November 27, 2017

Themes, ideas, input from Information Sessions

Vision

- The word "disability" captures too much; but it also says too little (Aspiring Workforce table)
- Vision needs to be framed in human rights and social justice (Key elements table)
    - MUST avoid seeing employment of PWD as a charity
    - MUST value people with disabilities as citizens
- We are often asked for a "business case". We have to show that PWD work better than everyone else. But we need to understand as well that it is not all about cost savings. (Aspiring Workforce table)
- Need to value what people can do whether it is paid employment or not (Key elements table)
- Need to de-stigmatize unemployment or being out of the labour force (Key elements table)
- There also needs to be a change in the mindset, you've hired a person who happens to be disabled not a disabled employee. (Confident employer program table)

Successes and success factors:

- Students with disabilities are getting jobs once they get attachments to the labour market. Work study is a large part of the program. (IL Movement)
- Attachments to employers and linkages. (IL Movement)

Challenges:

- Lots of people have multiple disabilities. There is usually one primary one (Confident employer program table)
- Overall high unemployment rate and low employment rate of people with disabilities. Participation rates of people with disabilities. (IL Movement)
- People are caught in a cycle of poverty and unable to solve issues to get employment. (Key elements table)
- Employers seem to be outsourcing their services, they are hiring part-time, they don't have the money to cover the cost of accommodations. (Confident employer table)

- It has always been a challenge to get small employers to the table. It has always been difficult to get them to take the time off since they are so busy.
- There is no bridge between education and employment (Key elements table)
- The problem with getting people hired is with interview experience. PWD are given less time during the interview. (Disability confident employer table)
- Evaluation focused on physical requirements, but there are so many others skills that can be used to work (Lived Experience table)
- Developing job descriptions and figuring out what a job entails on paper is quite difficult. (Lived Experience table)
- 3 perspectives: Client, employer, funders that we need to find ways of making together: Employers seem to be worried about cost of hiring PWD, clients need more work experience to add to their resume, funders want to fund a certain project and have certain outcomes measured. These are three distinct pressures, having to motivate clients to meet the funders expectations and get the employers on board when they don't have the funds to make the accommodations. (Confident employer table)
- Employers want to make accommodations but don't have the funds to do it (Confident employer table)
- Costs of accommodating deaf/hard of hearing clients is expensive (sign language interpreters, CART), this is a barrier for many employers that we try to work with. (Confident employer table)
- Lots of clients are underemployed. Even people with university degrees and tonnes of experience can struggle. What is the reason behind the barriers? Maybe it's cost, maybe it's lack of awareness, employers fear they don't have the skills to mentor someone who is deaf, missing education that there are lots of options to communicate with someone who is hard of hearing (eg instant messaging, text messaging) (Confident employer program)
- Information difficult to find – no centralized place to find information (Navigability and alignment table)
- 80% of people with mental disabilities do not disclose for fear of reprisal; this has a negative impact on the job, there is stigma. Most will disclose it when they have problems (Aspiring Workforce table)
- Every department in an organization is its own microcosm with own personalities --- PWD do not know the dynamics. (Aspiring workforce table)
- On the one hand, we need written accommodation plans so that as change happens, on the other hand the plan is static and may not accommodate changing circumstances (Aspiring Workforce table)
- There is no employer response, or otherwise, to address episodic disability and how to secure sustainable work (e.g. sick leave was never designed for people with episodic disabilities) (Lived Experience table)

