REPORT ON THE GAPS ANALYSIS ON EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES ACCESSIBLITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

FINAL REPORT

GOSS GILROY INC.
Management Consultants
Conseillers en gestion

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Abbreviation	Description
AESL	Advanced Education Skills and Labour
APSEA	Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASNL	Autism Society Newfoundland and Labrador
CCRW	Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (St. John's Branch)
CHHA-NL	Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador
CMHA-NL	Canadian Mental Health Association-Newfoundland and Labrador
EAPD	Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Program
EI	Employment Insurance
EDP	Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program
GGI	Goss Gilroy Inc.
IT	Information Technology
LMAPD	Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
NLACL	Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living
RFP	Request for Proposals
SFA	Student Financial Assistance
TSP	Training Services Program

1.0   Introduction

Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) is pleased to submit this report as per the contract with the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL) to conduct a gap analysis on employment and training services accessibility for persons with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). As stated in the RFP, this analysis is intended to help meet requirements in the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour's mandate letter.

This gaps analysis was conducted by GGI in concert with the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities from mid-February to mid-March 2018.

1.1   Background and context

The barriers to inclusion in the paid labour market for persons with disabilities are many. The issues are complex, multi-faceted and deeply intertwined and often compounded by disconnected public systems and policies.[1]

1.1.1   National and international context

In 2012, almost 14% of the Canadian population aged 15 years or older - 3.8 million individuals - reported having a disability that limited their daily activities. Among the provinces, the prevalence ranged from 10% in Quebec to 19% in Nova Scotia, with the prevalence of disability in NL cited as being 13.1%. One in 10 people of working age (15 to 64 years) reported having a disability. Women (15%) were generally more likely than men (13%) to report disabilities. Disabilities related to pain, flexibility, and mobility were the most common.[2]

Persons with disabilities represent a major population group in Canada, but it would be incorrect to assume that they are a homogenous group. Diversity within the disability community is significant and, therefore, the needs of persons with disabilities are certainly not uniform. Recent definitions of disability are broader than in the past. Disability is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between persons with disability types and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[3]

Models have emerged, and there is a reported shift from supports and services for individual remediation toward one that provides additional attention to environmental and societal accommodation. This acknowledges the belief that an individual's ability to be employed

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[1]National Conference – Disability and Work in Canada. Successes and Challenges of Canada's First 150 Years - Developing a Vision and Strategy for the Future. 2017. Available from https://crwdp.ca/en/national-conference-disability-and-work-canada.
[2]Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability 2012. Available from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2015001-eng.htm#a2.
[3]UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Available from http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.

depends as much on the openness of society to accommodate people with disabilities, as it does on the specific functional limitations of the individuals.[4]

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities enshrines the right of persons with disabilities to employment:

Article 27 highlights that people with disabilities have the right to work as everyone else in an open, inclusive, and accessible labour market, without discrimination, and with access to reasonable accommodations in the workplace. The article also identifies that there must be a focus on promoting employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment.[5]

1.1.2   The realities of access to training and employment for persons with disabilities

Despite efforts made by the federal and provincial governments, advocacy groups, and service providers, a disproportionate number of persons with disabilities remain out of the labour force and/or underemployed, and significant numbers rely on provincial income support programs in Canada. This is due to the reality that Canadians with disabilities have consistently experienced barriers in the educational, economic and social spheres. They face many obstacles in participating in the labour market, especially those with severe disabilities or low educational attainment.[6]

Major barriers to employment for persons with disabilities would include, but not be limited to: lack of accessible and affordable transportation; social isolation and segregation; limited/lack of personal and disability-related supports as well as costs of these supports; inaccessibility of the current environment; disincentives arising out of the various income support systems which they are accessing (income support, benefits, other funding); limited/lack of education, training and work experience; lack of on-the-job supports, accommodation and assistance; communication barriers; lack of access to self-employment and business development supports; and discriminatory employer attitudes and inflexible work environments. Additionally, and arising from years of marginalization and unsuccessful efforts to attach to the labour market, some persons with disabilities have internalized this failure, resulting in loss of confidence and enhanced social exclusion.

When persons with disabilities do attach to the labour force, they are generally less likely to be in management or professional occupations, more likely to be in personal and customer information

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[4]Lessons Learned: Disability Policies and Programs, HRDC, 1997.
[5] UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 27 - Work and Employment. Available from http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf.
[6]Discover Ability Network. Inclusive Employment for People with Disabilities. 2017. Available from https://discoverability.network/inclusive-employment-for-canadians-with-disabilities/.

services, less likely to be in full-year, full-time employment, and more likely to have lower employment income, even if full-year, full-time.[7]

1.1.3 The provincial labour market need

Planning for current and future needs was at the core of AESL's Labour Market Outlook 2025[8] (released in Fall 2015). As per this document, AESL continues to work toward ensuring NL has a highly skilled workforce to support the provincial economy, meet labour demands and increase labour force participation in the province.

A considerable number of job openings are anticipated over the next decade due to an increasing number of retiring workers (Occupation Projections – Department of Finance). The population that supplies most of the labour (15 to 64 years old) is projected to decline significantly over the forecast period, implying tightening of labour market conditions. Of particular importance to future labour market policy is the fact that new entrants, specifically young people at the beginning of their careers, will be the biggest single source of new labour supply. It is anticipated, however, that their numbers will be exceeded by labour market exits due to attrition (i.e., retirements and deaths).[9]

Despite these emerging economic opportunities, and an apparent continuum of training and employment services available to them, persons with disabilities remain largely unemployed - a willing "population in waiting."

1.1.4 The purpose of the gaps analysis

As per AESL's mandate, the Department has a role in helping individuals to obtain the educational, employment, financial and social supports needed to achieve the greatest benefit from current and future economic opportunities in the province, which should contribute to their other critical areas of focus: having a highly skilled workforce comprised of well-educated graduates who can participate in and contribute to their communities.[10]

It is recognized the Province must maximize the skill sets and ensure full participation in the labour market for all who are able to play an even greater part in the economic future and sustainability of the province. Yet, as stated previously, persons with disabilities still face many barriers to employment, including to training and employment programs and services which could and should support their employment aspirations.

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[7]Emile Tompa. Co-Director, Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy. Disability and Work in the Canada. Research Panel – The Economic Landscape (PPT). 2017. Available from
https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/Research%20and%20Publications/7_etompa-research-tuesam11.00-12.00.pdf.
[8] Labour Market Outlook 2025 is available from http://www.aesl.gov.nl.ca/publications/pdf/labour_market_outlook2025.pdf.
[9]Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. Labour Market Outlook 2025. Pg. 1. Available from http://www.aesl.gov.nl.ca/publications/pdf/labour_market_outlook2025.pdf.
[10]Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. About the Department – Mandate. Available from http://www.aesl.gov.nl.ca/department/index.html#mandate.

The Minister of AESL has been mandated to take steps to grow the provincial population. One of the actions referenced to achieve this objective is an improvement to supported and supportive employment for persons with disabilities. The proposed research study is a key initiative that will assist the Department in achieving this objective.

As delineated in the RFP, the employment and training services research study for persons with disabilities is intended to provide a gap analysis on access to such services for persons with disabilities in NL. Specifically, the research will provide:

- An examination of the needs of persons with disabilities for developing meaningful attachment to the workforce. This is considered from the perspective of persons with disabilities as a group, while also noting how these needs may vary across different areas of disability;

- An examination of the range of employment and training programs and services available to persons with disabilities in NL that are designed to address the above needs. This includes those available at the provincial, as well as federal, levels;

- An assessment of the barriers or obstacles that persons with disabilities in the province experience when trying to access employment and training programs and services, and what types of factors increase the likelihood of such barriers or obstacles to accessibility;

- A summary of the main gaps encountered in employment and training services for persons with disabilities in NL, with a particular focus on accessibility concerns (based on the information collected through the above research requirements). The summary provides some consideration as to how these gaps can be alleviated.

2.0   METHODOLOGY

2.1   Project liaison

The primary project liaison for the gaps analysis was an analyst with the Workforce Development Secretariat, Department of AESL. Given the time limited nature of the research, the analyst was critical in facilitating connections to AESL staff considered integral to the research process and, as well, in reviewing the consultation tools.

2.2   Information collection

2.2.1   Document/website review

A significant component of the gaps analysis was a comprehensive literature/document and website review. This primarily served to inform the needs of persons with disabilities for developing a meaningful attachment to the workforce and ways and mechanisms to address these needs. The document/literature and website review encompassed provincial, national and international levels. A full listing of the bibliography for this review is found in Appendix "A".

2.2.2 Participant interviews

Participant interviews gathered in-depth information from specific stakeholders on most of the issues.

Community

In-depth interviews were held with 33 representatives of community-based organizations of and for persons with disabilities in the province. These interviews focused on the issues identified in section 1.1.4. Working with the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities we identified a primary contact and interviewed one or more representatives from each of the following community-based organizations, many of whom are members of the provincial Network of Disability Organizations.

1. Association of Community Living - Ready, Willing and Able
2. Autism Society Newfoundland and Labrador (ASNL)
3. Avalon Employment
4. Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work St. John's Branch (CCRW)
5. Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL)
6. Canadian Mental Health Association – NL (CMHA-NL)
7. Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
8. CHANNAL
9. CNIB-NL
10. Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador
11. Empower (who also spoke for Inclusion NL)
12. Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador
13. Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
14. Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada – NL chapter
15. Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living (NLACL)
16. Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf
17. Newfoundland and Labrador Down Syndrome Society
18. People First of Newfoundland and Labrador
19. Schizophrenia Society of Newfoundland and Labrador
20. Spinal Cord Injury Newfoundland and Labrador
21. Stella's Circle
22. The Hub

23. Vera Perlin Society

24. Visions Employment Plus

The majority of the organizations consulted are disability specific (e.g., working primarily/exclusively with one disability group/type, and in some cases with their families). The remaining organizations are cross-disability in nature, i.e. working with individuals who self-identify as having a disability and/or seeking systemic policy change for all persons with disabilities overall. Generally, the organizations are working to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the knowledge, resources, supports, skills and opportunities to achieve equality and independence and fully participate in all aspects of their communities and societies.

