

# Activity Report



## Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy

Improving Canadian work disability policy  
to help all people access employment

yesterday · today · tomorrow



[www.crwdp.ca](http://www.crwdp.ca)



2013-2014



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# Table of Contents

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1	A Message from the Co-Directors
3	The Canadian Work Disability Policy System
4	Overview of the Centre
5	CRWDP Governance
6	<a href="http://www.crwdp.ca">www.crwdp.ca</a>
7	Our Newsletter
8	Injured and Disabled Worker Stories
9	National Launch
10	Community Caucuses and Employer Round Tables
11	Student and New Researcher Activities and Profiles
14	Research Activities
16	Looking Forward
17	Profiles of Leaders and Administrators

## CRWDP in Numbers

53 Academics

52 Partners

7 Years of Funding

\$2.76M from SSHRC

\$3.16M from Partners

4 Provincial Clusters

10,000+ Newsletter Views

100+ Worker Video Views





**Emile Tompa**

Associate Professor,  
Department of Economics,  
McMaster University  
Senior Scientist,  
Institute for Work & Health



**Ellen MacEachen**

Associate Professor,  
School of Public Health,  
University of Waterloo  
Adjunct Scientist,  
Institute for Work & Health

## A Message from the Co-Directors

To those of you who are new to our initiative, we are pleased to introduce you to the Centre for Research for Work Disability Policy or CRWDP for short. To those of you who have been with us for some time, we are honoured to have this opportunity to update you on our activities. Our national partnership of academics and injured/disabled worker communities, disability program providers, policymakers, labour, employer groups, and other service providers has been working together for more than a year now to identify novel policy approaches to creating a more inclusive Canadian labour market—one that allows opportunities for meaningful access and sustained engagement when people face the challenge of illness, injury or disability. To stimulate much needed thinking and action, we have broken down silos and brought together a critical mass of talent from across Canada in a partnership that is spearheading

at the development of a roadmap for policy change. Hand in hand, across rich and varied knowledge bases, we are collaborating to build systematic research evidence on work disability policy.

This past year has been one of launches. In February, we held our nationally-coordinated launch at McMaster University where a number of 'champions', including Ontario Lt Governor David Onley, publicly heralded the need for our research and action on work disability policy. Other beginnings include our website and e-newsletter, both in accessible French and English formats. The Seed Grant program was launched to stimulate work disability policy research. Graduate student activities and funding were initiated to encourage accomplished young scholars to take up research on disability policy challenge. Not least, we have set up an administrative and governance infrastructure with an international advisory committee, a national head office in Toronto, and four regional offices across Canada where provincial leaders have been busy with academic-partner activities and mentorship of students. We have also held employer round tables, initiated a national worker caucus, and created a video series where workers speak for themselves about work disability problems and their vision for change. Various committees have been struck to keep these activities flowing and provide a structure for oversight.

The Centre's creation has been made possible with a seven-year grant awarded by the Canadian national government, through the highly competitive Partners Grant envelope of the Social Sciences Humanities and Research Council (SSHRC). We are grateful to SSHRC, as well as to McMaster University for hosting this research initiative, the Institute for Work & Health for providing generous head office support, and to all our 50+ partners who are provided in-kind and cash support. We are proud, and pleased that they see the importance of this initiative. Moreover, we thank our 50+ academics participants across Canada who have come on board to dedicated a part of their careers to collaborate on this important area of public and social policy.

We are just at the beginning. Looking forward, we will stimulate and coordinate research that lays the groundwork for a national, evidence-informed, coordinated approach to work disability policy. We will examine and document evidence from the existing knowledge base, conduct Canadian and international comparative studies of policy challenges and promising alternatives, and hone a critical mass of academics that will promote this new field of applied research. Working with partners, we will create capacity for engagement in research and strong avenues for knowledge mobilization. We will host national symposia, link up with international experts, and create a momentum that will ultimately help those for whom work disability systems were built: our neighbours, our families and ourselves.

