



SUMMARY REPORT: ROUNDTABLE ON INCLUSION

Thursday, November 12th, 2015

11:30 am – 1:30 pm

The Landing (UC3018), University Centre, Memorial University

This document summarizes the discussions that took place at the Roundtable on Inclusion, held at the St. John's campus of Memorial University on November 12th, 2015. Co-sponsored by the NL cluster of the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP), the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL (COD-NL), and the Independent Living Resource Centre NL (ILRC-NL), this event brought members of the academic community together with a wide diversity of relevant corporate and community partners to discuss approaches to inclusion for persons with disabilities in NL workplaces.

The discussions were facilitated by Kelly White (Executive Director of COD-NL) and Kathy Hawkins (Manager of Employer Supports and Services for the ILRC-NL), and the session was chaired by Barbara Neis (NL Provincial Co-Lead for the CRWDP). The following is a complete list of attendees, presented in alphabetical order by surname:

- Catherine de Boer (Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, MUN)
- Stephen Bornstein (NL Provincial Co-Lead, CRWDP)
- Bernie Brockerville (Senior Placement Officer, Marine Institute)
- Jennifer Browne (Director, Career Development and Experiential Learning, MUN)
- Joanne Callahan (Human Resources Talent Manager, Nalcor)
- Elizabeth Chaulk (Associate Vice-President of Student Services, College of the North Atlantic)
- Bernadette Coffey (Workers' Advisor, NL Federation of Labour)
- Ailsa Craig (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, MUN)
- Ewa Dabrowska (Postdoctoral Fellow, SafetyNet, MUN)
- Lori Dalley (Senior Policy and Research Advisor, Workplace NL)
- Shelley DiNur (Occupational Therapist, L.A. Miller Centre)
- Patricia Dodd (President, NL Injured Workers' Association)
- James Farrell (Executive Officer, MUN Faculty Association)
- Grant Genova (Senior Architect, Fresh Fruit & Architecture)
- Kathy Hawkins (Manager of Employer Supports and Services, ILRC-NL)
- Tina Hickey (Employment Equity Officer, Department of Human Resources, MUN)
- Judy Kendall (Coordinator of Disability Service, College of the North Atlantic)
- Rhonda Tulk Lane (Policy and Advocacy Specialist, St. John's Board of Trade)
- Gillian Lee (Human Resources Officer, City of Mount Pearl)
- Carey Majid (Executive Director, Human Rights Commission, Government of NL)
- Steve Mantis (Executive Committee Member and Community Groups Lead, CRWDP)



Centre de recherche sur les politiques en matière d'ininvalidité professionnelle (CRPIP) Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP)

- Andrew Manuel (Manager, Corporate and Client Services, Workplace NL)
- Jackie Manuel (Chief Executive Officer, NL Construction Safety Association)
- Daniella Simas Medeiros (Masters Student in Sociology and CRWDP Student Fellow, MUN)
- Barbara Neis (NL Provincial Co-Lead, CRWDP)
- Ken O'Brien (Advanced Education and Skills, Government of NL)
- Jennifer Parsons (Director, Corporate & Client Services, Workplace NL)
- Annette Powell (Facilitator, Employer Supports and Services, ILRC-NL)
- Judy Powell (Chief Executive Officer, Metrobus)
- Leslie Rossiter (Manager, Policy & Communications, Hospitality NL)
- Aleksandra Stefanovic (PhD Student in Community Health and CRWDP Student Fellow, MUN)
- Anna Tapper (Director, Corporate Governance/Planning, Workplace NL)
- Ashley Turner (Diversity and Education/Training Specialist, Husky Energy)
- Chrissy Vincent (NL Provincial Coordinator, CRWDP)
- Kelly White (Executive Director, COD-NL)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The event opened with a few words from Kelly White, Executive Director of COD-NL. She provided a brief introduction to the mandates of the CRWDP initiative, COD-NL, and the ILRC-NL, and she explained the motivation behind the planning of this event.

The Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) is a 7-year, national, trans-disciplinary research partnership, which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and is co-directed by Emile Tompa at the Institute for Work and Health (the primary host organization) and Ellen MacEachen at the University of Waterloo. The Centre brings together over 50 academics and 40 community partners from across Canada with the aim of identifying how people, when disabled, can be better retained and integrated into the Canadian labour market. The ultimate goals of the Centre's research program are to improve public policy that fosters paid labour-market engagement of people with disabilities and to establish and develop the field of work disability studies in Canadian universities.

COD-NL is a provincial advocacy organization for all persons with disabilities, promoting their rights and raising public awareness of their needs. The role of COD-NL is primarily to act as a catalyst, bringing together various organizations of, and for, persons with disabilities and connecting them with government and other non-government agencies to address issues of mutual concern. COD-NL works with individuals and representatives of organizations to address policy and program issues around education, training, employment, labour market strategies, social and economic development, human rights, accessibility, accommodation, income support, and home support services. COD-NL also works with federal and provincial government departments in consultation and advocacy capacities.

The ILRC-NL is a consumer-controlled organization committed to providing supports, resources, and opportunities for empowerment that enable persons with disabilities to make informed choices about their lives. The ILRC-NL promotes the idea of independent living and offers a wide variety of services and supports upon request, including advocacy, employer supports, career services, internships, peer support, research and development, adaptive technology, and volunteer services.



Working together, the NL cluster of the CRWDP, COD-NL, and the ILRC-NL organized this event with the goal of facilitating a conversation about what it truly means to be inclusive of persons with disabilities in workplaces. The most recently available statistics show that 14.1% of the NL population aged 15 or older is living with a disability (Statistics Canada, 2012) and this figure only includes those disabilities that have been self-identified. Furthermore, over 50% of Canadians with disabilities are under-employed or not employed at all (Statistics Canada, 2012) and this is despite the fact that many are highly educated. In fact, in 2012, 56.2% of Canadians with disabilities aged 25 to 64 possessed a post-secondary degree, certificate, or diploma (Statistics Canada, 2012). Since employment plays such a large role in the structure of people's lives, it is important to shed light on these issues in an effort to figure out how NL workplaces might do a better job of fostering disability inclusion.

Our Roundtable discussions were guided by three separate but related questions:

- 1) How is disability inclusion currently promoted in NL workplaces, and what constitutes best practice?
- 2) What are some examples of effective inclusion-related strategies, changes, and initiatives from workplaces in other locations?
- 3) What follow-up would attendees like to see from this event, either through CRWDP-related work or otherwise?

TOPIC 1: BEST PRACTICES FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION IN NL WORKPLACES

Four themes emerged during the discussion of best practices for disability inclusion in NL workplaces:

- 1) *The need for **continuity of supports and services** throughout every stage of life.* Representatives from post-secondary institutions reported that enrolment numbers for students with disabilities are trending upward, which is likely due in part to these institutions' increased efforts to ensure that buildings are properly accessible and that appropriate accommodation is available for classes and exams. Concerns were expressed, however, that post-secondary education might not necessarily translate into successful labour market integration for such students unless similar supports are also made available to them in workplaces after they graduate. In light of this, the Department of Human Resources at Memorial University does try to encourage students to consider Memorial not only as a place of study but also as a place of employment after graduation – Memorial has a well-developed employment equity policy in place (a new version of which has recently been drafted and is currently under review). Both versions of the policy include disability considerations.
 - For more information on the types of accommodation offered to students at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic, you can visit the websites for MUN's Glenn Roy Blundon Centre for Students with Disabilities (<http://www.mun.ca/blundon/>) and CNA's Disability Services Office (<http://www.cna.nl.ca/Student-Support/Disability-Services.aspx>).
 - Memorial University's policies are all available online. You can access the "Accommodations for Students with Disabilities" policy (<http://www.mun.ca/policy/site/policy.php?id=239>) as well as the newly proposed "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment" policy (http://www.mun.ca/policy/status/EmpEquity_Policy_Consultation.pdf) through the MUN website at any time.



Our discussion noted, however, that students with disabilities graduating from post-secondary institutions ought to have access to employment in a much wider range of workplaces in this province than just the handful that currently offer the necessary supports and services.

