



Centre de
recherche sur les politiques en
matière d'invalidité professionnelle



Centre for
Research on
Work Disability Policy

Policy Roundtable on Pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work

Summary of the Roundtable

Held May 28th, 2019

Gatineau, Quebec

Planning Committee (listed alphabetically by last name): Alec Farquhar, Maureen Haan, Kathy Hawkins, Steve Mantis, Kathy Padkapayeva, Ron Saunders, Emile Tompa, Monica Winkler

Executive Summary

Since the December 2018 Disability and Work in Canada (DWC) conference, the DWC consortium has been seeking input, through a survey and extensive consultation meetings, on a draft Pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work. The strategy document is grounded in the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Canada ratified in 2010. At the May 28, 2019 roundtable of federal and provincial policy officials, we reviewed highlights of what we heard in the consultations up to that point, with a focus on three areas of particular relevance to government policy:

- How governments can help support employers
- Fostering a client-friendly, coherent, easy-to-navigate and inclusive array of supports to individuals
- Developing an outcomes framework, a monitoring/tracking system and a repository of resources

Policy Roundtable participants discussed these aspects of the strategy document and provided advice on the agenda for the December 2019 conference and for next steps after that conference.

Highlights of what was heard so far in the consultations included the following:

- Employers do not know where to go for supports (including training). They need a central repository of resources.
- Employers need to be supported in learning about the value that people with disabilities bring to the workplace.
- Governments should act as model employers for people with disabilities.
- Restrictive eligibility criteria for supports and excessive clawbacks of earned income keep people with disabilities from engaging in employment.
- Outcomes should be measured by type of disability, as employment levels for some types of disabilities are much different than for others. There should be timelines and accountability for key outcomes.
- People with disabilities must be involved in all aspects of decision-making. This requires funding to enable their active participation
- Inclusive design is critical, not just for the built environment, but also with regard to workplace practices (e.g., providing everyone flexible work hours).

Advice on the strategy document

Roundtable participants shared their thoughts on and suggestions for the three areas of the draft strategy that are of relevance to government policy, and also provided some general comments on the draft strategy document.

Supporting employers

- Enable service providers to support employers in all aspects of the employment process: inclusive design, recruitment (including pre-screening of candidates), onboarding, accommodation, retention, and career advancement.
- Work with employer associations, e.g., Chambers of Commerce, as a way of reaching their members.
- Inform employers about the needs and talents of employees with different types of disabilities and in different contexts.
- Facilitate access to incentives and grants (e.g., for accommodation costs, training programs).
- Provide programs tailored to the needs of specific sectors.
- Help employers to engage the support of co-workers.
- Consider establishing a “one stop shop”: a hub, possibly arm’s length from government, that would link employers to services and supports in their community.

Fostering a client-friendly, coherent, easy-to-navigate and inclusive array of supports to individuals

- Improve coordination of disability benefit programs across levels of government. Provide system navigators.
- Address restrictive eligibility criteria for disability support programs that keep people with disabilities from engaging in employment because of fear for losing benefits.
- Support the transition from school to work, including co-op opportunities.
- Help people with disabilities to access technology supports, and to use technology to enhance their capacity to participate in the workforce.
- Provide a single door, or “no wrong door”, approach to access to supports by people with disabilities.
- Provide sustained funding to disability organizations.

Developing an outcomes framework, a monitoring/tracking system and a repository of resources

- Identify key objectives. What are the three or four outcomes of most importance? Is the focus on increased numbers of people with disabilities with employment, or inclusive workplaces? It is probably both, but we may want to decide which is most important.
- What are the benchmarks we want to achieve in the short, medium, and long term?
- Indicators should be easily understood by all stakeholders.
- Collect data on various aspects of intersectionality.
- Document data gaps and identify opportunities for data linkages.
- Partner with researchers to build program evaluation capacity. May need a working group on the development of an evaluation framework.
- Work with stakeholders to develop a simple logic model to guide evaluation.
- Tell stories of individuals.

General feedback on the draft strategy document

- Generally, the strategy is on the right track.
- The language needs to be plainer.

- Participation of people with disabilities in the process of developing and implementing the strategy is vital.
- Ensure the framing of the strategy is relevant to all stakeholders, so that people can see themselves in it.
- The strategy reads as a starting point. Phase 2 should include an action plan.
- Make reference to the importance of evidence-based program design.

Ideas for the 2019 conference

- Be clear about your objectives for the conference. (Could be: support for the basic direction of the strategy and each participant identifying what they can do to help implement it.)
- Make sure all stakeholders see themselves reflected. Have diverse perspectives on the panels.
- Ensure that employers and employer associations are represented. Provide an opportunity to hear employers' perspective on accessibility and leadership.
- Have a keynote speaker who is an expert on implementation. Implementation should be a key area of focus for the conference.
 - Discuss implementation in various timeframes: what is already under way as well as future steps in short, medium and long term.
 - Identify how responsibility for moving things forward will be shared.
- Include presentations about practical steps that can make a difference, and some real-life case studies of success stories.
- Get people to sign up for working groups.
- Assign people to tables so that there is a diversity at the tables.

Ideas regarding resources post-conference to support next steps

- May need a coordinating body that is not government but has support from government. Could consider a membership model.
 - Centre of Excellence option should emphasize the practical aspects, e.g., development of and a repository for evidence-based tools.
- Develop robust partnerships with key stakeholders to deliver on elements of the strategy.
- The DWC committee should remain involved.
- The DWC committee can serve as a “neutral convenor” for future meetings/workshops among policy officials.