well, I think it is dumb to a certain degree, but there are people who like myself, depending on what the product is, I want to get my hands on it first. I don't want to just take a chance of spending you know, 5,6,7, \$800 online, finding out I don't like and then have to go through the hassle of going to post office and issuing you know, having it sent back and returned or refunded or whatever. Amazon makes that painless when it comes to you know, anything really, but you just can't try it first. Whereas if they had a retail store you can we could go to Best Buy get our hands on this laptop, feel the keyboard. My wife could see the screen brightness. You can't do that, you know otherwise so I think there's a place for retail still.

L Lis Malone 08:47

Well I think that's why they have such a kick ass return policy. So it's like you can play with it or touch it at home and then back.

R Ryan Fleury 08:56

Exactly, yeah, no questions asked.

L Lis Malone 09:00

You know, see how those keyboards feel along your butt crack and stuff like that right and then bring it back to the store. Ship it back.

R Ryan Fleury 09:08

Okay

R Rob Mineault 09:10

All right.

L Lis Malone 09:12  
I would never do that.

R Ryan Fleury 09:16  
This touchpad is not sensitive enough..

S Steve Barclay 09:24  
All right. All right. I like the home row indicators

R Rob Mineault 09:37  
All right. That's enough of that.

R Ryan Fleury 09:39  
Yes. Good thing we edit the show.

R Rob Mineault 09:42  
That's right, none of that will make it in. Hey, Ryan. Yes, Rob. Enough silliness. Hey, what are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 09:54  
Today we are speaking with co founder and executive director of stop gap Foundation, Luke Anderson. Hey, Luke, thanks for joining us.

L Luke Anderson 10:03  
Everybody, you, you entertained an audience of one and any other creepers out there that that are tuning in. That means our numbers went up from last week. Right on. I'm stuck with an image of a squirrel that's working its magic with it with a transformer.

R Rob Mineault 10:32  
It's an absolutely true story.

R

Ryan Fleury 10:35

When you stuck with us through that whole I did verbal diarrhea. So you've got some stories to tell I'm sure.

R

Rob Mineault 10:42

Right, I'm surprised Luke's power didn't mysteriously go out during all that. All right, well, hey, listen, we want to thank you very much for taking some time out to talk to us. So why don't we just start just maybe just giving us a little bit of a snapshot of who Luke Anderson is and a little bit about the StopGap Foundation?

L

Luke Anderson 11:08

Yeah, right on everyone. Thanks for having me on. And I appreciate the opportunity to share and shed some light on who I am and what I'm up to. I live in Toronto, and have lived in Toronto for the last almost 20 years. I graduated from engineering school, at the University of Waterloo and in 2002. And at the time, I was I was a really passionate athlete, and I really, really loved mountain biking. And, and made it a mission of mine to to live in the very best place in the country, if not the world to mountain bike that being the the interior of British Columbia. And, and so yeah, as soon as I finished wrapping up my my education at Waterloo, I moved to the interior BC and sort of followed followed my dreams of mountain biking every day on the best trails in the country. And yeah, and just met all kinds of other like minded, mountain biking enthusiast, doing their thing out there and, and it was on a ride later, later in in the riding season of that year. So October of 2002, when when I bit off a little more than I could chew on on a trail just outside of Nelson, British Columbia and I crashed. I had a bad crash that saw me flying over the handlebars and landing headfirst breaking a couple of vertebrae in my upper spine. And I'm telling you all of this because I believe that in that moment, well, my life changed in a split second. I was all of a sudden introduced to a world that's really not well suited for for somebody that that uses a wheelchair or a mobility aid. And and that really kick started a journey of of kind of figuring out how to handle how best to work with the frustration that I was feeling. And in encountering barriers that were preventing me from from accessing spaces on an equal basis. And, and yeah, that that conversion or that transformation, the transmutation of frustration led to what I'm doing today, and that's raising awareness about barriers that I believe affect all of us in some shape or form. And removing them through the deployment of really simple, bright, brightly painted access ramps for locations with a with a single step entryway, and we call that program of ours, this organization that it has become now over 10 years, hard to believe that, the StopGap Foundation.

S

Steve Barclay 14:36

Very cool. So where where do you guys get your funding from? Is it donations? Do you get government funding for doing this?