About one-third of the organizations provide employment services/programs, either as their sole focus, or as a component of their mandate. Some are disability specific (e.g., Ready, Willing and Able, supported employment), while others are open to any person with a disability (e.g., Empower's Full Steam Ahead Program, CCRW's Partner Program and Easter Seals career services).

Provincial government

Working with the AESL Project Lead for this gaps analysis, we identified and interviewed 13 AESL regional and provincial staff who participated in short interviews. These discussions were specifically focused on any perceived gaps in the employment and training programming available to persons with disabilities in the province via their division/department, as well as ways to address these barriers/gaps. The staff also identified and proposed ways to address barriers and gaps in other community, provincial and/or federal employment and training programs. In addition, we consulted with the Disability Policy Office and the Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities on the Opening Doors Program.

2.2.3 Program profiles

As the gap analysis was interested to examine the range of employment and training programs and services available to persons with disabilities in NL, we requested that the community and provincial participants complete a program profile template for any program they offered to the target group. These profiles sought an overview of the programs (e.g., target group, eligibility criteria, goal, main activities) and also, as appropriate, views on innovative aspects of their programs and effective practices.

Community-based program profiles

The community-based programs were specific to persons with disabilities. These are listed below, and the completed profiles are provided in a separate document.

ASNL
- STEP - Students Transitioning into Employment
- Transitions
- EmploymentWorks Canada (Worktopia)

Avalon Employment
- Supported Employment

CMHA-NL
- At Work

CNIB-NL
- Career Supports

Easter Seals NL
- Horizons Skills Link Program
- Opportunities Fund (Community Coordinator)

Empower
- Adaptive Technology Program
- Employer Support Subsidies Program for People with Disabilities
- Full Steam Ahead
- Independent Living Internship Program

NL Association of the Deaf
- Employment Services

NLACL
- Ready, Willing and Able
- STEP - Students Transitioning into Employment Program

Spinal Cord Injury NL
- Employment Services

Visions Employment Plus
- Supported Employment

AESL program profiles

The majority of the AESL profiles spoke more generally to employment services for the broader population, with the remaining profiles addressing specific programs/services such as supported employment and work-related supports for persons with disabilities, job trainer supports and LMAPD (Student Aid). The relevant information has been incorporated into this report.

Four specific programs were profiled, however, and are included in the separate program profile document:

- Canada Student Grant for Students with Disabilities ($2,000/year)
- Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities ($8,000/year)
- NL High-need Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities– (tops-up the $8,000/year under the Federal Services and Equipment grants – no limit)
- Opening Doors.

FINDINGS

3.0   Barriers to attaching to the Labour Force

3.1   Youth with disabilities and the education system[11]

3.1.1   The K-12 system

Youth with disabilities are among the most marginalized and poorest of the world's youth. They commonly face more discrimination and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities, even in developed countries. For many young people with disabilities, exclusion, isolation, and abuse, as well as lack of educational and economic opportunities are daily experiences.

It was noted by a few community participants that barriers to the labour force begin in the K-12 system and continue into the post-secondary system, both of which can limit youths' aspirations due to disability. Even with supportive families, many youth with disabilities face severe challenges in obtaining an education due to inaccessible schools and lack of accessible transportation as well as ongoing stereotypes and attitudes. Lack of knowledge about and insensitivity to disability issues on the part of some educators, staff and students can make it difficult for students with disabilities to access educational services equally, and in some cases to access a training stream of their choice.

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[11] Information on youth with disabilities was garnered from the consultations and several reports including but not limited to: International Year of Youth 2010-2011 - Our Year Our Voice. *Fact Sheet on Youth with Disabilities*. Available from http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/Fact%20sheet%20youth%20with%20disabilities.pdf; An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017. Available from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsdp-cpmcph/pdf/publications/EAPReport2012ENG.pdf; Ontario Human Rights Commission. Main barriers to education for students with disabilities (fact sheet). Available from http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/main-barriers-education-students-disabilities-fact-sheet; and Access to Post-Secondary Education and Services for Students with Learning Disabilities.

For example, assessments are not timely for early diagnosis and planning, and/or students are labelled at a young age, and then impacted in terms of their likely levels of success and potential for a career. This, in turn, results in students with disabilities being streamed into academic course/curricula which may not include a focus on career development or match the students' skills sets/potential. Additionally, teachers and guidance counsellors are often ill-equipped to counsel students with disabilities on their career options.

As an example, in research GGI undertook with youth with disabilities in relation to their awareness and perception of Oil and Gas Industry Careers Among Young Persons with Disabilities, one main barrier cited to their participation in the industry is they are not making the educational choices (e.g., math/science) in high school needed to enter the requisite post-secondary programs to facilitate entry into the industry. In some cases, the youth are streamed into certain courses/academic paths to ensure they will experience success and/or to protect them from "undue" challenges.[12] Further, and as detailed by a few community participants, in some cases, youth with specific types of disabilities (e.g., intellectual disabilities) can be streamed into primarily non-academic courses and still spend significant time in segregated classrooms. A few participants suggested that increased outreach to high schools to discuss career planning and options would be helpful. As commented by a community participant:

> *Students with intellectual disabilities should get the same career ed; they want to be included. [We] need to show more than one option. […] It is hard to be included in career planning when still in segregated classrooms. Students do not necessarily know how to get funding for post-secondary even if they have the capacity to attend.*

Poor or negative educational experiences as children/young adults can deter persons with disabilities from entering post-secondary training and employment programs fearing that their experiences will be repeated and lead to failure. As cited by one participant:

> *Many persons with disabilities have had past educational experiences that have been poor, and they don't expect new educational opportunities to be helpful to them. People need early intervention in schooling to show them what's possible.*

Some community participants stressed the critical nature of transition planning for youth with disabilities, citing the need to ensure appropriate course selection, availability of needed supports and effective employment counselling both in the K-12 system and for post-secondary training. In particular, some community participants working with youth with intellectual disabilities and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) cited the gap for these youth when leaving school (typically between 18 to 21 years), stating that supports are greatly reduced once they leave the educational system.

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[12] Goss Gilroy. Awareness and Perception of Oil and Gas Industry Careers Among Young Persons with Disabilities. Pg. 3. Available from http://www.oilandgascareerinfo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PIHRC-research-report-Exec-Summary-final-June-4.pdf.

As an example, it was identified that youth who have availed of needed technology in the school system are not able to carry this forward with them, i.e., the support is tied to the school/the system and not the individual. In addition, it was stated that some youth are not provided the needed disability-related documentation when they leave school which speaks, for example, to their assessments and needs. In other cases, training and employment programs demand recent or new assessments, which can be costly to the applicant.

3.1.2 Post-secondary training

Persons with disabilities still face serious disadvantages in education and training. National statistics indicate persons with a disability are more likely to leave school without a diploma compared to students who do not have a disability (28% versus 19%), and that only 13.2% of persons with a disability have a university degree or certificate.

Participation in post-secondary education (as well as apprenticeship programs) remains low for persons with a disability and those that do participate often need more time to complete their education or training program (Statistics cited in *Disability and Inclusion Based Policy Analysis*, IRIS, 2012).[13] Depending on the nature and severity of their particular disability(ies), individuals may face difficulties in a number of areas, any of which might create additional financial burdens, over and above those experienced by their peers without disabilities. Barriers can be physical, technological, systemic, financial or attitudinal, or they can arise from a training provider's failure to make available a needed accommodation in a timely manner. Examples include:

- Inaccessible training institutions;

- Information about services and supports that is not always accessible;

- There are delays in accessing accommodations, which could be insufficient, and the right of students to confidentiality is not always respected;

- Cost of technology which allows the individual to learn and/or access information in a more timely and effective way. (With increased technology innovation, more options exist, but budgets need to reflect the cost of better supports.);

- Few options for alternative approaches to assessing an individual's mastery of course materials, and resistance to modifying courses to meet learner's needs while meeting learning outcomes.

Further, post-secondary institutions are witnessing an increase in the number and severity of student mental health problems, necessitating an understanding of the difficulties these students encounter in striving for higher education. The nature of these difficulties can be summarized as

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[13]An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012- 2017. Pg. 5. Available from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsdp-cpmcph/pdf/publications/EAPReport2012ENG.pdf.

follows: internal difficulties (physical, psychological, and social), external difficulties (structural and stigma) and academic outcomes (difficulties with disclosure and academic impairment).[14]

It was noted by some participants that access to effective employment counselling is not always available to some persons with disabilities. As a result, they may not have done an assessment of the likelihood of employment based on the labour market viability of their educational choices and/or considered whether or not they can function within the chosen job, even with requisite accommodations. This concern is compounded when they are accepted into programs that are not prepared to adapt for any necessary disability-related accommodations.

Youth with disabilities generally face greater employment uncertainties and hiring disparities during economic downturns and shrinking labour markets. There is also a lack of alternative job training options for those who do not attend formal post-secondary education or training programs.[15]

Considerations

Recent analyses of Canadian graduates of post-secondary programs indicate continuing disability-related disparities among graduates in both full- and part-time employment, as well as earnings, even when socio-economic variables are controlled for (Zarifa, Walters & Seward, 2015). These findings suggest that there is room for improvement in better accommodating students with disabilities in schools, colleges and universities and in facilitating their transition to the workforce.[16]

There is a need to encourage and support youth with disabilities to plan for post-secondary education and their futures through enhanced career exploration at earlier ages. This will require schools to appropriately guide youth with disabilities towards courses and careers that match their interests and capabilities (with access to disability-related supports and accommodations as needed). As well, it will require additional flexibility at the post-secondary level to offer modified courses.

Young people of all abilities benefit from work experience. Evidence demonstrates that early work experience while in school can lead to increased school completion rates, improved secondary to post-secondary and school-to-work transitions, and higher future earnings. This is especially true for youth with disabilities, who often have a harder time connecting with

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[14] Project Muse. Difficulties for University Students with Mental Health Problems. Available from https://muse.jhu.edu/article/522572/pdf.
[15] An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012- 2017. Available from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsdp-cpmcph/pdf/publications/EAPReport2012ENG.pdf; International Year of Youth 2010-2011 - Our Year Our Voice. *Fact Sheet on Youth with Disabilities*. Available from http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/Fact%20sheet%20youth%20with%20disabilities.pdf.
[16] Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Willing but Unable: A Population in Waiting. Pg. 13. 2016.

employers.[17] This could include cooperative placements, summer jobs and access to wage subsidies for youth ages 16 to 21 years.