- 2) *The importance of **cross-disability understanding and consideration**.* Attendees all agreed that a firm grasp on the broad spectrum of disability as well as of its individualized nature is the key to successful and complete inclusiveness. It was mentioned that, as the primary professionals responsible for ensuring the accessibility of buildings, architects would increasingly like to be able to employ designs that are inclusive for all people of all ability types (“universal design”). They would benefit from more communication with the disability community in order to better understand what is needed to achieve that goal.

While built environments are certainly important, some participants felt that they are not actually the weakest link of cross-disability inclusiveness. In many cases, in fact, built environment accommodations for **physical** disabilities are some of the best-understood and most widely offered by employers while accommodations for **intellectual and mental health disabilities** tend to receive much less consideration.

Within post-secondary institutions, there is now a push for better understanding of accommodation for students with autism – but there is still a great deal of work to be done with respect to this. These institutions do, however, increasingly offer services such as mental health wellness programs and mental health first aid training for students and staff, which is at least a step in the right direction.

- For more information about Memorial University’s Wellness Programs (which include mental health wellness components), you can visit the Wellness Program pages on the MUN website both for students (<http://www.mun.ca/wellness/>) and for university employees (<http://www.mun.ca/hr/services/wellness/programs.php>).
 - For more information on mental health first aid training, you can visit the official website for mental health first aid in Canada (<http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca>).
- 3) *The value of taking a **multi-pronged approach** to workplace disability inclusion.* The most successful disability inclusion programs tend to be relatively complex, with a number of different components. We heard about several good, multi-pronged inclusiveness initiatives that have been put into action by workplaces in NL with at least some degree of success:
- Metrobus has recently introduced a new fleet of accessible buses and has incorporated sensitivity training into all of its driver training programs. You can visit the accessibility page on the Metrobus website (<http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/metrobus.cfm>) to learn more.
 - Husky Energy has extensive diversity policies in place (including sections on disability and accommodation), and has also instituted a Diversity and Respectful Workplace Council in order to ensure that there are ambassadors all throughout the organization. In addition, it hosts an annual “Diversity Day” as well as smaller monthly diversity-related events, and it





- has a well-developed youth outreach program aimed at addressing misconceptions about who is able to work in the petroleum industry and encouraging youth from diverse backgrounds to apply. More information is available on the Diversity and Inclusion page of the Husky website (<http://www.huskyenergy.com/socialresponsibility/diversity.asp>).
- Nalcor Energy also has a Diversity Council in place. As a part of its Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, it has conducted thorough reviews of both its “talent acquisition model” and its built facilities to ensure that there are no biases against persons with disabilities, and it has provided all staff and supervisors with training in creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.
 - The Government of NL has provided diversity training for all of its Human Resources staff, and also operates the “Opening Doors” program aimed at helping persons with various types of disabilities to enter the public service workforce and eventually secure ongoing employment. For further information on the Opening Doors program, please see the Opening Doors information page on the Human Resource Secretariat website (http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/hrs/disability_supports/employment_programs/opening_doors.html).

Unfortunately, even a multi-pronged approach is not always enough to ensure a program’s complete success, as is illustrated by concerns about ongoing challenges with the program offered to injured workers through Workplace NL. This program exists primarily to provide benefits to injured workers and place re-employment obligations on their employers, but it is more than just that. It also offers education and outreach programs to help employers better understand both prevention and early and safe return to work, and it takes a “Services without Barriers” approach to help ensure accessibility for all. Despite this multi-pronged approach, attendees who have worked closely with injured workers reported that many seem to never return to the workplace. Instead, they end up being referred to social services. Thus, while multi-pronged programs are necessary, they are not always sufficient to achieve inclusion for people with disabilities.

- For more information on Workplace NL’s program and services, you can visit their official website (<http://www.whscc.nl.ca/>).
- 4) *The strong need for more **education and awareness** around the issue of disability inclusion.* Recent statistics show that 50-60% of human rights complaints are disability-related and a large proportion of these can be attributed simply to employers’ lack of awareness. Many employers do not even realize that they are required to provide disability accommodation when requested. If made fully aware of the requirement, most employers would likely oblige (or at the very least, provide a transition plan over time to mitigate up-front costs). Likewise, persons with disabilities are not always aware that the onus to be inclusive rests squarely on the shoulders of employers. For instance, although some youth with disabilities express interest in pursuing jobs in the marine or petroleum industries, many realize that these types of employment are open to them only after being exposed to outreach efforts by companies within these sectors.