We hope you will enjoy this activity report that profiles our activities and vision for the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy.

With sincere best wishes from the centre co-directors,



**Co-Director**



**Co-Director**



## The Canadian Work Disability Policy System

Work disability refers to the inability of individuals to fully engage in employment over the short- or long-term due to health or functional impairment, including cognitive, emotional and physical factors. Providing appropriate support for people, when disabled, is a core strategy for work disability prevention. The work disability policy system plays a critical role in support provision for labour-market engagement. By **work disability policy system** we refer to support programs such as social assistance, workers' compensation, and disability insurance that shapes income security and labour-market engagement for work-disabled individuals. We also include employers in the work disability policy system as they play an important role in shaping opportunities for work-disabled individuals and have specific obligations under some programs and legislations.

The Canadian work disability policy system is comprised of a variety of disability income support programs at the provincial/territorial and federal level that were developed to serve pockets of needs identified and framed independently. There are at least eight different programs, each with varying and sometimes conflicting eligibility criteria and definitions of disability. As a result, many have described the Canada work disability policy system as uncoordinated and siloed. It is well documented that many people seeking supports are shuffled between programs and can ultimately fall through the cracks.

Registered Disability Savings Plan

Veterans' benefits for disability compensation for victims of crimes

Provincial workers' compensation benefits

Canada/Quebec Pension Plan Disability

Employment Insurance

Sickness Benefit

Provincial social assistance disability benefits

Employment-based short-and long-term disability plans

Car insurance

Disability Tax Credit

# Overview of the Centre

## Who We Are

The Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) is a transdisciplinary initiative on the future of work disability policy in Canada.

## Human Rights Our Guiding Framework

We recognize the entitlement of all people in Canada, including those with disabilities, to have equal access to basic rights and fundamental freedoms, including employment and education.

## Our Objective

Illness and disability touch most people at some point over their lifetime. Our objective is to identify how people, when disabled, can be better retained and integrated into the Canadian labour market.

## Our Three Key Questions

1. How well does the Canadian disability policy system serve the current and emerging needs of working-age individuals, when disabled, in terms of employment support and opportunities?
2. For which individuals and in what labour-market contexts does our disability policy system work well/not work well and why?
3. What are the key opportunities for policy and program improvement in the short and long run?

## Our Primary Activities

- Providing a forum for within- and cross-provincial and national dialogue on challenges and opportunities for improving the Canadian work disability policy system
- Identifying relevant and favourable alternative approaches to system design and service provision through select comparisons with other countries and small scale trials
- Mobilizing knowledge developed within and outside of the initiative in order to inform policy
- Building capacity for research and knowledge mobilization on the topic of work disability policy and labour-market engagement of individuals with disabilities