L

Luke Anderson 14:45

We we primarily get our funding from from individual donors. So little plug here anyone that's interested in supporting StopGap's work. We welcome your support. Just visit stopgap.ca. And there's a secure online portal to make a financial contribution if you're able. And and we work with some some really generous organizations. Yeah, on a year to year basis and and that is primarily how we are funded? Yeah, it's a we have certainly received support from government grants in the past. A few of them. But our funding is, is it comes in the form of donations from from individuals, either one time or we're trying to grow our monthly donor base just to have a consistent monthly monthly income. And and yeah, we have we have some partnerships with some some really, really, really helpful organizations, Toyota being one of them.

R

Rob Mineault 16:04

So initially, when you when you came up with the with the idea, were there any sort of kind of hurdles that you that you guys sort of had to get over in terms of rolling these out and selling them to businesses?

L

Luke Anderson 16:20

Yeah, yeah, totally. That's a great question. And I think the hurdles, the hurdles stem from just our ignorance, I think just as a society, a general level of ignorance, that shows up in, in some of the business owners or managers that we speak with, and some of the policymakers that we connect with different municipalities. So I'm remembering very early on connecting with a municipal representative and telling them what we were intending to do in in their town. And they, they did not want to have anything to do with it, and actually told us explicitly not to. I don't like the word no, I actually got motivated to continue and, and, and get those ramps on the ground in that municipality. Even though they told us not to, and those ramps are still in use today, and have received lots of lots of really positive, affirming feedback that they are bringing more people into those locations, and they're just creating a lot of awareness about about these issues that we want to get on people's radar, that being you know, the human right to equal access. And getting people to really think about great ideas that can help overcome the big barriers that that are preventing so many people from accessing spaces. And, you know, we're also hearing some really well, at first they were they're really troubling responses from from business owners saying that they didn't want to ramp because they didn't have any customers that used wheelchairs. So I'll just let you chew on that one for a second. Yeah, the customer, like the business owners, were telling us that they didn't need a ramp because they could bring stuff outside if somebody needed to access their services or see some of their products. And I remember being really, really angry at these responses and and kind of confused and having 20,30 minute conversations with some of these people who just didn't didn't understand why why it was important, and that, that they just really didn't see how it could be of benefit to them. And, and so we just continued for work forward, and we were able to connect, say with with their neighbor, business owner, a couple of doors down, who did participate. And then over time, slowly but surely, we did hear back from the business owners that that originally did not want a ramp that originally turned down the opportunity to receive one for free, I might add. And this all this all points to just a like I was saying earlier, just a level of ignorance out there. That just is you know, we're all coming to the table with our own level of awareness about about accessibility, why accessibility is important. And that's okay. We're all on our own learning journey. And, and it, it's, it's opportunities like this where we get to talk about issues that affect people with disabilities, and how access to space is important and human right, regardless of our situation, regardless of our lived experience, and it's all about

raising awareness about these societal barriers that exist, that being attitudinal. That being the policies and systems that are in place that that prevent access. And, and, of course, the the built built environment that a single step can, for example, cause a barrier to access.

S

Steve Barclay 20:58

So is your organization driving forward the adoption of standards for for better accessibility to buildings?

L

Luke Anderson 21:10

Yeah, yeah, we're seeing the work that we're doing in communities all over Canada really influence this this shift in in antiquated bylaws. It's helping communities understand that when they're, say redoing a sidewalk, that wherever possible, they raise the sidewalk up to meet the ground floor level of a building. So there's some cooperation happening between municipalities and private building owners, and I do understand that the responsibility isn't entirely with the municipality. But it can be helpful when when there are opportunities to create more accessible spaces to do it when when that type of construction is happening. And yeah, the onus is shared between municipal policymakers as well as private business owners, and it's, it's, it's on the private business owners to decide that accessibility is important when doing when doing renovations. So making ground level access at main entrance at main entrances, not not the back door. I can't tell you how many times I've, I've had to go through the the kitchen of a restaurant through the through back alley. There's some there's some freaky back alleys here in Toronto. And that, to me is not is not access.

R

Rob Mineault 23:03

So I want to step back a little bit and talk specifically about about the ramps, and just exactly what function they're they're sort of fulfilling. So just so the audience sort of gets an idea in their head of what we're talking about. How big are these ramps, and what are they specifically what kind of storefronts are they kind of specifically designed for?