As well, enabling community-connected experiential learning opportunities for students in kindergarten to grade 12 and adult learners[18] also could support transition to training and employment.

ASNL and NLACL both offer a Student Transitioning to Employment Program (which originated as a funded program through Ready, Willing and Able). The criteria for entry is based on each of their target populations and the age criteria is slightly different, with one offering the program to those between the ages of 16 to 21 years and the other for those aged 18 to 21 years. Both programs support youth with disabilities transitioning from high school to post-secondary and employment. The programs offer, for example, in-class sessions and job mentoring. There would be significant learnings from these programs, as well as from the national efforts in this regard, which would support AESL in their efforts to plan for transitions for youth with disabilities.

Overall, there is a need for early and effective intervention with children with disabilities in the K-12 system, and this could be achieved by more student-centred efforts - to identify and support success (including with needed supports) in the education system and in transition to post-secondary and employment. This will require more collaboration between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, AESL and families and community-based organizations supporting children and youth with disabilities.[19]

3.2 Employers[20]

A variety of macroeconomic, organizational and job-specific factors can affect employers' willingness to employ persons with disabilities. Employers may hold strong stereotypes about

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[17] Citizens with Disabilities - Ontario (CWDO). Together we are Stronger Series #2-4.

[18] Government of Ontario. Access Talent: Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. Available from https://www.ontario.ca/page/access-talent-ontarios-employment-strategy-people-disabilities#section-0.

[19] Coalition of Persons with Disabilities - *Disability Support Services in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada: Impacts on Labour Market Participation for Individuals with Disabilities. Pg. 20. Available from http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/Disability_Support_Services_-_Report.pdf.*

[20]Information on employment-related concerns for persons with disabilities was garnered from the following documents, as well as from the consultation process:

- Emile Tompa. Co-Director, Centre for Work Disability Policy Research Policy. Disability and Work in the Canada. Research Panel – The Economic Landscape (PPT). Available from https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/Research%20and%20Publications/7_etompa-research-tuesam11.00-12.00.pdf;
- National Council on Disability. Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment. 2007. Available from https://ncd.gov/publications/2007/Oct2007#3a;
- House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities - Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. 2013. Available from (http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8);
- Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Willing but Unable: A Population in Waiting; and
- Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (2014). Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities in Canada: Six Key Elements for an Inclusive Labour Market. Available from https://irisinstitute.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/six-key-elements-for-an-inclusive-labour-market.pdf.

the type of jobs or industries that are appropriate for people with certain types of disabilities and may have strong biases about the attitudes, aspirations, and potential for further human capital development of workers with disabilities. They may have concerns about costs, worker–job fit and acceptance by co-workers, and/or lack knowledge on effective practices in relation to hiring and managing persons with disabilities.

Employers may believe that a worker with a disability will be less productive in teamwork situations and/or more generally less able than their counterparts who do not have disabilities, and/or are more likely to be frequently absent from work. As well, personnel managers and supervisors may be personally uncomfortable around people with disabilities, and this discomfort may be manifested in a reluctance to hire, retain, or promote this population to positions of authority and responsibility. There may be unfounded concerns about safety and liability.

Examples garnered from some participants included:

- employers citing safety/liability as a primary reason for not engaging people with low vision, those who are hard of hearing and/or those who are deaf;
- cost of accommodation cited as being prohibitive in particular for smaller employers;
- employers not engaging persons with intellectual disabilities and/or allocating them to very menial positions, thereby underutilizing their skill set;
- employers not engaging persons with episodic disabilities due to a belief they will be off work frequently and/or lack the required level of productivity; and
- employees with disabilities not advancing up the corporate ladder, but rather staying in front-line administrative positions.

Further, employers may have a challenging experience with one individual with a specific disability and then wrongly infer that all persons having the same or similar disability would be a poor fit for the job in question.

Employers are often unsure of where they can access information and expertise to support their efforts to engage and employ persons with disabilities. This is true of the provincial landscape as there are many and varied disability-specific organizations, as well as cross-disability organizations. While it is positive that much expertise is available, it can be confusing to employers.

3.2.1 The business case

One of the approaches to addressing employers' stereotypical perceptions of persons with disabilities is to highlight and promote that it makes for a good business case, as opposed to speaking to the charitable nature of such engagement. To do so, however, it is critical that employers are provided accurate and valid information about persons with disabilities in relation to their skills, work ethic and productivity.

Promoting that job seekers with disabilities are more loyal, reliable, hard-working, personable and never sick, i.e., unrealistic characterizations of persons with disabilities, and/or that their presence can improve morale and the overall workplace environment further marginalizes persons with disabilities. Such characterization places undue pressure on workers with disabilities who feel they must maintain such unrealistic standards if they are to attach to and remain in the labour force. This stereotype is disrespectful and a barrier to persons with disabilities who want to be hired because they have the skills, abilities, and capacities to undertake a job.

Another major barrier to inclusive workplaces and true labour force participation of persons with disabilities is the charitable orientation of some employers. They promote hiring of this population because it is a good for their staff, workplace or society, as a charitable act, not one based on necessarily meeting an employment need.

The more accurate business case is that hiring persons with disabilities is good for business and can meet employers' labour market needs. As an example of realistic messaging for a business case, we draw from a handbook referenced by the British Columbia Centre for Employment Excellence:

1. British Columbia employers are facing increasing challenges to find and keep skilled workers in a globally competitive market.

2. British Columbians with disabilities provide a talent pool of 300,000 working age persons.

3. Persons with disabilities represent $25 billion in spending power in Canada.

4. British Columbians with disabilities have virtually the same educational achievements as those without disabilities.

5. The job performance of persons with disabilities has proven to meet or exceed that of employees without disabilities.

6. The cost of many workplace accommodations is minimal.

7. Disability management and return-to-work programs are proactive, cost effective measures.

8. The reluctance to hire persons with disabilities is often based on myths, attitudes and a lack of information.

9. A diverse network of agencies and service providers are ready, willing and able to assist you in hiring and retaining persons with disabilities.

10. When you hire persons with disabilities, you build an inclusive, effective and productive work environment.[21]

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[21]BC Centre for Employment Excellence. Recruiting and Retaining Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia. What Every Employer Needs to Know. 2017. Available from http://bccee.accuratedev.ca/employers-pwd/?doing_wp_cron=1520268896.0124399662017822265625.

Other critical messages include that by having more and more people with disabilities able to pursue employment, we make our workplaces more competitive. By having more and more organizations able to provide accessible customer service, we broaden their customer base so that they can make more money.[22]

3.2.2 *The role of the provincial government in facilitating diverse workplaces*

A few AESL participants suggested there should be a greater advocacy role through active partnerships with employment agencies/employers. They noted that there is a need to offset fear and address misconceptions about employees with disabilities.

The Province has a webpage devoted to HR practices. The NL HR Manager Toolkit[23] provides downloadable guides and templates which are described as being practical and useful to help employers to find, keep and manage valued employees. This Toolkit was launched in 2010. It was a product of a partnership among the Newfoundland and Labrador Business Coalition and Students in Free Enterprise Memorial, and the then Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, which engaged 150 employers to determine the challenges faced by organizations and the most effective ways to address them.[24] Available guides and templates are grouped according to themes. There is a section devoted to "Managing Diversity in Your Workplace".

The intent of the development of the HR Toolkit is commendable. However, a review of some of the associated tools under the Managing Diversity in Your Workplace section indicates that there are some improvements required to ensure that these do contribute to offsetting bias, stereotypes and exclusion. For example, tools designed to support raising awareness of diversity and/or assessing attitudes toward diversity in the workplace must:

- be attentive to language to ensure that they do not perpetuate stereotypes (e.g., equating a disability with a medical condition);
- approach the discussion of disability from a strength-based rather than a deficit-based perspective; and
- consider persons with disabilities as individuals with unique skills and abilities, rather than as a group with similar needs.

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[22] David Lepofsky. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance (Presenter). The House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.
[23] Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The NL HR Manager. Downloadable Toolkit. Available from http://nlhrmanager.ca/index.php%3Foption=com_content&view=article&id=166&Itemid=28.html.
[24] Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment. Employers to Benefit from New HR Toolkit. Available from http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2010/hrle/0211n01.htm.

Considerations[25]

It is important that AESL continue to provide information on and guidance to employers in relation to facilitating diversity. There have been some recent government efforts related to collaboration with other organizations to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. For example, AESL has worked with groups such as Empower NL and Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador to highlight employment opportunities in industries (such as tourism) that would benefit persons with disabilities, including the hosting of Destination Dream Job, an inclusive Tourism Job Fair.

In 2018, the focus should no longer be on raising awareness of who persons with disabilities are, but rather focused on the business case and how to ensure inclusion and diversity in the workplace. It is recommended that AESL promote the technology and expertise available in the community e.g., from Empower, CNIB and CHHA-NL, and encourage employers to access this expertise and technology.

It would be important that the tools and templates available to enable this outcome are clear, free from bias, current in language and approach and focused on the skills and capabilities of underrepresented groups. As well, the tools and templates should identify ways and means to accommodate their needs and adjust workplaces to enable diversity. It is suggested that AESL review its current supports (in collaboration with groups such as the Disability Policy Office and the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities) to ensure that they reflect the latest definitions of diversity and cover all relevant groups and populations.

Useful information on building inclusive and diverse workplaces would include, but not be limited to:

- Building accessible websites;

- Inclusive hiring practices (e.g., job applications in alternate formats, bias-free non-discriminatory recruiting and interviewing processes);

- Advice and information about assistive technologies, specialized training, supported employment, and accommodation, accurately depicting this as providing tools to ensure their employee's productivity and success. Perhaps discussing options for centralized accommodations funds within organizations which would support employees with or without disabilities (e.g., ergonomically adapted workstations); and

- Providing sample policies to support diversity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment.

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[25] Information on this section was garnered from the consultation, as well as from the following documents: HR Council.ca. Diversity at Work. Supporting Employees with Disabilities. Available from http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-disabilities.cfm; and Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment. National Council on Disability. 2007. Available from https://ncd.gov/publications/2007/Oct2007#3a.