- Persons with disabilities can't get job progression. Trapped in a job and not really able to leave. Not happy as they can't get accommodated in their job and not able to get a promotion. That person can't become the Manager! (IL Movement)
- Glass partitions: feeling like glass walls are on either side of you and above you, and the more comfortable you are and moves your organization has made to accommodate needs, makes some workers feel like they cannot move because they may not get the same type of accommodation elsewhere. (Lived Experience table)
- Training of people with disabilities needs to reflect the needs of labour market- shift to demand side training – stop training people for jobs that do not exist (Key elements table)
- Changing nature of the labour market to consider the rise of precarious employment
  - government programs do not reflect the reality of the labour market and workers' experiences
  - the current system cannot deal with current labour market challenges
- Silos among government programs. They do not communicate or share well enough (Key elements table); System is fragmented and leaves people fragmented to fall through the cracks (Key elements table); the welfare wall is real – there are significant disincentives in income support programs (Key elements table); Agencies not communicating with each other (provincial and federal) (Navigability and alignment table)
- There is no universal program to cover the additional medical/support costs. People don't want to leave the system because they'll lose the added benefits. So people stay in this program until they're 65 so they can get Old Age Security. (Lived Experience table)
- Some workers feel they can do more, but are afraid that if they do that they may find it difficult to get back on if they need it. A worker's attempt to get back to work is considered evidence that they no longer require the supports (Lived Experience table)
- Human rights approach is often of little use. Awards coming form successful Human Rights complaints are not enough, "slap on the wrist".   Often settled at mediation, which is confidential; therefore, no public record to publicize employer's name/company name. Under reporting, therefore, employers can get away with paying damages here and there without any real impact (Prevention Link table)
- Overall, a lack of teeth in applying "undue hardship" – for example, WCB accepts "no" from employer without pressure to apply the law that supersedes (Prevention Link table)

Key strategy elements

Measurement and evaluation

- A strategy should consider strategic evaluation (Key elements of a strategy)

Tools, supports and services:

- **Technology:**
- Big thing for people with disabilities will be driverless cars. (IL Movement)

- **Supports and services:**
- There is a whole emotional aspect of helping people. It is a challenge being an emotional support and letting worker yell, cry and let out their frustration. We need to help guide them to counseling and other resources (e.g. eviction, no money, no phone to communicate and seek assistance, etc.) (Lived Experience table)
- Being present in the moment and with the individual. (Lived Experience table)
- Ask people if there is anything they need, would like to talk. Even if what they say is beyond your abilities, you can say that you heard them but that you don't have the tools to support. (Lived Experience table)
- Creation of job brokers to support labour market attachment. (IL Movement)
- Helping students on university campuses to help them get jobs. (IL Movement)
- Information to assist with transition from school to the workplace (Navigability and alignment table)
- We need a push to get people in coop programs in terms of employment once completed. Needs to be a way to get into the labour force. Work experience is extremely instrumental. (IL Movement)
- We went from 15% people getting hired to 65% when coaching was given to help with interviews-instruction on what the hiring manager wants to hear (Confident employer program table)
- ODSP has a program where funding can be applied for to build opportunities for networking opportunities (like Dolphin mentoring), another stream is sector-based training eg hospitality training (2 weeks of training before being placed with an employer), also mentoring and coaching opportunities in specific industries (Confident employer program table)
- Ideally have a coach on duty available to person with disability to inquire! E.g., any adjustments you need to help you do your job? (Aspiring workforce table)
- Support self -advocacy and independence (IL Movement)
- Nav Can. has strong peer support program; it has been valuable. (Aspiring Workforce table)

Roles and responsibilities – government and private sector

- It is the government's role to guide and to monitor outcomes to determine what should be replicated and scaled up (Key elements table)

Legislative and policy solutions

- **Federal and provincial legislation and programs:**
- Flexibility is a key element (Key elements table)
    - Individuals have different needs. We need to be careful not to create rigid programs and policies
    - Need to recognize the diversity and heterogeneity of people with disabilities and business
- There are potential challenges implementing a strategy that works as well in Newfoundland & Labrador and Ontario (Key elements table)
- Federal funds are limited – any program added or expanded must show value added (Key elements table)
- It is not the federal government's role to dictate to the provinces (Key elements table)
- Federal Accessibility Legislation is the beginning not the end – just because there is a ramp doesn't mean someone can get a job (Key elements table)
    - Legislation should be linked to human rights
    - Lack of employment of people with disabilities is a market failure – people with disabilities are unrecognized as valuable employees
    - Legislation should facilitate effective job matching to get the right person in the right job
- There is not enough enforcement of Employment Equity Act. There is no teeth and a severe lack of enforcement (Key elements table)
- Consider the creation of a national accessibility fund to prevent employer discouragement of implementing accommodation (Key elements table)
    - Ontario Public Service has a centralized accommodation fund that is portable and works well.
- Universal compensation coverage would benefit this whole process (Prevention Link table)