L

Luke Anderson 23:28

these ramps really solve the single step issue, so they're custom suited to suit the step height. They're designed at a one to six rise to run ratio. So they're, they're steeper than what building code would ask for. They're not intended to be a permanent solution to the problem. They're intended to be used on on a request basis. So if someone if someone needs to use use the ramp, they would get a hold of someone inside the building to bring the ramp out that is that is the the safest way of using a deployable ramp, like the ones that we create. There, they're made out of plywood and just regular to buy lumber. And painted with a with a non slip type of exterior grade paint. And they're, they're, they're very colorful, so so they're painted with up to the business owners choice, either red, green, blue, or yellow. And yeah, so we intend to have the, the ramps have have a common color contrast that that make them visible on the sidewalk, so we don't want them to blend in to a sidewalk, concrete, concrete sidewalk. And yeah, we're running our program with the intention that they're used on request to abide by

municipal bylaw that in most communities dictates that that business owners aren't to have anything in front of their, their business. So nothing on the right of way like flower planters and cafe furniture and, and like sandwich boards that might be displaying or advertising menus. And so yeah, ramps kind of fall under that category of an encroachment that goes against municipal bylaws so so yeah, we we understand that there there is a there is a safety there's a there there is a risk to using a ramp like this. And we just educate all of our ramp owners about those risks and ensure that they're set up for success in using them safely. They're custom suited to fit the step height. So we'll we'll construct a ramp for a step height between two and nine inches in height. So they are truly, I would say, most of the ramps that we put out are are unique because because of the specific step height that they're constructed for and, and the condition of the sidewalk that might be in front of in front of that step. So it could be a sloping sidewalk. And we have to make sure that our ramp sits sturdily on on the sidewalk in front of in front of the step so that it doesn't wobble and so we've created a design that accommodates both a sloping slat sidewalk and a flat flat sidewalk.

L Lis Malone 27:08

So you mentioned that your ramps are you have - I guess because you have their portable, they would they have a higher pitch then I guess some of the standards might be for but I guess permanent ramps we could say?

L Luke Anderson 27:27

Yeah, that's right. So we've settled on a one to six rise to run ratio. And and that has followed us along since the beginning it was a design design ratio that that we felt would give us a ramp that was easy to to maneuver. So fairly easy to deploy. Some of the larger the ramps for larger step heights can get quite quite big and heavy. So to design and build a ramp for a one to 12 rise to run ratio for say a you know an eight inch step height you can imagine that that ramp is going to stick out a long way into the sidewalk.

L Lis Malone 28:19

Yeah, cuz I know here in the US like ADA for I guess more of a, like a permanent ramp is one to twelve.

L Luke Anderson 28:28

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. So these ramps are not intended to be to be used on a permanent basis. They're there to be used on request and yes, some people aren't comfortable using using a ramp that's designed at a one to six rise to run ratio and and those those people might choose not to use that ramp. And some people may choose to you know use them with with some assistance and others and others feel comfortable using them independently. But a really cool thing has happened along the way. We've heard from all kinds of other groups of people who have benefited from from our ramps like parents pushing strollers is a big community who who we hear from regularly and parents are actually choosing to go the extra distance to a location say a coffee shop or another shop or service that that has a ramp instead of going to one that

doesn't because they find it so much easier to push their stroller up a location or a storefront that has a that hasn't ramp. So this to me is an example of how when we put something in place to help someone with a disability in many cases we we all end up benefiting Seeing from it couriers and you know people with with temporary injuries that might be using crutches or say Walker. We hear from these people and and they confirm that the work that we're doing is benefiting not not just not just those that use wheelchairs, but other people in the community as well.

R

Rob Mineault 30:26

Yeah, I mean, listen, I'll play spokesperson for another segment of society which is lazy people, which I love ramps, I'm always constantly will pick a walking up a ramp as opposed to walking up stairs.

L

Luke Anderson 30:40

Yeah, I was working as an engineer prior to taking on my role as executive director at stop gap and, and I worked for a company whose office was in a building that had three steps that separated the sidewalk level from the elevator lobby level. So every time I needed to get in and out of the building, I needed to rely on someone to help set up this big heavy folding aluminum ramp. So the ramp was like, I don't know, 7560 75 pounds. And, and so for eight years, I needed to get somebody to help me set up this ramp, rain, snow or shine. You imagine what what that would be like in like, at a place that you frequent on a regular basis, like your home or place of work. So that led to some serious frustration. And that actually was another like, that was kind of the real clincher to deciding, okay, we need to do something about this. Because because we were recognizing how beneficial the ramp was when it was out all of these different groups of people that I was mentioning, wanted the ramp left out so they could use it to and and in most cases, there's a double set of doors to the entryway to this office building. And we put the ramp in front of the left side door. And most most people would choose to use the ramp when they had the choice to use the right side which was accessible by by the steps. Yeah, I would say nine times out of 10 people would choose to use to use the ramp, so you're not alone Rob.