3.3 Type of employment available to persons with disabilities

Some community participants commented that employment available for persons with disabilities originating from employment-based programs is often "artificial and short-term". There is an inequitable salary base and, for some employers with diversity plans, engaging one person with a disability allows for "ticking the diversity checkbox to meet a pre-established target". With such a narrow frame of reference, the focus is on meeting a target instead of on embracing or realizing diversity. As commented by one of the community participants:

> *Employers say, 'we do diversity', but what are the real actions supporting diversity? [They check] the box because they have hired someone with a disability but have not fully explored how many people with disabilities did not get an opportunity for an interview or [could not] access the hiring process.*

A related issue raised by community participants and discussed in the literature are the conflicting opinions regarding the value of wage subsidies.

3.3.1 Wage subsidies

There was a lack of agreement between and among community participants, also reflected at the national level, about the pros and cons of wage subsidies. Specifically, the issue, as explored in the Federal Government's report on *Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities[26],* is whether or not wage subsidies are a positive employment measure or one that is being abused by some employers in search of free labour.

Some community participants felt that if a wage subsidy is used to "create" a position, it may be more likely that the position will disappear at the end of the wage subsidy period. However, if a wage subsidy is offered to an employer who has an existing opening for an employee as a short-term financial support for the initial adaptation phase of the employee with disabilities, it is much more likely that following the time invested to train the person in the role, they will maintain their employment. It also was noted that, even if the wage subsidy is for a short-work placement in a "real job" to enhance an employee's skills and provide needed work experience (which can support confidence-building), this can be beneficial.

From the employers' perspective, a wage subsidy could be viewed as a positive contribution to their funds for wages or a form of compensation for engaging people who have "deficits". It also was felt by a few community participants that a worker's productivity beyond the wage subsidy period could be a concern for employers in situations where initially there was a mismatch of employee capabilities to job requirements and/or lack of post-placement support to lift the person's productivity to the required level.

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[26] This House of Commons report is available from http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8.

Considerations

There are clear benefits to wage subsidies as incentives to facilitate entry of persons with disabilities and other under-represented groups into the workplace and to provide valuable work experience and opportunities for skills development. However, it will be important that the messages sent regarding these subsidies are clear.

The focus of the wage subsidy should be as a financial incentive for engaging those outside the labour force with the skills to fill positions, and as a means of supporting needed on-the-job training and skills development to facilitate long-term attachment to the labour force. Wage subsidies should not be viewed as a means to fill a short-term skills gap with financial benefit and/or as compensation for a perceived lack of productivity.

It is acknowledged that for many community-based organizations who are short-/under-staffed, availing of wage subsidies provides for engaging much needed staff to undertake critical short-term work, with little opportunity for longer term employment. In these instances, the available positions must be aligned with the skills of the potential employee and include skills development.

3.4 The challenges of disclosure

The decision to disclose one's disability can be influenced by the nature of the disability (visible, hidden, stigmatized, multiple), if and when people need accommodations, the perceived "disability-friendliness" of organizations/workplace culture and personal choice.[27]

Individuals with disabilities who engage in a job interview often can struggle with the question of disclosure. This is not an issue when someone has an obvious physical disability, but it is a concern for people who experience invisible disabilities or episodic conditions in which the symptoms can be unpredictable. Non-disclosure makes it difficult to raise the need for possible accommodation at some later time. Yet, many feel that if they disclose their disability upfront, they may close the employment door before it even opens. As well, there are concerns that such disclosure can result in entering dead-end jobs without the opportunity for promotion or advancement, and/or their co-workers being overly curious about their disability and/or looking for examples of how the disability can impede their productivity.[28]

A recent consultation with individuals with disabilities in NL revealed the complex nature of disclosure. Most of the individuals stated that they would rather not disclose their status for employment purposes, because the stigma associated with their condition would be significant enough to impact their obtaining gainful employment. For example, one stated that she had some work experience, but since "disclosing" her status on job applications, she had not had any

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[27]Jans, L.H., Kaye, H.S. & Jones, E.C. J OccupRehabil (2012) 22: 155. Available from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10926-011-9336-y.

[28] Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Sherri Torjman and Anne Makhoul. Disability Supports and Employment Policy. 2016. Pg. 8. Available from https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/Research%20and%20Publications/1105eng.pdf.

interviews in almost a year. Another participant in this research stated that her decision not to disclose the nature of her disability when applying for jobs was based on fear that disclosing her disability status would lead to fewer opportunities for interviews/employment. Some participants felt that, if they did not disclose in advance and proved themselves in the interview, they could then discuss accommodation.[29]

Considerations

A component of the employer toolkit for managing diversity in the workplace could include effective practices on managing disclosure. This is an integral component for both the applicant with a disability as well as for the employer. Disclosing early in the interview process can provide the applicant with an opportunity to emphasize their strengths, discuss transferable skills, and identify accommodations/adjustments which could facilitate their productivity and workplace success. It also provides an opportunity for the employer to ask any relevant work-related questions and to identify how to access any needed adaptive technologies.

3.5 Accommodation[30,31]

A common misperception is that persons with disabilities are costly to accommodate. In an environment where employers are required to only ensure "reasonable accommodation", such inaccuracies can significantly impact persons with disabilities opportunities to attach to the labour force.

Accommodations can be as varied as the individual who needs them and can include: physical modifications to the workplace (a modified or ergonomic workstation, handrails, ramps, widened doorways or hallways, accessible elevators, adapted or accessible parking, adapted washrooms, and a barrier-free path of travel within a workplace); personal aids (human support, including a reader, sign language interpreter, job coach or personal assistant); technical aids (such as a voice synthesizer, an infrared system or portable note-taker, specialized software or other adaptations for computer or laptop); communication aids (such as Braille or large print, recording equipment); and accessible transportation and/or adapted furniture (such as back support).

Other less tangible accommodations include flexible schedules/flex time, reduced work hours and/or modified work duties, and working off-site/via Information Technology (IT). In some cases, persons with disabilities are not able to accept traditional 9 to 5 full-time jobs (e.g., because of time needed for self-care, therapy and/or medical appointments, parenting responsibilities, episodic disabilities). They may be seeking part-time/reduced work hours and

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[29] Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy – NL cluster. Ololade Adedoyin Animashaun. Research Project on Employment Experiences of Persons with Disabilities (PWDS) Around St. Johns.
[30] Exploring the Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Available from http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8.
[31]Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment. National Council on Disability. 2007. Available from https://ncd.gov/publications/2007/Oct2007#3a.

more flexible work arrangements, not unlike other employees who also might be in similar circumstances.

A critical aspect of accommodations is not only ensuring employers understand what an accommodation might entail and how it can be done, but that they follow-through, in particular when these accommodations are less tangible. It was highlighted by a few community participants, for example, that some employers do not understand and/or might be less accommodating of sensory-related disabilities that might entail sound reduction, light reduction or episodic disabilities.

New information technologies have made home-based work more available, acceptable and productive. Additional flexibility can be realized if individuals can find part-time work and/or job share, for example. Again, it is important to state that this should not be considered the norm for all persons with disabilities, nor in general for employees. However, such flexibility and innovation allow for inclusion of the broader groups of employees who might need temporary or ongoing access to such job arrangements.

Considerations

The key to effective accommodation is to build a culture of flexibility and responsiveness for all employees, where this is seen as the standard rather than the exception, i.e., managers/supervisors/HR personnel are accommodating to all employees. The critical message for AESL to convey is that accommodations are tools and working conditions that enable employees to give their best and to be their most productive on the job. Further, there should be information on their website which identifies any available funding for workplace accommodation and adjustment and contacts for community organizations which can support their efforts, in particular information about Empower's Adaptive Technology Program.

3.6   Limited/lack of soft skills and/or life skills[32]

When it comes to skills in employment, the first line of emphasis is typically towards abilities, training and knowledge of specific and technical skill sets. These are referred to as hard skills. Soft skills, however, are often overlooked, yet they also play an important role in day-to-day operations and are equally critical to a successful workplace attachment. Soft skills would include, for example, personal attributes such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, teamwork, time management and work ethic.

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[32] Information on soft skills was garnered from The House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities - *Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, a*vailable from http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8; New Horizons Computer Leaning Centres. The Importance of Soft Skills Training. 2018.Available from https://blog.nhlearningsolutions.com/blog/tabid/145/artmid/16483/articleid/1530/the-importance-of-soft-skills-training; and Soft Skills, available from https://www.google.ca/search?rls=com.microsoft%3Aen-CA%3AIE-Address&rlz=1I7LENP&dcr=0&ei=RAuoWvy6JuqO5wLrxYtQ&q=importance+of+soft+skills+in+the+workplace&oq=importance+of+soft+skills+to+employer&gs_l=psy-ab.1.1.0i71k1l8.0.0.0.5584.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0..0.0....0...1c..64.psy-ab..0.0.0....0.OhXSzYjOoVA.

The literature speaks to the lack of soft skills and basic training of some job seekers with disabilities. They may only have a high school diploma or have a post-secondary education, but they have not had the opportunity to acquire work experience (e.g., through a summer job) to be ready for the workplace.

In addition, some persons with disabilities, in particular those who have not been able to exercise their independence and/or who might have lived in an institution, do not always have the required life skills. As described by one community participant:

> *Life skills is a big gap. It is an impediment – not developing these skills to be independent at home or in school. For example, we had a client who did not know how to hang up their jacket. In that case, the employer actually stepped in and helped the client with some life skills. It is a problem because there is an expectation that these skills are there and [government/employers] assume they are when they aren't. [We] do not, at this point, cover life skills development, but often a job coach steps in to help with these things, but that is not meant to be the role of the job coach.*

Considerations

The gap in relation to soft and life skills is not unique to persons with disabilities. Individuals with many and varied life circumstances may not have adequately developed such critical skills. Opportunities to develop these skills often are found in pre-employment programs, the importance of which cannot be understated for providing a successful foundation for attachment to the labour market.