Identifying and promoting best practices, standards and guidelines

- Need best practice and guidelines (Key elements table)
- Focus on function and capacity as opposed to medical risk. For example, an engineer that is deaf. Her accommodation is to make person to person (tap) and eye contact so that everyone knows equipment is moving … creates safe environment for everyone. (Aspiring Workforce table)
- **Development of a National Work Disability Prevention Management System Standard**
- Proposed Standard to incorporate research evidence and best practices from multiple Stakeholders (collaborative approach is key) (CSA Table)

- Provide key elements / principles for an effective work disability prevention management program. Developing capacity for employers to accommodate employees with disabilities. Address recruitment and retention of employees
- Multi-stakeholder committee to develop the Standard (employers, workers, associations, labour, healthcare professionals, insurance, WCB, researchers, policy makers, etc.
- Address work related and non-work related disabilities
- Address Mental Health - link to the CSA Psychological Health & Safety standard – Z1003
- Many disability management programs available - what will this standard provide that is not already available? Comprehensive standard will provide a systematic approach / framework / blueprint for disability prevention management developed by a national committee experts - based on current research / best practice – take broader approach
- Culture shift needed   - this is not easy
- Recommend to promote standard internationally when completed
- Develop implantation tools for the Standard (evaluation tools)
- Can apply to all organizations – public / private – big / small
- Standard will provide an effective benchmark to measure their program against the national standard.

Link accommodation and return to work with disability prevention

- Need to deal with issues before injuries occur. Link workers' compensation rates to prevention initiatives. Integrate health & safety inspection/enforcement into compensation legislation – work to improve prevention initiatives. (Prevention Link table)
- Create joint RTW committee as a sub-committee of Joint Occupational Health and Safety committees to legitimize them (minutes, structure) (Prevention Link table)
- These committees can liaise to address prevention issues (Prevention Link table)

Different disabilities sometimes need different approaches

Disability intersects with other issues affecting people

- **Gender:**
- Women living on CPP only is different from men living on CPP. Lots of domestic responsibility include caring for others, being poor and not being able to care for self, etc. Document available on Status of Women in Canada website ("Enabling Income) (Lived Experience table)

- ADHD isn't often caught in girls. We are moving away from pigeon holing a medical diagnosis e.g. ADHD may manifest itself as hyperactive in boys but as inattentive in girls. (Lived Experience table).

Breaking down program silos

- Service Canada for working with Disability (one agency to help navigate the system (Navigability and alignment table)
- General central agency for people with disability to inform them of the programs before workers go into the work force (NB) (Navigability and alignment table)
- Central Access point (Navigability and alignment table)
- Australia and New Zeland have 'one stop' shop (Navigability and alignment table)
- Network for people with disability to help them find resources (Navigability and alignment table)
- Network for people with disability to help them find resources

Leveraging government investments:

- Need infrastructure projects that include Employment Equity (Key elements table); Accessibility legislation should be part of any infrastructure projects (Key elements table)
  - Need new laws and replace them with one plan – need to mandate every business and every level of government includes at least 15% persons with disabilities (Key elements table)

How do we make change?

- Need to lobby by working with the Ministry (Key elements table)
- Putting pressure on government and persisting, voicing before parliament is needed (Lived Experience table)
- We often think there are instantaneous solutions, but there are not. In order to build success, we need to talk about the things that work well. (Lived Experience table)
- If you take on the role of fighting for social justice, what skills are required to do so? Listening and understanding that even if you have lived experience with one thing, it doesn't mean you have lived experience in everything/other things. To be an advocate, you need to start by listening to people. (Lived Experience table)

Engaging the key players:

The central role of persons with disabilities

- There's a lack of understanding of what persons with disabilities actually do to navigate through the system. (Lived Experience table)

The need to change employer culture, attitudes and practices

- A lot of employers believe that if they have met accessibility standards they have done their job … but is it enough to just fill your checklist? (Aspiring Workforce table)
- My definition of Disability Confident Employer: not an employer that can reach out to the support agencies to help get people into jobs, it's about helping people be resourceful enough to do it on their own. You don't need to be able to manage every situation but to have the capacity to figure out how to get the support you need. Being disability confident happens long before you hire someone with a disability (Disability confident employer table)
- Often times there is a power relationship where the employer seems like a huge beast (Lived Experience table)
- Many PWD have episodic disabilities and so unpredictable in ways that scare employers (Aspiring Workforce table)
- What employers and employees forget is to focus on where the employee is here and now. (Lived Experience table)
- Challenges to accommodating workers in healthcare: getting employer to understand injured worker coming back to work requires special attention in a respectful way, efficient and compassionate communication. (Lived Experience table)
- Employers need to look at their biases and be honest about them and look at them without fear. Once this happens people can have an honest conversation. There needs to be a willingness of employers to look at systemic issues around hiring PWD (Confident employer program)
- There needs to be an open discussion and dialogue about accommodation and not be afraid of it. People need to see accommodation as an investment. (Confident employer table)
- Entrepreneurs are used to challenges, hiring and retaining PWD is another challenge to be competitive in the market. (Confident employer table)
- Need to change employer mindsets rather than force them to do things – need to focus on education (Key elements table)
- Often better to proceed by informal negotiation or using universal benefits to get the needs of persons with disabilities: but if informal the accommodation may

stop with management turnover. Some employers resist formalized accommodations (Aspiring workforce table)

We need to engage unions

- Union role can play an important role around barriers to employment; in negotiations for accommodations; can create an undercurrent of hostility to the PWD. For example, accommodation can be seen as not doing your due – e.g., nurses who get day shifts (Aspiring Workforce table)
- Some employer-side experience is perception based that unions pose a barrier, are adversarial in RTW, but actual experience is that the union helps RTW, because they have the trust of the worker/member and can be more candid with workers than the employer can be, it's about managing expectations – the union helps significantly with this (Prevention Link table)
- Common disadvantage is that employers are reluctant to give up power in the process (Prevention Link table)
- What needs to emerge is better union/management relations in the workplace (Prevention Link table)
- In some cases, the union lacks the knowledge necessary to properly advise/advocate for their members (Prevention Link table)
- Unions can negotiate specific language for both occupational and non-occupational for temporary & long-term RTW (Prevention Link table)

Self-employment and social enterprise as a solution for some people

- o Social enterprise is a field that lots of employers are interested in. What the Canadian Haring Society is doing is helping people learn ASL so that people with disabilities can teach this as a fee for service. Social enterprise is a promising option for PWD (confident employer program table)

We need to engage health professionals

- What is the proper role for the health professional and medical evaluations overall? Employers focus on medical evaluations, which do not add value to help employees get back to work. Focus of research is to move away from the focus on medical consultations, etc. (Lived Experience table)
- We don't want to "be" a diagnosis but we're forced to get diagnoses. (Lived Experience table)

Engage human resources professionals
- Involve HR professionals / associations (can help promote / reach stakeholders) (CSA Table)

Communications and social marketing is crucial

- Education is a key component – get everyone on the same page (management / labour/ healthcare professional/ workers / etc. (CSA Table)

We need leadership and champions

o Need champions / leaders to make this happen (CSA Table)

o **From employers**
o Businesses have the answer but need to share information and strategy. There is a need for shared leadership from the business community. The answer does not lie solely in the hands of the government. Business has the need and the knowledge but there are communication gaps. (Key elements table)

Building partnerships and common vision:

- We have to talk about what works. Share that across the country. (IL Movement)
- Government, unions and employers can work together (Key elements table)