R

Ryan Fleury 32:39

So cities and like city departments developers, are they are they seeing these these sorts of statistics and changing their bylaws changing their building codes to accommodate for for more ramps?

L

Luke Anderson 32:52

No, I've had to really dial up amp up my patience in this department, Ryan. Seen a little bit of change over over the past 10 years with a couple of municipalities adopting their own policies and and changing some of the ways that that they deal with with encroachment. But overall, it's it's been very slow, and there hasn't been a whole lot of uptake on on policy change.

R

Rob Mineault 33:31

Yeah, it is interesting, especially in Ontario, because you guys have the AODA over there. And this is, you know, this is an act that has been around since 2005. So yeah, it's coming up to like their their goal, which is, you know, to have a completely accessible province in 2025, in three years, and you're still fighting over over ramps. So talk to me a little bit about the AODA, though. Has that provided any help for you guys?

L

Luke Anderson 34:11

I would say that, that. Two things. There's been There has certainly been some good in in legislation. I think it has done some good certainly with customer service training and transportation, information and communication. It's it's done a lot to raise awareness about and get and get organizations to instill accessible features say in their HR regimen and policies as well as their websites. There's some momentum happening with that. And there's not enough of it. The legislation isn't being enforced. So I think that's a really big problem. Like, I haven't really heard of any companies being being fined for not complying. And so that there in terms of compliance. Yeah, there isn't a whole lot of enforcement of compliance, at least from, from what I've witnessed what I what I, to my knowledge. And then yeah, I think when when Doug Ford became Premier, there was a choice to put all of the subcommittee's on hold for, I think it was at least a year, if not more. All of the all of the subcommittees working on the various areas of the of the AODA like, like the different segments of the act like like transportation and information and communication. For example, all of those, all of those committees got shelved. And so what was, you know, already 2025, all of a sudden became 2026. And look around the city here in Toronto, and we've still got a subway system that has, I think it's now just over half, just over half of the subway stations are accessible, the rest are not, and it takes so long to install an elevator, I don't think that the rest of those stations will become accessible in three years, I can almost guarantee it. So yeah, we have a long way to go. And I have not seen 2025 Being a year that we can celebrate full access. With the accessible Canada Act now and Accessible BC Act, you know, each province is going to start rolling out their own at some point. You know, we've had the AODA that we developed a bit of a framework from but everybody kind of wants to do their own thing, reinvent the wheel. And, you know, you're right there, there has been no repercussions, no fines, no lawsuits, you know, the only the only course of action we have is human rights. And, you know, I don't know how effective that's going to be. Yeah, we have, we have a human human rights code that says we, we all have a right to equal access. And that is something that needs to be leveraged. And I think it's informing people and how I think it's a matter of informing people and how they can how they can leverage that, that that piece of legal support.

R

Rob Mineault 38:00

And I think the other the other part of of this education that is so important is that and this is like this with with almost all disability really, it's that people really don't understand disability until they are in the driver's seat, until they join the community. And then they realize just how inaccessible a lot of things are. And I'm sure for you, Luke was probably very eye opening when you had the accident and you're in a chair, realizing just how many storefronts, for example, or restaurants or whatever, were just inaccessible. And people don't realize that.

L

Luke Anderson 38:40

Completely. Yeah, all of the stuff that we're talking about, that we're talking about tonight is is it was completely off of my radar at one time in my life. And now it's it's my every day. Yeah, there is there is an ignorance and that's okay, it's okay to not know, what I love sharing is is that we're all we're all connected to this, either directly or indirectly. Disability is part of human nature. As we as we age, the way that we move around our communities, it'll, it'll change, it'll shift due to the natural aging process. And we can experience a shift in the way that we move around, as we become parents due to occupation and certainly due to injury or illness. So it's, I like kind of dropping that and and just letting letting people kind of sit with it because because disability is part of human nature. And I guess what happens, it can be problematic when when there's a, you know, human nature of disability when when it when it intersects our human nature to just not know, where there's this unconscious bias towards not recognizing disability as an important and equally you know valid way of of living life. That's where harm that's where harm can can stem from. So, so we all I think we all need to do our part in recognizing that we all have equally valuable lived experience. And and we need to do our part in educating ourselves about different ways of experiencing life. And that's, you know, connecting with different groups of people, people with disabilities, people of different races, of sexual orientation, and just expanding our, our scope and perspective. So we can grow our edges. And and I think that that wealth for me, it's really enriched my life. And it's created lots of really, really meaningful connections.