3.7   Persons with episodic disabilities[33]

While persons with any disabilities can struggle in their efforts to attach to the labour force, persons with episodic disabilities (e.g., persons with Multiple Sclerosis; individuals with mental illness who have periods of being unwell) face significant barriers. They may experience interruptions and/or gaps in their employment during times when there is an exacerbation of their condition. This can challenge their opportunities for employment, in particular should employers be inflexible in relation to scheduling, hours of work and/or time for needed breaks, and not accommodating to their employees' circumstances.

Further, and as previously discussed, it can result in fear of disclosure due to concerns they will be unsuccessful in acquiring a job or be maintained in a lower paid position due to the fact they may experience periodic absences from work. Employment Insurance sick benefits continue to be inadequate to address the specific challenges faced by individuals with episodic disabilities –

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[33]*Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.* Available from http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8.

they may not need a continuous period of benefits but would need access to the total allowable benefit spread over a longer period of time.

As commented by one of the community participants in relation to episodic disabilities:

Often people will hide their disability because they are afraid of what the employer might do; some have been dismissed due to [their diagnosis]. Accessibility and accommodations are big needs. Sometimes it is an issue where an employer is feeling someone is faking. […] When [an employee] identifies experiencing fatigue [as an issue], people think you can just go lie down and rest, but this doesn't necessarily work. More than that, it can hit any time of day and sometimes can hit for days. And [an employer] can't see this, so they think the person is just lazy. Sometimes people can't function in the morning. There is no cure or medications for fatigue.

Considerations

Persons with episodic disabilities' options and opportunities for attaching to the labour force would be enhanced by changes proposed in previous sections - e.g., opportunities to safely disclose and access to needed accommodations.

4.0   Barriers in existing programs and services

4.1   Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Program

The Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (EAPD) Program had a holistic approach to service which not only funded post-secondary education, tuition and books, but also accommodations, meal plans and disability-related needs. In addition, there was a component that helped students develop life skills (which, as cited previously, is critical for some persons with disabilities) to succeed in a post-secondary environment.

Recent changes to the EAPD have been discussed at length by the Network of Disability Organizations. The Coalition developed a *Backgrounder on LMA for Persons with Disabilities* which overviews their concerns and relevant excerpts are provided below.

This kind of program change, combined with specific economic and labour market circumstances, including an increase in precarious employment, reduction of employer benefits, and the absence of eligibility for other types of disability income, all point to a trend referred to as "welfareization" of disability incomes. More and more individuals with disabilities are relying on general income support rather than on social assistance disability benefits. It is believed that this trend discourages employment and perpetuates poverty, as well as reinforces systemic

stigmatization of recipients by disallowing recipients to improve their situations in ways that most Canadians would take for granted.[34]

By moving the funding agreement for persons with disabilities into Student Aid, barriers to employment are being created. Income support is not congruent with Student Aid, and for individuals who are currently able to cover their needs through income support, they are fearful that returning to school will result in a loss of other benefits (Drug Plan, Childcare Supplement, Home Supports).

Students also are being deterred by the loan portion of the program with the fear of not being able to re-pay the loan, because of their disability and existing barriers to employment upon graduation. Other students fear they will not be eligible because of their parents' income, or because they have defaulted on a Student Aid loan in the past arising from issues related to their disability.

Communication

Persons with disabilities are being told the EAPD program, which would fund university level post-secondary education, no longer exists and to go to the Student Aid office. It was suggested by some informants that information on other available options through Labour Market Development Agreement programming (e.g., Skills Development Funding) may not be being consistently presented to all students with disabilities.

Funding, income testing and repayment

Parents' income will be considered a factor in eligibility for Student Aid. However, disability-related expenses that are covered by parents for their children/youth prior to post-secondary education (e.g., interpreters, cochlear implants, mobility devices/supports, therapies, retrofitting vehicles) are not being considered. Yet, some or all of this expenditure impacts parents' capacity to contribute financially to their children's/youths' education.

Students with disabilities who have accessed a Student Aid loan to complete post-secondary, and who experience challenges in repaying the loan because of lack of employment, could be eligible for loan forgiveness. However, if they subsequently secure employment, they are expected to repay the loan. This is a direct deterrent to finding employment after graduation, in particular for persons with high disability-related costs and/or those whose disability hampers finding employment with a liveable wage.

Some students with disabilities who might be interested to return to a post-secondary program, but who have already accessed Student Aid and defaulted on their loan due to disability-related issues, are not eligible to access the program.

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[34]Coalition of Persons with Disabilities - Disability Support Services in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada: Impacts on Labour Market Participation for Individuals with Disabilities. Pg.5. Available from http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/Disability_Support_Services_-_Report.pdf.

Persons with disabilities can "avail of funding to cover the costs of equipment and/or services that are directly related to overcoming the educational barriers that the disability might present."[35] There are other indirect disability-related costs which impact persons with disabilities' capacity to engage in post-secondary training that are not considered in the available funding – e.g., higher rental costs associated with finding accessible accommodations; special meal plans; and additional home support costs.

In addition, prior to post-secondary, some students with vision loss (who attended school in NL) obtain services from APSEA (Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority); however, once they graduate high school, they no longer have access to the assistive technology they used through APSEA. Students must therefore purchase the assistive technology themselves or purchase the technology through the grants they received through student loans (if they qualify).

A few AESL participants spoke to a gap created with the realignment of LMA and the EAPD component moving to Student Aid. They noted that there is a feeling amongst persons with disabilities that they have lost an educational supports funding option, or that Student Aid does not provide the level of coverage for disability-related needs that was provided under EAPD.

Considerations

Although Student Aid is considered an equal opportunity program for eligible students, numerous compounding disadvantages (as described above) faced by students with disabilities result in the students and their families struggling to fund post-secondary education, thus severely impacting their opportunity for training and attaching to the labour force.

It is important to note that the intent of integrating the Training Services (TSP) and Student Financial Assistance (SFA) programs was to create equity for persons with disabilities who are accessing government financial support to attend post-secondary training. The budget under the TSP program was only able to support a finite number of clients annually, with a wait-list created for those for whom funding was not available at the time of application. By utilizing the SFA Program, the needs of all persons with disabilities, pending eligibility, will be met.

Another benefit of integrating the TSP with the SFA is to maximize the utility of the federally-funded Canada Study Grant for persons with Disabilities (to a maximum of $10,000 annually).

In addition, the province introduced the Grant for High Needs Students for persons with disabilities who have higher than normal costs related to disability-related supports to ensure that these students do not have unmet needs for those supports necessary to allow them to successfully complete post-secondary training. Disability–related supports may include hearing

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[35]Advanced Education Skills and Labour. Students with Permanent Disabilities. Available from http://www.aesl.gov.nl.ca/studentaid/disabilities/index.html#high.

aids, visual scanners, readers, technical equipment, and assistive technology such as computer aides or software.

It will be important for AESL to continue to monitor the impacts of these programmatic changes to ensure that access to post-secondary education for persons with disabilities is facilitated through Student Aid.

4.2   Public Service and the Opening Doors Program

A few community participants spoke to what they felt were exclusionary attitudes and practices at the Public Service Commission. It was stated, for example, that the interview process is a standardized approach with no flexibility for disability-related issues.

A review of the Public Service Commission website[36] identifies that decisions are based on the merit principles which include:

> Merit is a rule of conduct that provides for the recommendation of candidates for a position on the basis of the best demonstration of bona fide levels of position related qualifications, knowledge, abilities and personal suitability.

> […] Equity means equal access to employment opportunities. Practices are free from systemic and attitudinal barriers and duly consider "reasonable accommodations".

While these principles would infer that persons with disabilities would be equally considered for available public service positions, the online job portal has a specific link for persons with disabilities to Opening Doors. This again sends a message to the individual applying and the public service, that the individual is not able to compete without special consideration and/or treatment. This defies the idea of equal access.

Opening Doors

The Opening Doors Program is an employment equity initiative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the foundational program of the Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities of the Human Resource Secretariat, out of which the Office's other services have emerged. The program involves full-time, permanent positions throughout the provincial public service in various locations of the province. The positions have been designated for persons with disabilities and may be filled only by members of this employment equity group who have been accepted for inclusion on the Office's client registry. The positions are also protected from bumping by more senior employees so as to ensure they are not lost during periods of downsizing.[37]

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[36]Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Public Service Commission. Available from http://www.psc.gov.nl.ca/psc/commission/index.htm.

[37]Coalition of Persons with Disabilities - Disability Support Services in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada: Impacts on Labour Market Participation for Individuals with Disabilities. Available from http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/Disability_Support_Services_-_Report.pdf.

While this program has supported persons with disabilities to access employment, there were several concerns identified with its approach by a few community participants and as referenced in relevant reports. While it has been recognized that the program supports many people in finding work, is has been described as restrictive in terms of the type of disability considered, lack of job mobility, and fair wages.[38]

Examples include that the skills which people bring are often underutilized, as individuals enter lower-skilled positions, thus devaluing their contribution; once in a position, they are "protected" which sets up a conundrum for those who want to advance in the public service but are concerned about loss of employment during times of lay-off and bumping without the protection of the Opening Doors program. As well, because Opening Doors is a government-funded program, the number of positions available are restricted by the amount of funding available.

Considerations

When Opening Doors was initiated, it was at a time when employment for persons with disabilities was only just becoming a real consideration and initiatives were needed to support employment within the public service. In 2018, however, it is felt by some community participants that this program is a major barrier to creating a culture of inclusion for employees with disabilities because they are not able to avail of the "regular" public service processes, which are not inclusive and instead are streamed into a "program for them."

4.3   Self-employment

During periods of unemployment, whether due to economic downturn, job loss or ongoing barriers to employment, self-employment is a viable means to provide income, assets and other elements of self-sufficiency for many including persons with disabilities.[39]

It must be recognized, however, that persons with disabilities who are interested in self-employment face not only the obstacles confronting all entrepreneurs, but also additional issues and obstacles such as attitudinal barriers, the possible loss of government-provided cash benefits and health care, and a lack of assistance and support from self-employment and small-business entities.[40]

A review of AESL's Self-Employment Assistance Program[41] identifies that eligible applicants must be EI eligible, a criterion which can be a barrier for some persons with disabilities (see section 4.4.1). The program allows for working part-time and references covering expenses, which could respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, if this is flexible in nature and

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[38]Ibid.