TOPIC 2: EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES/INITIATIVES FROM OTHER PLACES

During the discussion of effective inclusion-related strategies and initiatives from other places, five key examples were identified:

- 1) *The passing of **specific legislation** addressing issues of disability inclusion.* Some Canadian provinces (such as Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia) have their own pieces of provincial legislation centred on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, while others take their guidance from more general federal laws and regulations. It would be interesting to examine whether there is any appreciable difference in outcomes between these two approaches, and if so, which is more effective.
- 2) *The incorporation of **universal design** into all built environments.* Universal design is the concept of constructing built environments that are usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or status in life. It can help accommodate persons with disabilities with respect to housing, transportation, neighbourhoods, and workplaces. Some places have introduced legislation or regulations providing incentives to encourage its use, but there is still much work to be done. It seems to have been embraced more in some countries (such as the United States) than it has in Canada, but given that our population is aging, this is something that would benefit our society in multiple ways.
 - For more information on universal design, visit the website for the Design for All Foundation (<http://designforall.org/index.php>), which is based in Spain but disseminates information internationally.
- 3) *The use of government-imposed **quota systems** to incentivize employers to hire more persons with disabilities.* The idea behind these kinds of systems is that the existence of a concrete goal will motivate employers to achieve it – and in doing so, they will likely be profitable. Germany is one example of a country that has implemented a quota system for the employment of persons with disabilities, and it seems to be relatively successful. Each year, companies that do not meet the set quota are required to pay a fee and the proceeds are then used to develop programming related to disability inclusion in workplaces. In addition, results from all companies are made publicly available so that the system has built-in accountability.
 - If you would like to learn more about the German disability quota system or about these systems more generally, you might wish to consult the report issued on the topic by the International Labour Office (http://www.ilo.int/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_106625.pdf).
- 4) *The recognition of **control and communication** as the two key principles for successful accommodation.* In order for employees with disabilities to be properly and fully accommodated, they must feel that they have **control** over their work environments and they must be able to have open and honest **communication** with their employers. Successful accommodation strategies everywhere always seem to have these two characteristics in common.



- 5) *The use of **conflict resolution strategies**, rather than legal action, to settle disability-related human rights complaints.* Human Rights Commissions in some Canadian provinces have moved in this direction and have found that it is usually much quicker and less stressful for all parties involved. The NL Commission is in the process of making this change as well – after all, there is no need to go to court over an issue that could potentially be settled with an apology or a hug.
- More information on conflict resolution strategies can be found on the website for the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (<http://www.cicr-icrc.ca/>).

TOPIC 3: DESIRABLE OUTCOMES FROM THIS ROUNDTABLE

During the discussion of the third theme, desirable outcomes from this Roundtable, there were three distinct suggestions for potential outcomes that attendees would find valuable:

- 1) *Initiation of **research that integrates attention to the use of technology** into the exploration of disability inclusion issues and opportunities to ignite social change.* For instance, it might be possible to use social media to track injured workers (on a voluntary basis) in order to get a sense of how the return-to-work system is working, as well as whether or not its effectiveness is improving or deteriorating over time. As another example, a YouTube channel where people can upload videos of themselves struggling with various disability-related issues might result in the opportunity for some interesting qualitative analysis.
- 2) *Establishment of a **disability studies curriculum** at Memorial University and/or other post-secondary institutions in NL.* This would go a long way in addressing the current lack of education and awareness among workers, employers, and policy-makers in the province and the resulting inclusion-related challenges.
- 3) Future **opportunities to reconvene** and further the discussion. The simple act of bringing together stakeholders from different silos (researchers, advocates, injured/disabled workers, senior managers, and so on) is extremely helpful for gaining perspective on these issues and so it would be nice for this group to have an annually occurring meeting. Although there is no current allocation in the CRWDP budget for an annual event of this nature, there are potential alternative sources of funding that could be explored (such as funding through Memorial University's Office of Public Engagement, for example).

REFERENCE:

Statistics Canada (2012). Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012: A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry.