



Celebrating

50 years

2018-19 Annual Report

Inclusion. Innovation. Impact.



Joan Lee, CEO of Vecova

A message from Joan Lee

Inclusion, Innovation and Impact – these words tell the history and future of Vecova. As we enter into our 50th year of providing services to persons with disabilities and the community, we are clear on our roots, our purpose and our future. Vecova, formerly the Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute (VRRI), has come of age and will continue to focus on inclusion, innovation and impact today as much as we did in our formative years through leadership and collaboration.

We rise to the challenge of driving inclusion through innovation. We believe that without inclusion, our differences divide us. At Vecova, we stand united together as equals to champion inclusion as a catalyst for the needed change in society. By working together, we can achieve our vision that persons with disabilities are valued and integral members of society. Through innovative strategies, we are able to improve how we support people and have positive impacts on peoples' lives. These beliefs and actions have stood the test of time and will continue to be our focus for years to come.

At Vecova, I witness inclusion, innovation and impact every day through our high caliber services, social research, innovation and enterprises. From adapting and growing our existing programs to continuing to build and nurture relationships, Vecova is committed to grow and serve the changing disability community. In this way, we discover better ways to impact peoples' lives and build an inclusive society. The stories within this Annual General Report highlight some of those impacts.

Our founders had a vision and left a legacy to follow rich in hopes, dreams and words of wisdom. I am thankful for the employees, donors, stakeholders and all those we have relationships with that help us make this vision a reality.



Vecova Photo Archive - Date Unknown



Our Mission

Building the capacity of persons with disabilities and enriching communities through leadership, innovation and collaboration.

Our Vision

Persons with disabilities are valued and integral members of society.



Creation of the VRRI (Vecova)

1960 - Disability Rights Movement

The disability sector undergoes a significant change – community living is seen as a right for all citizens, regardless of ability.



1965 - Centennial Program

The Canadian Association for Retarded Children, the University of Calgary, the Active 20/30 Club and the Government of Alberta come together to take an innovative concept and make it into a reality. The National Centennial Project in Mental Retardation provides \$7 million to 13 projects across Canada to celebrate the Centennial of Canada's Federation in 1967.



1964 - A Spark That Ignites

Disability maverick Christine Meikle approaches the University of Calgary to develop a program to train persons with developmental disabilities through research-based services and programs.



1966 - Incorporation

The Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute (VRRI) is incorporated on July 19, 1966.



1968 - Ground Breaking Ceremony

The ground breaking ceremony for the VRRI was held on May 30, 1968. Important dignitaries and key people in the disability sector turn the first sod and bury a time capsule. The VRRI becomes the first affiliated institute of the University of Calgary, and Dr. D. Gibson is appointed the first director.



1969 - Doors Open

146 individuals are assessed as potential trainees for the program in the first year. The VRRI opens its doors on July 15, 1969 and begins providing services and supports to persons with disabilities in the community.





Vecova Photo Archive - 1974



Vecova Photo Archive - 1983

Wellness

- **105** persons with disabilities received work, education, leisure, volunteer and other opportunities through our Community Access services
- **180,000** patrons accessed our swimming, aquatic and dryland programs
- **\$16,000+** in fee subsidies provided to children, youth and adults who accessed our recreation programs
- **114** children and adults with disabilities enrolled in our Empower Abilities and Music & Movement programs
- **276** persons with disabilities received group and individual counselling, assessments and behavioural consultations
- **5,000** people attended 12 Professional Supports Educational Series presentations

Highlights:

Building connections

Vecova built connections in the community through partnerships with the Calgary Public Library, Telus Spark Community Connections, Foodfit at the Alex, Prospect Long Table Creative, The Calgary Foundation and Momentum Money Matters.

Creating an impact

Vecova partnered with Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the Parkinson Association of Alberta to create recreation programming to meet the needs of specific demographics and create a positive impact in the community.

Finding friendship at Vecova

"We are very thankful for the aqua mobility class that we have attended every Tuesday since January 2012."