[39]Bizfluent. Derek Dowell. Self-employment Ideas for Persons with Disabilities. 2017. Available from https://bizfluent.com/info-8245432-self-employment-ideas-people-disabilities.html.

[40] Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment. National Council on Disability. 2007. Available from https://ncd.gov/publications/2007/Oct2007#3a.

[41] Department of Advanced Education and Skills. Self-employment Assistance. Available from http://www.aesl.gov.nl.ca/lmda/sea.html.

extent. However, on the main page, it is noted that assistance may be provided in **exceptional circumstances** to cover all or part of the following costs related to participation -e.g., dependent care, disability needs, transportation and accommodation. Disability-related supports are not, however, an exception for the population in question and so this stipulation could be exclusionary.

It is also identified that employment plans must be developed at a local employment centre. Depending on the region in which a person is living and their access to transportation, this could be a barrier to engaging in self-employment.

It was noted by a few community participants that the option of self-employment should be presented to individuals with disabilities. Some felt that this option is not presented due to the misperceptions of those delivering self-employment supports, i.e., this option is not applicable to or realistic for persons with disabilities.

Considerations

The advantages of self-employment are many, and thanks to online and at-home freelancing, the prospect of finding work at a livable wage is better than it used to be.[42] Self-employment allows people to customize their work experiences specifically to their needs and to design a work environment that optimizes flexibility and accommodation. To be successful, there must be programs and services that support employment preparation, enable technical knowledge and provide work incentives to achieve self-sufficiency. More specifically to facilitate self-employment, governments can:

- Align policy across systems to reduce and eliminate barriers to individual exploration of entrepreneurial goals that encourage income production and advancement of economic self-sufficiency;

- Promote cross-system collaboration and braiding of resources to invest in business start-up and job creation for individuals with disabilities;

- Allow individuals to leverage their benefits (e.g., income assistance benefits) for use in pursuing self-employment, which can provide a needed cushion during the start-up phase of the business; and

- Encourage public- and private-sector investment in, and purchase of, products and services offered by businesses owned by people with disabilities[43],[44]

Effective practices and lessons learned regarding entrepreneurs with disabilities and how to facilitate self-employment for this population could be garnered from Western Economic

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[42]Bizfluent. Derek Dowell. Self-employment for Persons with Disabilities. 2017. Available from https://bizfluent.com/info-8245432-self-employment-ideas-people-disabilities.html.

[43] United States Department of Labour. Office of Disability Employment Policy. Self-Employment for People with Disabilities. 2013. Available from https://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/2014StartUp.pdf.

[44]Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment. National Council on Disability. 2007. Available from https://ncd.gov/publications/2007/Oct2007#3a.

Diversification Canada's *Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program* (EDP). The EDP provides business information, training and development, mentoring and one-on-one counseling services. In rural communities, the program is delivered through Community Futures offices. In urban areas, Western Diversification works with a number of partners to deliver the program. Entrepreneurs meeting the following basic criteria may be considered for support through the EDP:

- have been unsuccessful in acquiring sufficient funding for business from other sources;

- are restricted in the ability to perform at least one of the basic activities of entrepreneurship or self-employment;

- have physical or mental disabilities;

- have a viable business plan and are a new or current small business owner with a disability.[45]

4.4 Eligibility Criteria

4.4.1 EI eligibility

Some community participants identified that criteria related to EI eligibility is problematic for entry to employment services and programs. For example, Ready, Willing and Able is funded through the Opportunities Fund, and there is a strict requirement that individuals cannot be on EI or in receipt of EI in the last five years. The paradox is that this program supports individuals to access employment; if they then become EI eligible, they are unable to access additional support through the program. CMHA-NL's At-Work Program (also funded through the Opportunities Fund) and ASNL's Worktopia Program (partially funded through the Opportunities Fund) have similar criteria.

Conversely, having to be EI eligible to access other employment and training programs and funding poses significant challenges to persons with disabilities who are already challenged to access the labour market and who do not have work experience. For example, AESL's Skill Development Program "provides financial support to EI-eligible individuals who are seeking full-time post-secondary training, for duration of 12 weeks or greater or short-term training of less than 12 weeks at a public or private training institution."[46]

4.4.2 Supported Employment IQ criteria

To access the Supported Employment Program, participants must have written documentation of an intellectual disability (IQ of 70 or below) from a professional recognised by AESL. This was cited as a significant concern for individuals with intellectual disabilities/ASD who do not meet this criterion and who would, therefore, be excluded from needed supports (e.g., a job coach). It

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[45]Government of Canada. Western Economic Diversification Canada. Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program. Available from http://www.wd-deo.gc.ca/eng/13643.asp.
[46]Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Advanced Education and Skills. Skills Development Program. Available from http://www.aesl.gov.nl.ca/lmda/skills_dev.html.

was noted that ASNL provides pre-employment/employment programs where there are no IQ restrictions - individuals can self identify and don't need medical documentation.

There also are different definitions of intellectual disability employed by different departments of government. For example, AESL looks for a primary diagnosis of development disability from a physician or registered psychologist, whereas the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has more of a focus on pervasive needs.

Assessments

A related issue is the requirement for documented assessments (e.g., for learning and cognitive disabilities) to enter some training and employment programs. Some participants spoke to the prohibitive nature of the cost of such assessments (e.g. $1,500 - $3500), which are not covered by MCP and many private insurance plans.

Considerations

The issue of EI eligibility can be a significant barrier to access for persons with disabilities accessing the labour market, as discussed previously. AESL should review its programs to identify any potential changes to this criterion which could facilitate needed access and/or, as needed, discuss this barrier with its federal counterparts in relation to their programming.

The IQ criteria for accessing supported employment is quite limiting; however, it is recognized that to open up the criteria could be a costly endeavour for government. Supported employment is further discussed in section 4.5.

The cost of assessments as noted above can be prohibitive and yet, assessments are critical for identifying appropriate interventions and supports. AESL should give consideration to whether there are opportunities and options to cover these costs to facilitate entry to employment and training programs.

4.5   Supported Employment

Supported employment is the provision of supports to a job seeker with a disability to help them to find, obtain and maintain a job. It is also sometimes known as 'job coaching' or 'customized employment'. It involves supporting the individual to obtain employment, then supporting that person on the job while he/she comes to terms with its demands; in some cases, the support is ongoing, with no time limits and is always responsive to the clients needs. It generally involves a 'place then train' rather than 'train then place' approach.[47] Supported employment has emerged as one of the more successful approaches to furthering the employment of people with intellectual disabilities in jobs in the open labour market.

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[47]Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (2014). Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities in Canada: Six Key Elements for an Inclusive Labour Market.

Some participants spoke to the supported employment model as an effective model for attaching persons with the workforce and one that should be available to the broader continuum of persons with disabilities.

Considerations

The supported employment model has a proven history, and there are employment corporations across the province delivering this service. AESL might consider undertaking demonstration projects in regions across the province in which selected corporations could more purposely engage with the broader population of persons with disabilities to provide support in accessing employment and training programs and attaching to the labour force. This would require some training to existing staff and/or additional staff resources, as well as wide-spread advertisement of these available services. Such expansion should not negatively impact the services available to the existing population of individuals with intellectual disabilities but would broaden the services available to persons with disabilities in rural areas.

Further, consideration could be given to broadening the population availing of supported employment with some modifications. For example, a job coach could be made available to a person who has acquired a disability and is transitioning back to work; as well, a job coach could be made available to a person with a disability who struggles with anxiety and needs a few weeks of support to settle into the workplace.

4.6 Persons with multiple disabilities and/or complex needs

If community organizations and/or government agencies are under constant pressure to show results in terms of numbers of clients successfully served, this can lead to "creaming". In these circumstances, persons with disabilities needing intensive and long-term interventions to become job ready are the least likely to be selected as program participants, because the interventions might be lengthy and complex, and this can preclude serving others (thus diminishing numbers served).

Employment programming needs to be specifically created to meet the needs of people with complex needs - people with multiple disabilities, and/or people with disabilities facing multiple forms of discrimination (women, newcomers, LGBT, Aboriginal/First Nations). Service delivery organizations of people with disabilities historically have been more effective at providing long-term employment supports to people with disabilities facing multiple barriers, because they do not pigeonhole people with disabilities, instead they work on the goals set by the individual. However, and again, in a competitive funding environment, where the focus is on showing output, this can dramatically impact the quality of service.[48]

[48]Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Persons with Disabilities: Getting Beyond Being the Population in Waiting. CCD Presentation to the House of Commons HUMA Committee. 2011. Available from http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/employment/huma-28Feb2013.

Persons with multiple disabilities and complex needs also cannot always work full-time, and this reality needs to be reflected in employment programming, i.e., part-time work should be considered an acceptable outcome in some circumstances. As explained by one of the participants:

> *There is also a desire to have people go to work full-time and only full-time and this is not how it happens; especially when dealing with individuals who have experienced intergenerational poverty and have no models around them of people working and what that is like. It is tough to move on from poverty for this reason and issues of self-confidence, self-image, self-esteem. It can take many tries before the person gets to full-time employment, and some people will never be able to work full-time.*

As an example, Stella's Circle CanDo program was described as providing clients an introduction to work. This program provides two to three short shifts per week so there are minimal impacts on supports. The clients are supported with instruction in how to budget and build other skill sets needed to transition to further employment.

4.6.1 Job maintenance and follow-up supports

An often-critical support for some persons with disabilities, in particular those with complex needs, is job maintenance, i.e., following up with employees for the first few weeks/months on the job to ensure they are fitting in well and coping with their job demands and to identify and address any identified skills gaps and/or emerging issues.

It was felt that such supports are not generally considered in the design of some community or employment programs and services and/or not able to be resourced within the funding allocated for the program or service. Once persons with disabilities graduate a program, and if they are successful in finding employment, they generally have no or limited support should issues arise, which could impact job retention.

4.7 Inclusive government programming

Some community participants felt that the broad goal should be to ensure all government-based employment and training programs are available to the continuum of persons with disabilities. To that end, any individual should be able to enter an AESL employment centre or apply to a program/service with the focus being solely on identifying and eliminating their barriers to employment – disability-specific or otherwise.