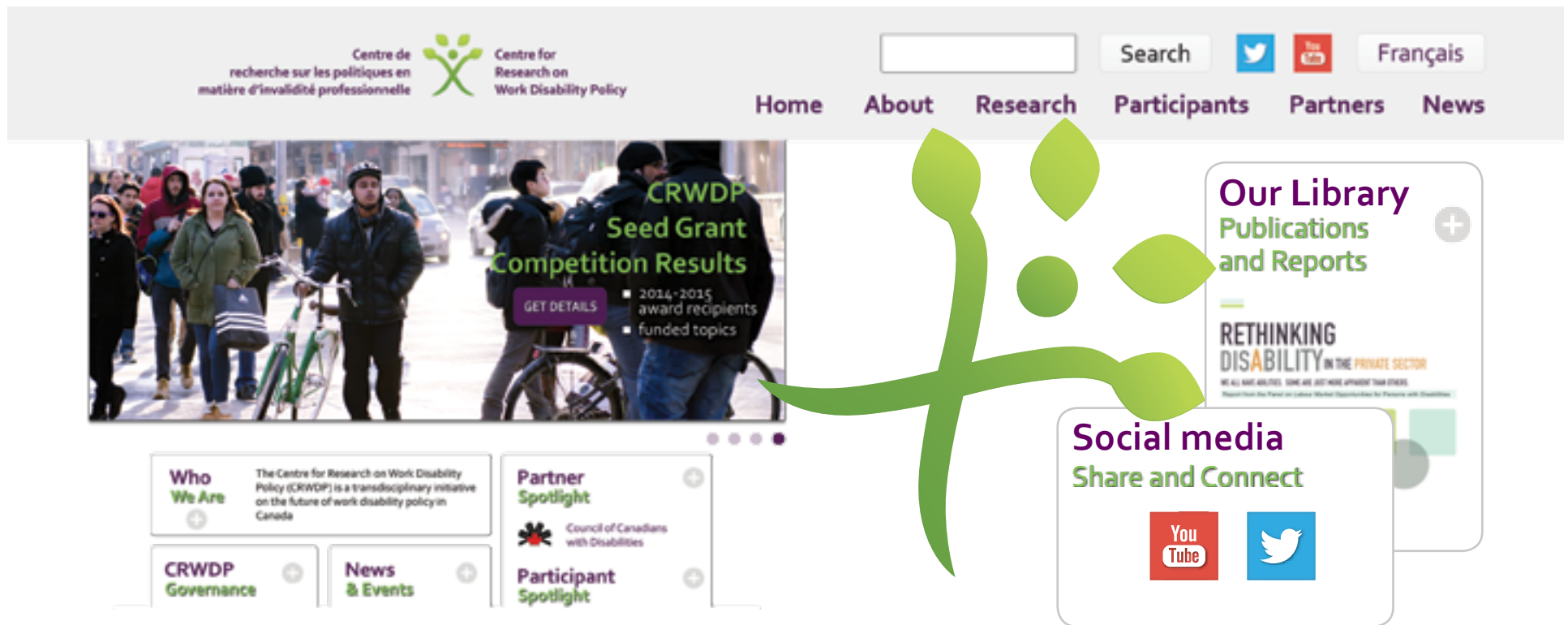
# CRWDP Governance

## An overview of how we are organized

CRWDP is governed by three primary committees—an **External Advisory Committee**, an **Executive Committee**, and an **Activities Oversight Committee**. The External Advisory Committee provides arm's length advice on the relevance and quality of initiative activities, including current portfolios and future directions. It also reviews the initiative's progress, timelines and target achievement in relation to the Centre's Strategic Plan. The mandate of the Executive Committee is to guide the use of initiative resources, ensure relevance and timeliness of initiative activities, and enable key Centre events such as national symposia. The mandate of the Activities Oversight Committee is to oversee and coordinate provincial and thematic research, communications/ knowledge mobilization, partner engagement, and capacity building activities. It is comprised of leads from the various activities components of the initiative. Focussed committees are also struck on an ad hoc basis to develop specific areas such as seed funding and student capacity building.







**[www.crwdp.ca](http://www.crwdp.ca)**

## **An accessible, multi-layered, bilingual website**

We are focusing on internet and social media as a key way to reach out to our broad and diverse audiences. The [www.crwdp.ca](http://www.crwdp.ca) website is the hub of our social media activities. The front page contains nuggets of core information such as “news & events,” “current tweets,” “partner spotlights,” and “research highlights.”

Layers include details on who we are, our research themes, our governance structure, profiles of partners and participants, a newsletter archive and a page dedicated to worker stories. New layers to be added in the autumn of 2014 include an interactive governance map, and a library archive. A “members” layer will also be added in fall 2014 that will allow academic and partner participants to sign into a secure area to discuss current issues, join groups within the initiative, and receive details on centre activities and events. Also in the works is an archive for webinars and podcasts.

