

Employment and Income Program Supports for People with Disabilities in Canada: Sharing promising practices

**Remarks to the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy
National Symposium on Informing the Roadmap for Work Disability Policy in Canada
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Our topic and questions

- *Employment programs and income security programs in Canada that support work integration and reintegration for individuals with disabilities*
- What promising trends are there internationally?
- How does Canada perform in relation to these innovative trends?
- What next for more open employment opportunities for Canadians with disabilities?

International Trends

1. Reforming *assessment processes* that focus more on capacities of people and their ability to work
2. Changing income benefits to improve *work incentives*: financial supports to employees and or employers; assist people with disabilities with work-related expenses
3. Expanding *vocational rehabilitation* and employment services to support job searches and job retention
4. Establishing *employer forums* that provide a link with government officials and disability agencies, and promote dialogue and action on more inclusive workplaces
5. Implementing *disability management*, sickness absence monitoring, and return-to-work plans

Canada: promising practices

- *Provincial social assistance:*
 - Specialized employment supports (e.g., job coaching, mobility devices)
 - Transportation assistance
 - Enhanced asset limits and earnings exemptions
 - Maintain medical assistance when enter workforce
 - Automatic reinstatement to disability assistance if needed
- *Work experience opportunities:*
 - Internship programs in computer technologies
 - After school work opportunities
 - Summer employment for students with disabilities
- *Employer incentives and supports:*
 - Wage subsidies
 - Employer advisory councils (e.g., Canadian Business SenseAbility)
 - Information and counseling services
 - Direct grants or corporate income tax deductions for structural adaptations and other accommodations in the workplace

Canada: ongoing challenges

- *Promising practices are pockets of innovation in particular programs and jurisdictions*
- *Modest investments in employment supports by Government of Canada*
 - Opportunities Fund
 - Enhancing Accessibility Fund
 - CPPD Vocational Rehabilitation Program
 - Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities
- *Absence of federal implementation plan and monitoring body for the UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities*
- *Unmet needs for assistive aids, technical devices, and job accommodations among those employed, and most of those with unmet needs do not ask employer for accommodations*

Roadmap for Action: 1

- ✓ Modernize income assistance programs for people with disabilities in Canadian provinces and territories, and investing further in supports for transition to employment, including those persons with partial work capacity
- ✓ Transform community service agencies from sheltered work to an employment first approach and to supported employment and social enterprises
- ✓ Develop work experience opportunities in all jurisdictions, especially for students and young adults
- ✓ Extend the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program offered by Western Economic Diversification Canada to other regions

Roadmap for Action: 2

- ✓ Consider introducing early diagnosis and intervention services within the Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit program and the CPP Disability program
- ✓ Examine more closely workplace cultures of reluctance and fear of many workers to disclose disabilities and request job accommodation
- ✓ Understand more openly the reasons behind the refusal by many employers to requests from employees with disabilities for accommodation
- ✓ Expand the array of employer incentive, services and supports to recognize costs of adaptations and accommodations

Thank you

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