Instead of having disability specific employment programs and services being delivered by a number of community-based agencies (which would appear to contradict an inclusive approach), it was suggested that there could be more focus on contracting their expertise to support inclusion within existing government programs and services. However, it was noted that some of

the existing programs could continue as needed for specific and complex issues, as identified by the individual and not the service provider.

Considerations

It is clear that the approach suggested is radically different from the current framework of government and community-based programs and services. However, if AESL wants to achieve inclusive programs and services, then this should be the overarching and long-term goal.

In the interim, it would be important that there be a focus on ensuring community-based organizations of and for persons with disabilities are working collaboratively with each other and government. All government and community-based organizations delivering employment and training programs and services must be working in tandem, and action should be taken to eliminate duplication of effort. Service delivery must be done within an Independent Living Framework in which persons with disabilities are at the centre and have choice in and control over their own lives and decision-making.

4.8   Communication/information

It was identified by some participants that accessing information on government programs and services, including available resources/disability-related supports can be challenging to persons with disabilities, in particular those with few technical skills, literacy concerns and/or with specific communication issues. There is not one central site which provides the range of support/programming available and the various sites can be difficult to navigate.

For some people with disabilities, there continues to be a digital divide. Poverty and limited access to disability-related supports make it difficult for some to be active in the online world.[49]

Considerations

To support persons with disabilities' access to information, products and services must be built based on universal design principles. Alternate formats must be a given, as should access to needed adaptive technology. Accessibility standards should be in place for all government information, communication and publications (clear language, web and electronic access; clear layout/print and alternate formats) and application processes should be streamlined so that there is no need for multiple applications to access programs and supports.[50]

Consolidating the many and varied disability-related employment and training programs and resources on one webpage with links as needed would be beneficial. However, to support persons who do not have the necessary technology and/or skills to navigate government websites

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[49] Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Willing but Unable: A Population in Waiting. Pg. 36. 2016.
[50]*What We Heard*: Inclusion for All - Consultations to Develop a Plan to Remove Barriers for People with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador. 2010. Pg. 16. Available from http://www.cssd.gov.nl.ca/disabilities/pdf/Inclusion_for_all.pdf.

and/or apply to programs/services, access to government staff should be available via multiple platforms – e.g., in-person, phone, skype, social media.

4.9   Client-centred practice

Some participants generally spoke to the need for more client-centred employment and training programming. Client-centred approaches[51] are ways of commissioning (funding), providing and organizing services that are rooted in listening to what people want and need. Individuals are not simply placed in pre-existing services and programs and expected to adjust, rather the service or program strives to adjust to the person.

Person-centred approaches look to mainstream services and community resources for assistance and do not limit themselves to what is available within specialist services. Such an approach is founded on self-identification of needs and not tied to inflexible and often exclusionary criteria. This approach includes a broad range of actions at individual, organizational, systemic and community levels to support and facilitate the forward movement of the person with a disability.

Person-centred planning is the basis for problem-solving and negotiation to mobilize the necessary resources to pursue a person's aspirations. These resources may be obtained from someone's own network, service providers or from non-specialist and non-service sources.

This type of planning also would include pre-employment programming to support those who require, for example, academic/literacy upgrading and/or development of soft skills/life skills and/or transitioning support from high school.

Examples of person-centred planning for employment and training programs would include having access to a case worker, who has a reasonable case load, and who would be available to persons with disabilities while in programs. The case worker would have sufficient time to work with the individuals to learn about their employment and training needs and ensure they are receiving the necessary support to facilitate their success.

This staff also would, for example, support persons with disabilities to take responsibility for their career goals and choose the supports (including assistive technology) that work best for them. All interactions would afford persons with disabilities the right to dignity of risk as they work towards their employment goals. Additionally, support would be delivered within a flexible framework in recognition of the fact that some persons with disabilities' goals may change and/or, due to their own individual circumstances, they may have to move in and out of programs and/or take more time to complete programs.

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[51]Life Without Barriers. Championing Opportunity for All. Pg. 5. Available from http://www.lwb.org.au/assets/Uploads/person-centred.pdf.

Through a person-centred lens, service design and delivery have the person with a disability at the centre, and it is a continuous process of listening, learning, reviewing and further action; it is not a one-off event. It is based on the assumption that persons with disabilities have futures, and that their aspirations will change and grow with their experiences.

5.0 Other factors that can impede persons with disabilities' access to employment and training programs and services

5.1 Social stigma

Social stigma is a serious issue with a critical and long-lasting impact on persons who are being discriminated against and treated unfairly. It is well documented that some disabilities can bring about more severe discrimination than others. For example, compared with individuals with physical disabilities, persons with mental illness and/or psychiatric disabilities as well as persons with intellectual disabilities are more likely to experience social and employment-related stigma.[52]

5.2 Poverty[53]

In Canada, the risk of poverty among adults with disabilities (15 to 64 years of age) is twice as likely as for adults without disabilities. It can both be a cause and result of disability. The rates of poverty also correlate with *severity:* as degree of severity of disability increases, so does the risk of poverty. A complicating factor which further entrenches living in poverty is that persons with disabilities can face high costs of living related to needed supports. For persons with disabilities living on low income, two-thirds of their total income is from government transfers. The single largest component is provincial income assistance, i.e., which as referenced earlier, results in the "welfareization" of disability.

As described in the report on *Disability Support Services in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada,* the Newfoundland and Labrador government introduced a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy in June 2006, *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador,* with an explicit goal of achieving the lowest poverty rate in the country by 2014.

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[52]*Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* Available from http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8.
[53]The section on poverty was informed by the following reports:

- Michael Prince. Employment Equality for Canadians with Disabilities. Dignity for All: Labour, Employment, and Poverty Summit. PPT. Ottawa, June 2014.;
- Michael Prince. Poverty and Disability. Remarks to the 2016 Progress Summit. PPT. Ottawa, 2016;
- Michael Prince. Employment Equality for Canadians with Disabilities. Dignity for All: Labour, Employment, and Poverty Summit. PPT. Ottawa, June 2014; and
- Sherri Torjman. Dismantling the Welfare Wall. Available from https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/Research%20and%20Publications/torjman_crwdp_welfare_wall_may_11.pdf.

Beginning in 2007, a number of changes were made to the province's disability support services. Among other strategic directions, the government called for strengthening disability-related supports by increasing flexibility, improving access, and reducing financial costs associated with living with a disability.

In 2014, the government issued a report on its poverty reduction strategy, describing some of the actions undertaken to meet the goals of the inclusion strategy. There were increases in funding for programs within Health and Community Services, including home support and special assistance programs, family board and lodging, and child welfare allowance. In addition, there were also improvements to general supports targeting poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, such as increased access to affordable housing and increased income support rates. This report also noted that, in recent years, some changes have been made that have reflected the economic constraints confronting the provincial government and that have cut into some of the previous achievements. These recent changes include:

- reduction in the number of placements in the Linkages Program (19 fewer in 2016-17);
- integration of the Post-Secondary Training Services Program for persons with disabilities into the Student Loan Program, a decision that standardizes programming offered to similar clients throughout the province;

- amendment of the income test financial assessment for subsidy applicants under the Home Support Program and Special Assistance Program, increasing the maximum client contribution from 15 percent to 18 percent of net income; and

- introduction of a two hour per day cap on free homemaking hours subsidized under the Home Support Program.[54]

These changes would have had negative ramifications for many unemployed persons with disabilities across the province.

When it comes to income security, paid employment has always acted as the first line of defense. Income programs come into play when wages from work are either too low or erratic. If there were better employment prospects and opportunities for persons with disabilities, there would be less need for this population to rely on Canada's programs of income support and less concern about the "welfare wall". Unfortunately, far too many Canadians with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed.

Employment alone, therefore, is not the solution to the depths of poverty in which many persons with disabilities live. Rather, policy actions on income benefits and individualized disability-related supports, among other measures, are critical for reducing their disproportionate poverty. This would include ensuring an adequate standard of living for individuals and families by improving coverage of social protection and enhancing adequacy and delivery of benefits.

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[54]Coalition of Persons with Disabilities - *Disability Support Services in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada: Impacts on Labour Market Participation for Individuals with Disabilities.*

Disability-related supports[55]

Disability-related supports are any good or service that assists a person with a disability in overcoming barriers to carrying out everyday activities, independently and with dignity and choice.

It was identified by some community participants that there are disincentives to work arising from the design and allocation of disability support services provided in NL, e.g., in relation to eligibility, portability, financing, and delivery. While benefits, such as disability supports, are a vital component of the income support system, they comprise part of the welfare wall that makes it difficult to leave the program.

Some participants provided examples of disincentives to work arising from concerns about loss of disability-related supports. Persons with disabilities entering the workforce can lose supports, which they cannot afford based on entry-level and/or lower paid jobs. This creates a significant deterrent to work: there is little or no benefit to working a low-wage job if all of their funds are covering supports such as expensive drugs and/or wages are clawed back to pay for home support. Further, should a person with a disability lose their job, they have concerns about timeliness to once again attach to income support or EI should they have sufficient weeks of work. As described by one of the community participants:

> *About 80% of our clients are in receipt of Income Support and dealing with poverty; the other 20% would not be in poverty mainly due to having support from family, etc. but still experiencing complex needs. There are concerns around housing especially when in transition from Income Support to employment; a file gets suspended and people lose supports. There is a 30 day overlap on Income Support but because rent is issued in advance there really is only a window of about two weeks where there is true overlap. The calculations and formulas are complex; in the past [our staff] would go with a client to see a CSO and they would discuss calculations/impacts based on the individual. Now AESL will do a group session, which will be general information and will not be specific to any one individual. Even though the differences might seem small on paper, they can have big impacts. People do not typically have any resources to absorb the impacts of an Income Support loss no matter how small. Also, [a person's] file can be suspended, and they are not aware until they find out from their landlord that their rent did not get paid, etc. There is a lot of anxiety around the transition, the loss of supports and these impacts.*

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[55]Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Social Policy. Disability Supports. Available from http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/disabilitysupports; *What We Heard*: Inclusion for All - Consultations to Develop a Plan to Remove Barriers for People with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador (http://www.cssd.gov.nl.ca/disabilities/pdf/Inclusion_for_all.pdf); and Sherri Torjman. Dismantling the Welfare Wall. Available from https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/Research%20and%20Publications/torjman_crwdp_welfare_wall_may_11.pdf.

The literature and some of the community participants cited that linking disability-related supports to an individual is an efficient and effective approach compared to providing supports through specific programs. Ideally, these supports would be delivered outside of the income support system. Under such a framework, persons with disabilities would not have to apply for or stay on welfare because they have no other means of accessing disability supports. Further, eligibility for disability-related supports would be based on individual need, be available across the lifespan, and follow principles of control, choice, portability and flexibility.

5.3   Personal barriers

It was identified by some participants that persons with disabilities can have personal barriers which impact their capacity to access training and employment programs, as well as attach to the workforce.

Some persons with disabilities have few or no support networks and/or few financial resources. This results in social isolation, which can create mental health concerns and/or impact their knowledge and awareness of existing training and employment services/programs, and/or their confidence to access these programs. For those who may have been institutionalized, these issues are compounded. Further, such isolation can negatively impact their interpersonal skills, which are critical for workplace success.

Some persons with disabilities also self-stigmatize, i.e., accepting the stereotype that failure is expected and resulting from their disabilities. It is important to state that this is a product of a history of exclusion arising from, for example, negative experiences in the educational system, lack of connection to organizations of/for persons with disabilities/isolation, and/or stereotypes perpetuated in the media. Additionally, ongoing lack of success from their own efforts in the educational and employment spheres can result in a sense of powerlessness and defeat.

Some community participants spoke to family circumstances as having potential for unintended negative consequences for children/youth/adult children with disabilities. In some cases, disconnection from services arises from families not wanting to identify and label their child as having a disability or not wanting to be "seen" as accessing supports – especially in cases where the individual is very high functioning, for fear this would further marginalize their child/youth. In some cases, families have the good intention of "protecting their children" which can result in diminishing their capacity for decision-making and independence. As commented by one community participant:

> *Parents are sometimes an issue when it comes to life skills development as they see themselves in a caregiver role and want to protect [their children], or they are in a routine for many years and just continue to provide this role. Also, the family dynamic can affect a client when the parent does not recognize the disability [and/or] does not*

want to identify in school or blocks access to programs which are known to be for persons […] a disability.

It was highlighted by a few participants that personal development is critical for some persons with disabilities to facilitate their engagement and success in employment and training programs. They may need a period of socialization and opportunities to develop soft and life skills, as previously referenced. For example, it was noted that some individuals, because of the nature of their disability, could be "too social" or inappropriate in their interpersonal relationships (e.g., not respecting normal boundaries) thus creating difficulties in the workplace.

5.4   Rural access to services

Some participants spoke to the challenges that persons with disabilities living in rural areas can face.

It was stated by some participants that persons with disabilities can be limited in their access to training programs, unless they can move to a larger centre. If they choose to remain in their own communities, local training institutions may not be accessible. If they have access to a training institution, they may have to choose a program that is offered in the local area, but which may not be the right fit for them or the best career choice. It is recognized, however, that moving away from home often causes more barriers: it can be expensive and create challenges in relation to continuity of existing services and in accessing new support systems.

Access to community-based agencies and programs is very limited in some regions of the province. AESL can refer clients to agencies that provide disability-related services, however most of these services are in St. John's and may be more difficult for individuals to access. It also was stated that there are few dedicated staff resources in rural AESL offices to provide the needed expertise to support staff in delivering services to persons with disabilities.

Another significant challenge in rural communities is lack of access to transportation, discussed in the next section.

5.5   Transportation

Lack of access to reliable and affordable transportation is a major barrier for persons with disabilities generally and specifically in relation to accessing training and employment programs and attaching to the workforce. Persons with disabilities often cannot afford to invest in their own vehicle and/or fund needed modifications, and some are restricted from driving.

St. John's has an accessible transit system (GoBus) which also serves Mount Pearl and a public transit system (Metrobus) which covers the St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise areas, but challenges exist with both systems. A few community participants stated that the GoBus can be unreliable (e.g., the rider arrives at their destination extremely early or late for work), and/or it is

not responsive to the needs of the continuum of users who are eligible to access the service (e.g., individuals who are non-verbal). As described by one of the community participants:

> *Transportation is a need. Both GoBus and Metrobus [need] reach and predictability. GoBus can have people arrive an hour late for work, and clients are worried their employer will be mad, or in other cases they can arrive up to an hour early and nowhere to go to wait to start work (wait at Tim Horton's or out in the cold). Metrobus also has reach and predictably issues. Entry-level work can often involve shift work, [and people] would not be able to take the bus [to take on these shifts]; as well, work in Donovan's industrial park or work as a flag-person can be outside the reach [due to lack of transportation]. These transportation issues cause stress and anxiety. Also, it is hard for clients accessing pre-employment programs to get their transportation subsidized.*

Further, it was noted by a few community participants that on occasion, persons with disabilities eligible to access the GoBus have been denied funding for the GoBus card, because a government service provider felt it was not needed, and the person could access Metrobus. Yet, Metrobus shelters are not accessible to some users in inclement weather when, for example, sidewalks are not cleared or are hazardous, and not all buses are accessible. These issues are magnified for persons with disabilities living in other regions of the province where there is no public transportation and limited options overall for transportation (e.g., few or no taxis).

A few community participants delivering employment and training programs and services highlighted that their program funding does not include sufficient or any designated funds to support their participants' transportation needs. This can restrict or limit access to those eligible and interested to participate. These participants felt that more funding should be provided to their programs to support transportation for persons with disabilities to/from programs, as well as to access job interviews, for example.

It also was noted that when persons with some disabilities (e.g., those with mental illness) do not have sufficient funding to access their needed therapy appointments to support good mental health, this diminishes their capacity to participate in any programming and successfully attach to the labour force.

5.6   Community Capacity

Employment programs and services delivered by not-for-profit organizations, from pre- to post-employment supports, are critical to the integration of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Yet, the service delivery system at the community level is based for the most part on short-term funding that does not allow for the flexibility to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities who may seek to be employed for the very first time.[56]

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[56]*Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.* Available from http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/HUMA/report-12/page-42#8.

Additionally, if funding is based on an annual application process, this creates uncertainties for the program staff (which could lead to high turnover) and for the clients who fear loss of service or who may choose not to engage due to the time-limited nature of the program. It also was stated that if an organization has underestimated the demand for their service in a particular fiscal year, there are no options for renegotiation until the following fiscal budget cycle.

One of the concerns with multi-year funding for programs and services is that if these services are not responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities, this will not be identified until later in the funding cycle. To support quality and accountability, service providers must be able to demonstrate that the funds are being used to provide comprehensive, effective, high-quality programming. This could be supported by ongoing evaluation.

6.0   Effective practices for designing employment programs and services for persons with disabilities

6.1   Recognize and respond to the diversity of persons with disabilities

Employment and training programs and services cannot be homogenous as persons with disabilities are not. They are at different stages in their life cycle. Some are youth or young adults seeking their first job while still in school. Some are mothers returning to the work force after an absence to care for children. Some are older adults facing disability because of an accident or onset of a chronic health condition. There are, of course, many other sources of variability within this population, including the nature and severity of the disability, level of education, previous employment experience, and need for accommodation. Effective employment policies and programs that support the full integration of this diverse population into employment must be multi-faceted, flexible in design and delivery and supportive of a range of needs.[57]

6.1.1   Case management

Case management services are critical to support persons with disabilities especially in relation to transitioning on and off of social benefit programs and for supporting access to employment and training programs, as well as related available resources. Opportunities for short-term follow-up with program graduates to facilitate a pathway to employment and for job maintenance also are integral for persons with disabilities.

6.2   Collaborative program design

Theory and concepts might not translate well into reality and practice. Focused and purposeful collaborations with organizations and including individuals with lived experience in the design

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[57]Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Willing but Unable: A Population in Waiting. 2016.

process for employment and training programs and services will ensure the resulting programs and services are truly client-centred and responsive to the full range of needs.

Use of an inclusion or disability lens would support accessible and responsive programs and services. The Disability Policy Office has developed an Inclusion Lens – a guide to incorporate inclusive practices when working on policies /programs.

6.3   Students with disabilities

Ensure students with disabilities receive the needed support through the K-12 experience to receive a quality education, including appropriate career counselling.

Provide community-based volunteer and work experiences for youth with disabilities to support skills building and identification of career paths. Encourage employers to identify existing employees willing to mentor students with disabilities on the job site.

6.4   Adaptive technology

To facilitate success in training and employment, persons with disabilities must have ready access to the adaptive technology they require and be provided necessary training to master this technology. Additionally, individuals should be provided opportunities to test new products before purchase, ensuring that these are fully responsive to their needs.

7.0   CONCLUSION

There is a direct benefit to providing employment and training programs inclusive of persons with disabilities and relevant needed supports to ensure their successful engagement in and completion of these programs. For employers who are projected to face labor shortages as the baby-boom generation retires, unemployed and underemployed persons with disabilities represent a "population in waiting" – a valuable pool of human resources to help fill those needs. For people with disabilities, employment has not only economic value, but important social and psychological value as well. For government, increased employment of people with disabilities helps decrease social expenditures and increase their tax base.[58]

To ensure the skills and abilities of working age adults with disabilities are maximized in relation to their contribution to the labour market, the following elements are critical:

▪ Early employability and career planning for youth with disabilities, as well as ongoing skills development and early work exposure/community volunteer opportunities;

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[58]Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment. National Council on Disability. 2007. Available from https://ncd.gov/publications/2007/Oct2007#3a.

- A seamless and coordinated employment and training system that is flexible and responsive to the needs of people with disabilities (e.g., disability-related supports and accommodations provided); and

- Employers skilled in inclusion and diversity, supported by information and resources from government and the expertise available in the community.[59]

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[59]Citizens with Disabilities –Ontario (CWDO). Together we are Stronger Series #2-4.

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[60] Michael Prince is well-known and respected in the disability field across the country and internationally. He has worked closely with both the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and Canadian Association for Community Living for many years. Michael is the Lansdown Professor of Social Policy at the University of Victoria and is a political scientist, as well as a public policy and administration scholar.

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