# WORKING POLICY

## News, views and research from CRWDP

Available in both French and English, the CRWDP's e-newsletter is another way we are reaching out to our large and diverse audience. The first issue of the e-newsletter was released in January 2014, in time for our February national launch. It included profiles of one of our champions (Mike Bradley, Mayor of Sarnia), a partner (Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups), an academic participant (Normand Boucher from Université Laval), and a student fellow (Cameron Crawford, PhD Candidate from York University). In this issue, we also highlighted foundation elements of our initiative, including our three key research questions, our guiding framework of human rights, and what we mean by work disability policy.

The second issue of the e-newsletter, released in August 2014, went "viral." We had more than **8,600 visits** to the English version within one week of its release. This issue introduced accessibility features for screen readers through its Adobe InDesign platform. The issue also included hot links to the CRWDP website, and links to audio recordings of the keynote and partner presentations from our February launch.



Cover of 2<sup>nd</sup> e-newsletter



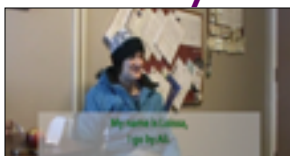
# Video Stories to Communicate Lived Experiences

## Injured and disabled worker stories

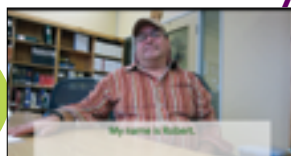
As part of our efforts to communicate to a broad audience the lived experiences of injured and disabled workers with the Canadian work disability policy system, we began a video story initiative in November 2013. The videos are short, two-to three-minute clips of workers talking about their experiences of work disability systems and programs. The video stories are available on our website and also on our YouTube channel. The video series was introduced at our National Launch in February 2014 by two community representatives, who sit on the CRWDP Executive Committee.

The first series of videos focused on experiences with seeking support from various disability support programs. A planned second series in 2014-2015 will include worker-employer experiences with employment.

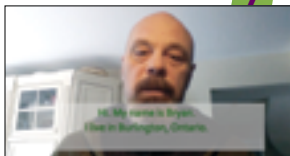
### Ali's Story



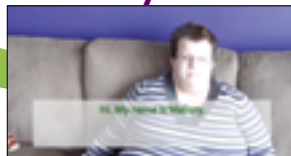
### Robert's Story



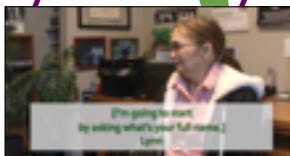
### Brian's Story



### Mallory's Story



### Lynn's Story



### Mario's Story



### Eugene's Story



Eugene was injured while working in the bush in northern Ontario. He has since had 14 surgeries on his knee. Eugene had initial income and rehabilitation support from workers' compensation. The support then ended and later was restored following his appeal. However, Eugene is now on social assistance benefits and unable to work.

# Our National Launch

## Opening the Centre with a splash

CRWDP's national launch was held at the McMaster Health Forum on February 4, 2014, with partners and participants from across the country linking in web-based teleconferencing. The launch included three renowned keynotes who spoke about the importance of promoting inclusion. The Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, gave the opening keynote at the event. The closing keynote was given by Mike Bradley, the Mayor of Sarnia and a longstanding advocate for accessibility. The launch event also included a keynote by the Honourable Mike Lake, a Member of Parliament for Edmonton–Mill Woods–Beaumont. MP Lake spoke about the importance of providing support for school to work transitions of youth and young adults with disabilities.

Also speaking at the launch were Charlotte Yates, Dean of Social Sciences at McMaster University; Cam Mustard, President of the Institute for Work & Health; and Brent Herbert-Copley, Vice-President of Research Capacity at the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. Steve Mantis, a member of CRWDP's Executive Committee and the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, presented a worker video story. Marie Ryan, also a member of CRWDP's Executive Committee and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, presented a second worker video story.

Concurrent with the launch we held a media release that had uptake by 30+ outlets in print and radio. Release of the first newsletter, launch of the website, and publication of several worker video stories preceded the national launch.



**CRWDP Launch:** From left, Dr. Patrick Deane, President and Vice-Chancellor of McMaster University; Dr. Ellen MacEachen, Co-director of CRWDP; Dr. Charlotte Yates, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, McMaster University; Mrs. Ruth Ann Onley; The Hon. David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario; Dr. Emile Tompa, Co-director of CRWDP; Dr. Brent Herbert-Copley, Vice-President, Research Capacity, Social Science and Humanities Research Council.

## Community Caucuses

### Ensuring a voice for injured and disabled workers

A Community Caucus is a place where people facing work disability can share experiences and lessons, and have a collective voice that can be heard within the CRWDP initiative. It is also a forum for two-way dissemination of research knowledge and engagement with other CRWDP partners and participants. Steve Mantis, an injured worker with over 30 years of experience as a community activists, is spearheading the Community Caucus initiative. The task involves building capacity in each cluster for hosting community causes. Over the next year a Community Caucus will be held in each cluster. Building capacity will involve identifying community leads in each cluster who are willing and able to take on the role of local champions for the caucus initiative. These champions will come from both the injured worker and disability communities. The task also involves developing a framework and a leader's manual that can be used by the local champions to execute a Community Caucus.

## Employer Round Tables

### From challenges to best practices

We held our first employer round table in June 2014. It was a focus group size meeting with employer representatives that explored ways to broaden our engagement with the employer community. Some of the questions discussed included: what are key problems that employers see with work disability policy and practice, what are the knowledge and support needs of employers, how do we document best practices, and what kinds of research projects would be of most benefit to employers? We also met with business community leaders in central Ontario to discuss labour-force development issues in that region. CRWDP plans to hold at least one round table every year in each cluster to inform attendees of our research progress and related activities, discuss next steps, and identify how our activities connect with their work.



Cover of report from the Federal Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, available on line at [www.esdc.gc.ca](http://www.esdc.gc.ca)





## Building Research Capacity

### Training and mentoring of new researchers

CRWDP has laid the foundations for a rich training and mentoring program for students, emerging scholars, and other highly qualified personnel. A student/post-doctoral training and mentoring committee was struck in the spring of 2014 to develop, oversee and review training and mentoring opportunities. The committee will undertake activities over the seven years of the initiative, with new training and mentoring objectives identified each year. In the first year we are focusing on promoting graduate stipend opportunities, hosting a student event on September 29 2014 at the Work Disability and Prevention and Integration Conference being held in Toronto, and recruiting the centre's first post-doctoral fellow.

Key opportunities funded by CRWDP include 70 graduate stipend years for masters and doctoral students, and four two-year postdoctoral positions. Other planned activities include student provincial caucuses, community based internships, student forums on our website, and curriculum development that includes a course on Canadian work disability policy.

# Student and New Researcher Profiles



**Sara Saunders** completed her PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences at McGill University. She is currently Associate Director of the Occupational Therapy program at McGill University where she also works as a faculty lecturer. Saunders is a CRWDP collaborator.



**Dustin Galer** completed his PhD in History at the University of Toronto. His research interests include the Canadian origins of the social model of disability, historical perspectives of brain injury, and disability, poverty and homelessness. Galer is a CRWDP collaborator.



**Edwin Ng** completed his PhD in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. He is currently an ACHIEVE post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Research on Inner City Health (CRICH), St. Michael's Hospital. CRICH is a CRWDP Partner Organization.



**Cameron Crawford** is a PhD candidate in Critical Disability Studies at York University. He is examining policies, programs and socio-demographic factors associated with successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities. He is supervised by Marcia Rioux.



**Margaret Oldfield** is a PhD candidate in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Her research examines how women with invisible, stigmatized conditions stay at work despite numerous challenges. She is supervised by Ellen MacEachen.



**Firat Sayin** is a PhD candidate in the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University. He is examining the population characteristics and labour-market conditions of persons with disabilities. He is supervised by Isik Zeytinoglu.



# Student and New Researcher Profiles



**Pam Lahey** is a PhD candidate in the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University. Lahey's research is on system level factors that enable workers with mental health conditions to secure and sustain quality employment. She is supervised by Rebecca Gewurtz and Emile Tompa.



**Francis Charrier** is a PhD candidate in the School of Social Work at Université Laval. His thesis is on the determinants of job retention for workers with disabilities aged 50 and over. He is supervised by Normand Boucher and Ysabel Provencher.



**Mary Catharine Breadner** is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Science at Simon Fraser University. Her current research focuses on disability prevention and holistic case management for healthcare workers. She is supervised by John Calvert.



**KJ (Karan Jeet) Chabra** is a MDM candidate in Digital Media at Ryerson University. KJ is CRWDP's Media Coordinator. He oversees website and video development, newsletter design and formatting, and assists with other media needs.



**Bronson Du** is a MSc candidate in the School of Public Health and Health Systems at the University of Waterloo. Du is working on a CRWDP scoping review led by Ellen MacEachen.



**Andrew Posen** is a MPH candidate in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Posen is currently working on a CRWDP environmental scan led by Emile Tompa.

# Supporting Research on Work Disability Policy

## Research Seed Grants

### Creating a relevant and contemporary evidence base

Seed grants are one of the ways we leverage our funds to create a strong and focused body of research in Canada and provide training opportunities for the next generation of work disability scholars. In the summer of 2014, we held the first of our three planned requests for proposals for seed grant funding of up to \$10,000. Proposals had to be led by a CRWDP participant or partner, required researchers and non-academic partners to work together, and emphasized the priority of hiring and training students as part of a project. This first call yielded 15 proposals from across Canada. Over the next few years, more than 20 seed grants will be funded.



## Partner Hot Topics

Partners' knowledge and experience of key work disability challenges and opportunities will guide planning of our research priorities. In 2014, partners were invited to provide ideas about pressing work disability policy topics. These "hot topics" are a key mechanism for us to identify priority funding areas for seed grants. The topics will also be posted on our website for uptake by researchers.

## Foundation Research Projects

We are currently undertaking two environmental scans of work disability policy. The first will summarize past Canadian policy efforts to coordinate supports provided by different programs. It will also include interviews with key informants involved in, or familiar with, these past policy efforts in order to determine their success. The second scan will summarise peer review literature on the 'grey zones' of work disability policy. By 'grey zones' we mean areas that are identified in research papers as not fully covered by policy, such as 'cracks' in coverage due to fractured, outdated or poorly planned state systems.

Looking forward, we will conduct four core studies: an international comparison of work disability policy conditions and challenges; an economic analysis of the social cost of labour-market exclusion of people with disabilities; case studies of complex program support cases; and impact analysis of legislation intended to support people with work disability.

## Seed Grant Projects

First call from spring/summer 2014

The Human Rights of  
Injured Workers: Social  
Protection Floors and the  
Canadian Work Disability  
System

Exploring the Experiences  
of Injured Workers Who  
Fail to Return to Work

La mesure de  
l'incapacité : un état  
des lieux

Willing but Unable:  
A Population in Waiting

People with Episodic  
Disabilities: Who are They and  
What Supports Do They Need  
to Obtain and Retain  
Employment?

Disability Support Services in  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
and Canada: Impact on Labour  
Market Participation for  
Individuals with Disabilities

L'utilisation des TIC pour  
soutenir l'accès à l'emploi des  
adolescents handicapés ou en  
difficultés d'apprentissage  
ou d'adaptation (HDAA)



# Looking Forward

## Planned activities for the short-, mid- and long-term

1

We have started several activities and have plans for others to begin soon. Our activities include: seed grants, graduate student funding, post-doctoral awards, internship and training programs, national studies, employer round tables, worker caucuses, partner-participant provincial meetings, national symposia, and an international conference.

3

We will create an applied research base and develop an evidence-based roadmap for work disability policy change. We aim for policy change leading to income security and labour-market engagement for all people who can and want to work.



2

These activities will lead to increased graduate training in work disability policy, new work disability policy research by established researchers, strategic alliances between researchers and partners, and a level of momentum and activity that leads to increased recognition of our research centre.

# Profiles of Leaders and Administrators

## Executive Committee



**Patrick Loisel**  
Director, Work  
Disability Prevention  
CIHR Strategic  
Training Program



**Steve Mantis**  
Recording Secretary,  
Ontario Network of  
Injured Workers  
Groups



**Marie Ryan**  
Partner, Goss-Gilroy  
Incorporated



**Alex Collie**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Institute for Safety,  
Compensation and  
Recovery Research



**Kerstin Ekberg**  
Professor,  
Department of  
Medical and Health  
Sciences, Linköping  
University



**Michael Feuerstein**  
Editor in Chief, Journal  
of Occupational  
Rehabilitation, Journal  
of Cancer Survivorship

## Communications and Administration



**Cindy Moser**  
Communications  
Manager



**Mai Elramly**  
National Manager



**Karan Jeet Chabra**  
Media Coordinator



**Natasha Altin**  
Ontario Cluster Coordinator



**François Weldon**  
Director General,  
Policy Research  
Directorate,  
Employment and  
Social Development  
Canada



**Margaret Whitehead**  
Professor, Institute of  
Psychology, Health  
and Society,  
University of Liverpool



**Denyse Lamothe**  
Québec Cluster  
Coordinator



**Chrissy Vincent**  
Newfoundland  
Cluster Coordinator



**Mary Catharine  
Breadner**  
British Columbia Cluster  
Coordinator

# Profiles of Leaders and Administrators

## Thematic and Cluster Leads



**Alec Farquhar**  
Engagement  
Committee Lead;  
Director, Office of the  
Worker Adviser



**Ron Saunders**  
Communications and  
Knowledge  
Mobilization Lead;  
Director, Knowledge  
Transfer and  
Exchange, Institute  
for Work & Health



**Normand Boucher**  
Law, Policy and  
Program Analysis  
Theme Lead;  
Associate Professor,  
School of Social  
Services,  
Université Laval



**Geneviève Baril-Gingras**  
Labour-market  
Analysis Theme Lead;  
Professor,  
Department of  
Industrial Relations,  
Université Laval



**Mieke Koehoorn**  
Population Analysis  
Theme Lead; British  
Columbia Cluster  
Co-Lead; Professor,  
School of Population  
and Public Health,  
University of British  
Columbia



**John Calvert**  
British Columbia  
Cluster Co-Lead;  
Professor,  
Faculty of Health  
Sciences,  
Simon Fraser  
University



**Marcia Rioux**  
Ontario Cluster Co-  
Lead; Professor,  
School of Health  
Policy and  
Management, York  
University



**Linn Holness**  
Ontario Cluster Co-  
Lead; Director,  
Centre for Research  
Expertise in  
Occupational  
Disease,  
St. Michael's Hospital



**Ysabel Provencher**  
Québec Cluster Co-  
Lead; Professor,  
School of Social  
Services, Université  
Laval



**Marie-José Durand**  
Québec Cluster  
Co-Lead; Director,  
Centre d'action en  
prévention et en  
réadaptation de  
l'incapacité au  
travail, Université de  
Sherbrooke



**Barb Neis**  
Newfoundland  
Cluster Co-Lead; Co-  
Director, SafetyNet  
Centre for  
Occupational Health  
and Safety Research,  
Memorial University



**Stephen Bornstein**  
Newfoundland  
Cluster Co-Lead;  
Co-Director, SafetyNet  
Centre for  
Occupational Health  
and Safety Research,  
Memorial University







Photos from the National Launch on February 4, 2014



Design & Production: Emile Tompa  
Content: Emile Tompa, Ellen MacEachen, and Mai Elramly  
Graphics & Layout: Karan Jeet Chabra