"Having Vecova available for us to access an assisted change room, a water wheelchair and a warm pool has been fantastic and beneficial to my life."

- Carol and Richard Hood
Customers



"I have been coming to Vecova for the best part of 25 years. I broke my leg skiing and other pools turned me away. Vecova's pool was recommended to me, as it had all the safety features – like a ramp – for people with disabilities. I have been coming ever since.

Not only did I rehabilitate here, but I also met wonderful people. Not just the employees but friends in both the aquatics and land programs. I have found everyone to be helpful and friendly, always polite and helpful. As a result, I was able to receive help from employees and my friends in the pool when my daughter was diagnosed with cancer. Support and TLC are very important in times like that, and I received it here.

Also, the warm water helps older folks like me with arthritis!

I would like to thank everyone at Vecova for your kindness and support over the years. Have a wonderful 50th Anniversary! Thanks for being there for me!"

- Margaret McMillan
Customer



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Vecova Photo Archive - 1982

Living Support Services

- **101** staff provided Complex Medical and Coverage Living Support services to Vecova clients
- **76** staff provided Complex Needs (Behavioural) Living Support services to Vecova clients
- **40** staff provided Supportive Group and Roommate Living Support services to Vecova clients

Highlights:

Providing safe housing

Vecova made strides in providing safe housing to individuals with complex risk behaviour by implementing a harm-reduction model and working with mental health clinicians to explore treatment options, support individuals through legal proceedings and provide a safe home for individuals with addiction issues.



Vecova Photo Archive - 1990s

Finding a place to call home

“Vecova provides strong advocacy for great client service, which includes increasing their opportunities, providing social inclusion and bringing enhanced awareness to the community.”

- **Leslie Simpson**
Living Support Services
Manager



A couple years ago, Alison and Mitchell almost met. They were both approached separately for an opportunity to be each other’s roommates. Alison wanted to continue her work as a Supportive Roommate, and Mitchell was looking to gain his independence from living at home. That fell through, but little did they know it would only take a few years before the opportunity to live together would come true again through Vecova.

Alison had been with Vecova since 2009. She loves working with the community, and in particular, being a Supportive Roommate. In the past two years, she had met with about nine different families to find a good fit for both her and the client to live together in a long-term situation.

Then she met Mitchell.

Mitchell and his family had made the decision for him to move out on his own and gain some independence. He was working at Home Depot and generating an income for himself. With support from Vecova, they decided to pursue finding a Supportive Roommate for him. Soon after meeting, Alison started searching for a place to live in the south east of Calgary that was affordable, safe and accessible. They both wanted to find a place that would work for both of their needs.

“We looked at different places together. It was a fun way to get to know each other!” They have now lived together for a few months and are enjoying it. For Mitchell, it took some adjustment but now he loves it.

“It’s my first time on my own. It was scary for the first couple days, but I got used to it,” Mitchell revealed. “I left ‘the parent umbrella,’ but it’s fine. There are no problems; I’m used to it – it’s like any other day.”

“He doesn’t need a mom or a caregiver,” Alison said. “I see myself as his big sister, there to support him, when he needs it, so he can be as independent as possible. This is his goal.”

Mitchell’s mom said that “it was an adjustment for us, but we felt very comfortable with Alison as soon as we met her. He is very happy and independent and this is what we wanted for him.”

Ultimately, they are a great roommate match for each other.

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Vecova Photo Archive - 1974



Vecova Photo Archive - 1982

Social Enterprise

- **33** Vecova Airport Cart Retrieval employees served YYC's 17,000,000 travellers
- **36%** of the Vecova Airport Cart Retrieval workforce had a self-disclosed disability
- **55,470** Vecova Bottle Depot transactions for commercial orders and walk in orders combined
- **\$18,661** collected by Vecova Bottle Depot in donations to Vecova
- **17.5 million** containers recycled by Vecova Bottle Depot
- **65%** of Vecova Bottle Depot employees had a self-disclosed disability
- **4,500** households served by the Vecova Bottle Pick-Up Service
- **60%** of the Vecova Bottle Pick-Up workforce had a self-disclosed disability
- **100%** of the University of Calgary Recycling Contract for Service workforce had a self-disclosed disability

Highlights

Innovative technology

Vecova's Bottle Depot installed an assistive technology that allows our employees to better serve customers quickly while allowing the staff who sort the recycled material by product type and size to be more efficient and accurate.

Raising community awareness

Vecova's Bottle Pick-Up Service hosted a "Beat The Thieves" event with InjaNation in September 2018 to raise awareness of Vecova and to take action against thefts to Vecova's Bottle Depot donation bins.

"I've been working with Vecova for five years and have been a client for ten years. I was at a bad point in life and Vecova helped me turn my life around. Now I have two jobs volunteering and I just want to give back to the community because it gave me so much."

- **Derek Cusler**
Recycling Agent,
Vecova Bottle Pick-Up Service

Embracing new technology



Continuing its trend of innovation, leadership and inclusion, in 2018 Vecova's Bottle Depot became one of the first depots in Calgary to add TOMRA's Sorting Solutions to its facility. This new technology aids employees in maintaining the accuracy and focus on customer service that Vecova's Bottle Depot is known for.

"There's always learning curves, but if everyone's on the same page it's amazing what this thing has been able to do for us," Jason Barefoot, employee of Vecova's Bottle Depot, said. "It makes our job a lot easier."

In 2018, Vecova's Bottle Depot received the Trevor Nickel Service Excellence Award for Customer Service in recognition of its admirable performance.

Vecova continues to lead the way as one of Calgary's premiere bottle depots with this new technology, which will increase accuracy, effectiveness and customer service.

"The depot is an inclusive environment and demonstrates that all people, no matter the barrier or challenge, are productive, contributing members of a community."

- **Ron Meeres**
Social Enterprises Manager, Bottle Depot



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Vecova Photo Archive - 1987



Vecova Photo Archive - 1983

Employment Services

- **13** students in Rocky View School District participated in our Youth Transition and Work Experience Program
- **74** clients accessed our Employment Services to find meaningful employment in the community
- **48** business partners worked with our Employment Services to employ persons with disabilities

Highlights

Vecova client receives Star Award

A Vecova client received a Star Award from the Ramada Inn where she has worked for three years. She was given this award by the Housekeeping Manager for her positive work ethic and personality, which brightens her co-workers' work day.

Youth Transition and Work Experience

The Youth Transition and Work Experience program is a one-year pilot program funded by Alberta Works to help youth with disabilities in rural communities to gain work experience and transition from school to adulthood.

"Our belief is that anyone can work with the right supports, with the right job, in the right environment. No matter what someone's support needs are in this program, we will tailor an individualized program to help them wherever they're at."

- **Kim Yager**
Youth Program Manager

Gaining work experience



When youth with disabilities are able to obtain work experience at an early age, they develop critical skills such as time management and teamwork, which can be transferred into their adult lives. Many youth with disabilities, however, do not gain work experience during high school.

To address this, Vecova received funding from Alberta Works, CIBC and the Rocky View School Board to complete a 1-year pilot of a Youth Transition and Work Experience program in the Rocky View School (RVS) division.

The program is divided into three cohorts of approximately 10 youth who will receive an employability assessment, work preparation, work experience and work placement supports in three month intervals.

The program started in January 2019 and is currently underway in the communities of Airdrie, Cochrane, Crossfield and Chestermere, assisting 13 students with developing employability and life skills, as well as on-the-job work experience.

Initial conversations are underway with 33 youth and their families to develop transition plans to ensure that the appropriate services and supports, as well as a road map to detail how the youth will achieve their goals into adulthood, are in place.

In the short time that the program has been operational, it has already seen numerous successes. The first youth began attending a work experience within the first month of the program and another youth received paid employment before the end of the first cohort.



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Vecova Photo Archive - 1989



Vecova Photo Archive - 1973

Infrastructure

- **16%** of Vecova's overall workforce had a self-disclosed disability
- **544** employees, two practicum students, 45 approved backup and six contractors
- **1,500** attendees at events throughout the year
- **40** volunteers supported events throughout the year
- **13** news media appearances across all of Calgary's major networks
- **1,098** learners from 23 agencies in the Calgary PDD region and Vecova successfully completed the Medication Administration Training program
- **24** Professional Development classes and 100 Essential Skills in-class trainings hosted by Learning and Development
- **26** Vecova managers and directors received University of Calgary's Leading Series training

Highlights:

Implementing new technology

Vecova has successfully implemented its new Enterprise Resource Management System to manage financial, human resource and scheduling activities. This project required extensive time and effort from various teams across the organization for the past two years. This system supports Vecova's long-term success and financial sustainability, allowing us to modernize the way we work so that we can support the needs of persons with disabilities for years to come.

Building an inclusive workforce

Learning and Development received grant funding for Equipping and Advancing a Culturally Diverse Workforce Project. This project includes Leadership development for non-Canadians, as well as a plain language and curriculum redesign for Vecova's Medication Administration eLearning course.

"Vecova was started by incredible people who were passionate about inclusion."

- **Joan Lee**
CEO of Vecova

Board of Directors



Joan Lee
Chief Executive Officer



Dr. Ivan Sierralta
Board Chair



Meredith MacDonald
Vice Chair



Donald Dart
Treasurer



Michelle McKenna
Secretary



Dr. Dorothy Badry



Steve Twible



Neil Mackie



Dave MacKillop



Robert McKercher

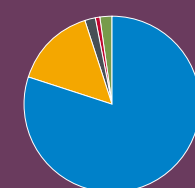
Executive Team

Joan Lee, Chief Executive Officer

Yvonne Martodam, Chief Administrative Officer

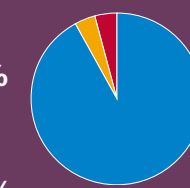
Donovan Tymchyshyn, Chief Strategy Officer

2018-19 Financials



Revenue

- Government of Alberta Contract: **80%**
- Net Sales: **15%**
- Rental: **2%**
- Provincial/Municipal/Other Grants: **1%**
- Fundraising: **2%**



Expenses

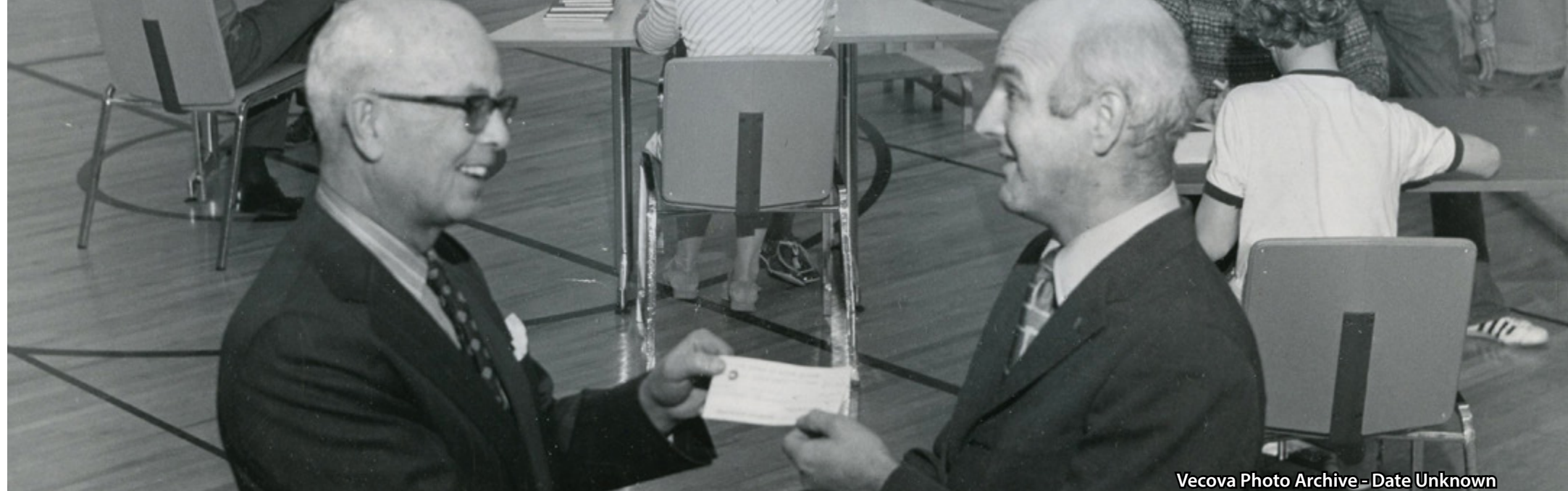
- Direct & Supervisory Costs: **92%**
- Facility Maintenance/Capital: **4%**
- Infrastructure Costs: **4%**



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Vecova Photo Archive - 1967



Vecova Photo Archive - Date Unknown

Our Supporters

- **2** awards given to our supporters at Vecova's annual Stewardship Event
- **\$10,000** donated by the Melton Foundation to support accessibility upgrades at Vecova
- **\$10,000** donated by CIBC in support of Vecova's Youth Transition Program
- **\$6,000** donated by the Calgary Children's Foundation in support of Vecova's Empower Abilities program
- **\$5,000** donated by Inter Pipeline in support of Vecova's Explore, Experience, Decide program

Highlights:

Honouring stewardship

At Vecova's annual stewardship event, Vecova awarded our 2018 New Partner Award to **SysGen Solutions Group** and our 2018 Volunteer Champion Award to **RBC** in recognition of the outstanding support that they provided to our organization throughout the year.

Strength in Art

Fund Development and Communications hosted the first Strength in Art Show in partnership with Humainologie and Empathy Week 2018. This event was the first time that many of our clients had displayed and/or sold their work to the public. The event was well attended and many of our clients had great success selling their work.

Meet our supporters

Vecova is successful because of the support we receive from the community. We would not be able to continue serving persons with disabilities without your continued support and commitment.

To meet all of our supporters, visit: vecova.ca/oursupporters

"Being involved in our community is so vitally important because you never know when you're going to need the community."

"That's just another reason why we need to be there for our communities and support our communities is because one day, we're going to need our communities."

- **Trudy Lawson**
RBC

Volunteer Churchill



"Sir Winston Churchill High School has a variety of unique clubs for all students. One of the most distinct clubs at our school is Volunteer Churchill, a club in which we organize and execute volunteer projects around Calgary for students. Our club has more than 10 years of volunteer organizing experience and over 500 members. We help host one-time events as well as regular projects in the community.

When I first identified Vecova as a potential organization that the volunteers at my school could be a part of, I emailed the organization right away!

Volunteer Churchill was able to help with Vecova's Strength in Art Show that occurred last June. The positive environment and the sense of community allowed the volunteers to feel part of their community.

Very recently, we were able to be part of the momentous 50th Anniversary for Vecova, which was an absolute honour. It felt as though we were part of the history itself! We look forward to more beneficial changes in Vecova's future.

Volunteer Churchill allows students to become influential and supportive members in their communities, and it is only through organizations such as Vecova that we are able to provide these long-lasting experiences. Thank you."

- **Ghada Eldib**
Volunteer Churchill Coordinator



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Vecova Photo Archive - Date Unknown



Vecova Photo Archive - 1975

Research and Strategic Services

- 15 projects led or supported

Highlights:

Partnerships in the community

Research and Strategic Services partnered with University of Calgary Haskayne Business School, Colbeck Strategic Advisors, Innoweave and Sharpline Management.

Supporting sustainability

Vecova's Research and Strategic Services continued to support the Executive, Senior Leadership and Management teams to move forward Vecova's strategic plan and business and operational goals. They also contributed to Vecova's overall operations and sustainability. This included:

- Developing and implementing various organizational plans and projects (e.g. Professional Services Review and Business Development, ShareVision, Youth Transition and Work Experience Program) to support each business area to move their business goals forward
- Contributing information on legislative changes or opportunities for engagement and commentary (e.g. City of Calgary Municipal Development and Transportation Plan, Employment and Social Development Social Finance Fund and Government of Canada Charitable Sector Committee)

50th Anniversary Events

For 50 years, Vecova has continued to carry out its mission to build the capacity of persons with disabilities and enrich communities through leadership, innovation and collaboration. As an accredited and registered charitable organization, we have been meeting the lifelong and changing needs of persons with disabilities since 1969.

Vecova will be commemorating this milestone achievement with community events throughout the year.

Mark your calendars with the following dates so you don't miss out on any of the celebrations!

2019 Calendar of Events:

Thursday July 11	Stampede BBQ Vecova Recreation Centre lawn
Saturday & Sunday July 27 & 28	Canmore Event Northwest Mounted Police Barracks
Friday Oct 25	Chili Cook-Off Vecova Recreation Centre gym

Visit us at vecova.ca/50th for up-to-date details on our 50th Anniversary events. We can't wait to celebrate with you!



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Vecova Photo Archive - Original rendering of building

Our Past

Even before the Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute (VRRI) became a reality, what started as an idea grew into an innovative concept to provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Calgary and across the country.

In 1966, the VRRI published Bringing the Future to Today, in anticipation for the Institute's opening in 1969. According to the publication, it was a "lack of vocational training facilities and sheltered workshops to serve young adults in Calgary" that became a new opportunity to "offer hope for dignity to young adults in the Province of Alberta and all of Canada to create a balanced program of training and services to clients and communities." With a focus on research to guide this innovative system of supports, a program was created with activities and training that would be "directed at maximizing the occupation and social behaviour of young adults" with developmental disabilities.

The VRRI, now the Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research, opened its doors in 1969 and has grown from a vocational and rehabilitation facility to a respected community service organization dedicated to persons of all abilities.

At Vecova, each individual it serves has a quality of life that is personally meaningful and helps enhance their connection and contribution to the community. Vecova is an internationally recognized research centre for its trendsetting work and deep knowledge of the disability sector, and insight into the key social issues that impact it. Vecova has an acknowledged model of success for its social enterprises, which demonstrate organizational sustainability through an inclusive community.



Rendering of new building - GEC Architecture

Our Future

"What I have learned from working at Vecova is to never underestimate the potential people have—we just need to keep presenting the opportunities to make it happen."

- **Donna White**
Community Access
Manager



For half a century, we've created and grown a community of innovators, leaders and drivers. Now, we're poised for another half-century of forward thinking and forward motion.

To address the social, economic and environmental challenges persons with disabilities and our communities face, Vecova will continue to think differently about our complex world and work together in new strategic ways to create transformative change.

Vecova looks forward to launching a capital campaign to raise funds for a new facility to act as a community hub that focuses on abilities.

Vecova will address the underrepresentation of persons with disabilities

within the workforce, and promote employment and decent work for all through the creation of a new Employment Centre with services and programs that focus on youth transition training and social entrepreneurship.

Vecova will champion health and wellness as an achievable priority and create opportunities for individuals to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing through the creation of a state-of-the-art Wellness Centre that is fully accessible and adaptable for all Calgarians with a new aquatics and fitness facility and mental health and physiotherapy clinics.

Vecova will develop creative, affordable and accessible housing and support solutions for Calgarians with disabilities, and contribute to the creation of a healthy housing system for the Calgary region.

Vecova will develop new social enterprises throughout its service and programs as a critical tool to ensure Vecova's continuing sustainability, innovation and financial discipline as it delivers on its mission to improve the quality of life for those with disabilities.

Vecova will continue to meet the lifelong and changing needs of persons with disabilities, the ever-evolving nonprofit and disability sectors, the strategic and business needs of Vecova and find innovative solutions to our most pressing social concerns within our communities with the creation of a new Centre for Social Research and Innovation that focuses on inclusion and equality.



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