L

Lis Malone 41:24

So I have to point out, so Luke, you are a complete gentleman, and what you just said, and especially with your point about saying that it is okay to not know, to not understand. And then someone like me, Hurricane Harriet is like, yeah, I get it, it's totally okay to not know and to understand. But once you're schooled in it, and you still don't do anything, and you are willfully purposefully ignorant. And figure, if you just ignore the problem, it'll just go away, is, you know, that that other category of, of people that, you know, that we in our community deal with. And so, I'm curious, if you think that there's any part of that whole idea of those customers, or, I'm sorry, those business owners, who you said sort of reject getting this free tool to make their business more accessible, bring in these new customers, people who can't access your space right now, do you think that any part of them are thinking that well, now that I'm making my space accessible for them to come in now I got to I have what else do I have to do inside of my business to make it accessible? I mean, is it almost like easier just to keep them out? That way of thinking like, oh, God, no, I have to rearrange rows or have like, accessible counters?

L

Luke Anderson 42:58

Yeah, totally. I think I think that that is a tragic expression of, of fear and being overwhelmed. So yeah, there may, there may have been some awareness about accessibility, why it's important, maybe they were schooled, somehow, somewhere to some certain degree. And, there exists, you know, I'm speaking from my own experience of not having lived with a disability at one time in my life, and I'm taking myself back to my 23/24 year old self and, and just imagining having this conversation. I'm sensing that 24 year old self would be absolutely freaked out. Overwhelmed. Unaware. And, and I think that the expression of denial or avoidance is, is is rooted in in fear, fear of just not knowing or being overwhelmed. Yeah, give

me like, if I get a ramp, I'm gonna have to do something about my bathroom that's in the basement. I'll have to you know, bring it upstairs and I'm going to lose all that seating capacity in my restaurant that's already limited in its size. Yeah, it is overwhelming. And you don't have to do everything. And that that's a it's a really important thing to to get out there. As long as people are informed about what they're getting into prior to showing up. It's okay that the bathroom isn't in the basement, as long as there's as long as the information is made available. To any anybody visiting that business or restaurant or cafe, they can make arrangements for themselves to seek bathroom facilities, say, at a restaurant down the street, or maybe that that that restaurant owner can be proactive and make those connections beforehand. Already, they can have have a partnership with a location down the street that has an accessible bathroom. And again, make that information available to anyone. So that they can be informed and really have an experience that is efficient and not not a letdown. I can't tell you how many times I've visited a venue and shown up to be surprised about about the space and maybe called and was told that the space was accessible, but found out that upon arriving the idea of access is to have six bouncers lift me up 15 steps like that, that, to me is not is not access. I'm an adrenaline junkie, but but there's a there's a line that I draw. And if I'm if I can be informed about what I'm getting into, ahead of time that that to me is invaluable. So yeah, there's there's some fear and some overwhelm - I can totally understand why someone would would, would react in a way that kind of looks like avoidance or or maybe denial. Maybe aggression even. It's a tragic expression to me of a feeling scared, and just not not really feeling comfortable, being vulnerable and saying, hey, you know, this, this topic scares me. And and I just don't know, I feel overwhelmed.

L

Lis Malone 47:05

I always say that so much ignorance and misunderstanding is completely driven and blocked by fear. That it's that knee jerk reaction. If I just ignore it, it won't ever happen to me. I don't want it around me. I don't want to talk about it. It's uncomfortable. And I and we've had people on the show that and I'm actually an example to the where I had the people closest to me who were just in complete denial of my blindness. My mother used to, I would hold her arm, we'd walk down the street, and then we'd walk into the store and then she would leave me and she forget, she just left me. I was doing it and then it would take her a few minutes and then she'd come back out. She's like, Oh, yeah, no, I forgot. She didn't forget, you just completely block it out of her her mind. So it's, it's it's the denial, fear, everything all sort of bundled in one.

L

Luke Anderson 48:15

Yeah. And that that's we each have our own duty and due diligence to to work through that fear of for some of us. Like myself, the experience of disability say the grief that comes in, in losing a part of of me that I deeply grieve every day. So I'm, I'm doing my part in working with that grief. And I guess yeah, we're also also working on the getting to know the fear that exists in myself around my inevitable change in the way that I'm going to be able to move around as I age. So kind of doing that work, doing that work ahead of time. I don't think that that's something that that we do, culturally. It's not not not something that we're taught. And, and so I think, yeah, I think that getting really philosophical here, but think that that causes avoidance, it causes us to, to not talk about death, that causes us to have a really hard time grieving when either like a family member or, you know, a loved one dies and how and how we deal with

change, whether it's due to injury or maybe a, you know, some sort of tragedy, whether it be like job loss, suffer some sort of life circumstance where things change, as a culture, as a society, we're set up well to, to deal with with change in a in a healthy way.

R

Rob Mineault 50:14

Yeah, I mean, change is scary, you know, the but the other thing that I see as a little bit frustrating about it is when politics come into play, too. Because and I'm kind of curious to know what what kind of learning curve there was when you guys first developed this idea because it's a very smart and elegant solution to a very small specific problem. Like it this only addresses those one steps. By no means is it going to solve all the accessibility problems, but it certainly can solve some. So I'm curious to know that do when you first came up with this did you sort of bump heads with some of the bylaws in terms of what what you could place out in front of storefronts and all that, like, was there a learning curve that you guys had to go through?

L

Luke Anderson 51:05

We're still bumping heads. Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we're still bumping heads big time. It's like a big, it's like a big game of bumper cars right now. There's no, there's there's no real public acceptance or approval, there's, that we're that that we're receiving? I'm taking the City of Toronto, for example, like behind closed doors, yeah, we've got counselors that are that are rooting for us. And that really, you know, support us some counselors have. You know, they've come to our events, and they've supported us vocally. But, but the the actual putting pen to paper to, to change, to change by laws, that that isn't something that I see. I don't know if I don't know if it'll ever happen. I hate to say it. But from what I've witnessed this, this intolerance to risk is is a reality in municipalities, and I'm seeing it big time, here here at the city. And a good example is that of that is what's happened with our outdoor patio spaces. So the mayor has made CafeTO which which is our curbside patio program, a permanent thing. So it's been going on for the last two years. And the previous two years, the city has installed asphalt ramps for all cafes and restaurants and bars that that installed a curbside patio, so that they came around and laid down these these asphalt ramps, and they were they weren't perfect. The first year, they were horrible. The second year, they were a little better. And then this year, the third year, they didn't do it at all. And and there's, you know, some reasons that we've been, we've been told by different members of different departments like transportation, and it- we were given, I think, not the truth, I think the truth lies in their resistance to, to taking on risk. And and they want to put the risk in the business owners hands instead of taking it on themselves. So yeah, it's it's a big game in legal red tape around around risk allocation.

R

Rob Mineault 53:55

And see, that's the frustrating part. Because even for a business that wants to become more accessible, there's all these barriers for them. That with all these ridiculous bylaws or local politics or even, you know, even politics in general. You know, it's like, it's like they're working against accessibility, just through bureaucracy, it's crazy.

L

Luke Anderson 54:22

They are. They're totally Rob, you hit it out of the park with that because, and the result is a vague set of guidelines if you're going to use CafeTO as an example. Again, that the city put out this vague set of guidelines that that described the accessibility requirements for for these cafe, patio spaces, and nowhere on the application for a permit for one of these patios were there any checkboxes for accessibility So there's this, this guideline, they have this guideline that people could have chosen not to read. And it seems like most didn't, because I would say, we were had the opportunity to connect with a reporter from the Toronto Star, and they wrote a great piece about their findings, they went around and surveyed 100 Different patio spaces and, and noted that I think only 14 of them were accessible. So the rest of them had immovable furniture, most most of them didn't have ramps. The ones that - thinking of one case, there was a ramp, but it went right into an immovable bench. So just a real debauchery of, of I guess, lack of clarity, lack of, of, of city kind of programming. And it's sort of resulted in this real bummer of a situation where we've got what could be wonderful patio spaces that that just are not accessible.

R

Rob Mineault 56:22

So you know, we're bringing the show down. Here, we got to bring it back up. Well, okay, well, let me ask you this. So has anybody else reached out from you from other provinces? Maybe seeing your model and being like, hey, we want to do something similar in our province. Has this idea spread out at all?

L

Luke Anderson 56:41

Yeah, great way to turn it around. And we were so keen to hear from from people all over Canada. So we're working primarily in Canada at the moment. And one day, maybe we will, we will work beyond our borders. But for now, we're we're focusing here on home turf, and yeah, we we've got all kinds of great resources that, that we would gladly share. There's a there's an agreement that that we enter into with with someone who wants to lead this project. And we see the the the different municipalities and different provinces being being the leaders adopting this program in internally and running with it. Because it takes it takes some work. It takes some development of of waivers and indemnity agreements. And we see this being a great opportunity for municipalities to, to take on because they have the capacity for that. And yeah, there's, there's, I mean, City of Toronto is is a beast. And we have precedent with we're in working with other other smaller municipalities that are much more nimble and can take on this type of work and adopt their own their own policies that allow these ramps say to live more permanently on on the public right of way where where it's safe, and where there's enough clearance. We understand that we want to be mindful of all different ways of moving around you know, people that are using white canes and we want to make sure that that we're hearing from everybody and and learning from those that may be challenged with having a ramp like ours on on the sidewalk so so yeah, there's there's definitely opportunity for this to be adopted in different in different communities all over Canada. And we'd love to hear from from people who might be listening. So yeah, please get in touch.

R

Rob Mineault 58:55

Look at this. You're not gonna perfectly for the camera into asking you if people are interested in

Look at this. You've set me up perfectly for the segue into asking you if people are interested in contacting you, where can they find your contact information? And where can they find the StopGap foundation?

**L** Luke Anderson 59:11

Yeah, yeah, for sure. So stopgap.ca is where you'll find all kinds of great content and information about the organization and if anybody's interested in adopting a community ramp project in in your town and your community, your city, drop us a line at info@stopgap.ca. We're on Instagram, Facebook, we've got a great YouTube channel where you can find lots of fun content of the for example, escapades of the barrier busting superhero we called Ramp Man. He and I have never been in this in the same room together. Some people say that we look alike but yeah we've never been ever in the same room together he's out there busting barriers as we speak. Excellent. Well good, we need we need him right now apparently need to go bust some heads on some of these local politicians. Totally totally. That's it's a great note to end on. Ramp Man really embodies our core value of having fun talking about we've covered a lot of ground and some of these things are challenging topics that evoke fear and overwhelm and people so the bright colors that we use Ramp Man and his antics they really embody this core value of ours that's that's followed us all the way since we started.

**R** Ryan Fleury 1:00:45

I smell a Netflix series.

**L** Luke Anderson 1:00:50

Brilliant. Ryan, another million dollar idea.

**L** Lis Malone 1:00:54

We'll sell it to you Luke.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:00:58

It was his idea in the first place.

**R** Ryan Fleury 1:00:59

You need Ramp Man merchandise sold your website. Mini ramps and Ramp Man himself in little figurines, t shirts.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:01:20

Man I tell you we had follow through in this place. We'd all be millionaires at this point. Listen

man I tell you, we had to follow through in this place. We'd all be millionaires at this point. Listen, Luke, we want to thank you again for coming on. Best of luck. I think this is an amazing project.

L Luke Anderson 1:01:36

Thanks again for reaching out and the opportunity to chat a bit about all this great stuff.

R Rob Mineault 1:01:43

Yeah, no doubt.

R Ryan Fleury 1:01:44

Well, if you've got any news and you want to come back on, you're more than welcome to come back and bring Ramp Man with you.

L Luke Anderson 1:01:50

Okay. We'll have Ramp Man on. Does he have a different voice? Does he wear glasses? He he's an enigma. I'll have to be in touch with them and see Oh, yeah, that's right. I shouldn't be asking you these questions because like, how would you know? Oh, I'll be I'll be in touch with him soon. Awesome. All right. Well take care of my friend and we'll talk soon. Right on everyone. Take care. Thanks. Thanks

L Lis Malone 1:02:20

Bye Luke.

L Luke Anderson 1:02:22

See, like a place that makes wooden ramps and they have an Instagram. And we can't figure out our Instagram. Yeah, what's wait that's what we need. That's that's a great idea. Banter Boy. don't know that's yeah, we I think we already went this route. Yeah. Why does Superman have a big belly?

L Lis Malone 1:02:59

What's better? Rob doing the voice or me doing Rob doing the voice? I don't know.

R Rob Mineault 1:03:07

Yeah. Wow, this is so meta. It's like Inception now. You know, it's, you know, it's funny, I did a

little bit of research before the show. And do you guys know what's it like to build a ramp? Like if you're a business and you want to actually put in a wheelchair ramp? Do you know the crap that you have to go through to actually do that?

**L** Luke Anderson 1:03:09

Like you're talking permits and all that sort of stuff?

**R** Rob Mineault 1:03:24

Yeah. Which costs like about a grand and then you usually figure to put in a wheelchair ramp it's between it's can be anywhere from like \$3000 to like \$8,000. So again, like you're looking at like 10 grand to put in a wheelchair ramp and a bunch of permits and stuff. What a pain in the butt. You know, I don't understand why, and then we wonder why why more businesses don't pull the trigger and be more you know, try to be more accessible. It's because they're they have all these barriers in front of them as well.

**R** Ryan Fleury 1:04:28

Well the application process to you know, probably by the time they submit an application a year could go by before they even get looked at looked at so

**R** Rob Mineault 1:04:36

But you know, it really frustrates me in terms of these these these bylaws that we were talking about earlier because really StopGap is an amazing it's a very elegant simple solution. It's literally a piece of plywood, like you know on ramp, painted a bright color, put up against the step like it doesn't get any easier than that and they had to go through all of this. Fighting with with local bylaws and stuff it just it seems ridiculous to me. There's there's my rant for the day

**L** Lis Malone 1:05:10

Rant Man. Oh no, Ryan is rant man.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:05:14

Yeah. Hey, Lis.

**L** Lis Malone 1:05:22

Rob.



Rob Mineault 1:05:27

Hey, where can people find us?



Lis Malone 1:05:31

They can find us on the web at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)



Ryan Fleury 1:05:37

Perfect. Well done.



Lis Malone 1:05:40

Emphasis, emphasis on dot com.



Ryan Fleury 1:05:42

Exactly. That's where the emphasis needs to be. Yes. Yeah. Yeah,



Luke Anderson 1:05:47

I know while we already led, a lot of people like staring at like for Error 404 Internet page



Ryan Fleury 1:05:55

This domain can be yours.



Rob Mineault 1:06:01

And they can't find our Google Plus page either. Who's next what? Oh, I'm next. Hey, they can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com).



Steve Barclay 1:06:21

And if they're so inclined and participate in those evil, evil social medias, you can find us on the evil Facebook and even Twitter



Rob Mineault 1:06:31

And not the evil Instagram because we haven't figured figured it out yet. But we will

and not the evil Instagram because we haven't figured it out yet. But we will.

- R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:38  
We need to focus on on the metaverse. We need to get ourselves some some land in the metaverse and start staking our claim there.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:06:47  
Yeah. Okay. Well, okay, you figure out where the metaverse is. I don't know where it is.
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:53  
I read an article the other day that there are people willing to spend the same amount as they do on their homes and stuff for property as they are willing to spend on the metaverse for for whatever property or whatever, token or whatever the metaverse is gonna look like, and they're stupid. Yeah, people are willing to spend lots of money for their place in the metaverse.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:07:16  
Wow. Wow, have fun in the metaverse.
- L** Lis Malone 1:07:20  
Didn't people learn their lesson after Bitcoin?
- R** Rob Mineault 1:07:24  
and NFTs or ...
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:07:26  
Non fungible. What the hell is fungible?
- R** Rob Mineault 1:07:32  
Just stupid man. We're all grumpy.
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:07:34  
I have a Wrigley's gum wrapper. what's that worth to you, Rob? Oh, I'll trade.

R

Rob Mineault 1:07:41

Yeah, don't even get me started on that. That's what you should have ranted about today. Okay. All right. Are we done? Okay, hey, oh, wait, no,

R

Ryan Fleury 1:09:14

That's gonna do it for us this week.

R

Rob Mineault 1:09:17

Thank you, Ryan. And that is going to do it for us for this week. Big thanks of course for everybody for listening in. And big thanks to Luke Anderson for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.