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Partner Hot Research Topics

CRWDP Partners are being asked to identify what they see as key work disability policy knowledge gaps. These "hot topics" will be made available on the CRWDP website. Stay tuned.

Lt. Gov. David Onley's Keynote Speech at the CRWDP National Launch Takes on Myths About People with Disabilities



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 Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

An attitudinal barrier still prevents people with disabilities (PWDs) from being gainfully employed and thus achieving their full potential to contribute to society. This was the message of the Honourable Lt. Gov. David Onley, the keynote speaker at the official launch of the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP). The launch took place on February 4 at McMaster University in Hamilton.

"This barrier is an ethical one that manifests itself in the attitudes of employers who, despite study after study and case example after case example, will not look beyond a person's disability when it pertains to hiring people with disabilities," said Onley, as he expressed his support for CRWDP.



Lt. Gov. David Onley's Keynote Speech (continued from previous page)

The Centre hopes to address the high unemployment rates of people with disabilities by exploring how current work disability policy in Canada can be improved to help PWDs find, return to and sustain work.

People with disabilities represent about 15.5 per cent of Ontario's population (similar percentages apply across the country), making PWDs the largest single minority group in the province. "It is also the only minority group that any single person can join at any time, through illness or accident, a visit to the doctor or, quite simply, getting older," Onley said.

This minority group faces challenges in the labour market. According to Statistics Canada's Canadian Survey on Disability, about 46 per cent of working-age Canadians with disabilities are employed, compared to approximately 80 per cent of working-age Canadians without a disability. "For people with disabilities, this is not a Great Depression; it is a perpetual depression," Onley said.

According to Onley, companies don't hire PWDs because they believe a number of myths: namely, that PWDs have higher absenteeism and lower job retention rates, and that they come with high accommodation costs. Yet Onley pointed to three recent studies—a 2009 Compas survey, a 2010 Deloitte white paper and a 2013 federal report titled, *Rethinking disABILITY in the private sector*—that all show the opposite: hiring PWDs is good for business.

"If you hire someone with a disability, you will probably be admired by your family, be recognized by some social group that gives you an award ..., all sorts of positive things like that," Onley said. "But none of these are reasons to hire someone with a disability. The reason to hire is the same reason Kevin O'Leary [of Dragons' Den fame] would hire, and that is to make money. People with disabilities increase productivity."

How? According to the studies cited by Onley, PWDs have, on the whole, lower absenteeism rates and higher job retention rates. Their peers find working alongside disabled colleagues to be a rewarding experience, leading to happier, more productive workforces. And a better understanding of the disability community is good for business, given that 53 per cent of the population (in Ontario) either has a disability or an immediate family member with a disability.

Hiring PWDs also benefits society, Onley said. "Everyone benefits when PWDs are not reliant on government assistance but, rather, become something we should all be proud to be—taxpayers."

Onley is glad to see the Centre recognizes that more than research evidence is needed to achieve social change, and that people in positions of authority and leadership are also needed to speak up. "That is the challenge that I suggest we all need to take away," he said. "It's my hope that seven years from now [at the end of the Centre's SSHRC funded mandate], you will be able to, in effect, shut down for one simple reason: you have fully succeeded."

For more details on CRWDP's launch, check out the Centre's website: www.crwdp.ca.

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CRWDP National Launch

Speaking out at the National Launch to promote inclusion

CRWDP's national launch, held at the McMaster Health Forum on February 4, 2014, had three renowned speakers talk about the importance of promoting inclusion. The Honourable **David C. Onley**, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, gave the opening keynote at the event (see the cover story and champion profile in this issue). The closing keynote was given by **Mike Bradley**, the Mayor of Sarnia and a longstanding advocate for accessibility (see our champion profile in our first e-newsletter issue). 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. He presented a video of his son Jaden Lake, who has autism, that featured Jaden's performance in a play put on by his highschool. The video can be seen at <http://crwdp.ca/bye-bye-birdie>. These keynotes and other presentations from the launch can be found at <http://crwdp.ca/en/launch-presentations>.



The Hon. David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, giving his opening keynote at the launch.



Mike Bradley, Mayor of Sarnia, giving his closing keynote at the launch.



Mike Lake, Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Mill Woods-Beaumont, speaking at the launch.

Employer Round Table

CRWDP is organizing employer round tables to learn about opportunities and barriers to employing people with disability. Through these discussions, the Centre will identify the key challenges and knowledge needs of employers, gather support for the development of joint labour-employer best practice guidelines, and discuss policy alternatives. For more information or to get involved contact CRWDP's National Manager, Mai Elramly, at nationalmanager@crwdp.ca.



Champion Profile

Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

The Honourable David C. Onley was appointed Ontario's 28th Lieutenant Governor following a distinguished career as a broadcaster. His Honour has championed disability issues for many years and served as Chair of the Government of Ontario's Accessibility Standards Advisory Council and was an accessibility council member for the Rogers Centre and the Air Canada Centre. As the first Ontario Lieutenant Governor with a physical disability, Mr. Onley has adopted 'accessibility' as the overarching theme of his mandate. He has defined 'accessibility' as that which enables people to achieve their full potential, and believes that true Accessibility occurs when disabled people can fully participate in the social, cultural and economic life. Because Accessibility includes equal access to opportunities like education, Mr. Onley expanded the Aboriginal Youth Literacy Programs to include computer literacy initiatives. Mr. Onley was born in Midland, Ontario, grew up in Scarborough and was inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame and the Scarborough Walk of Fame. The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario is the Colonel of the Regiment, Queen's York Rangers, and also the Honorary Colonel of 25 Field Ambulance. Mr. Onley is the recipient of the Rick Hansen Award of Excellence, the Courage to Come Back Award, and holds eleven honorary degrees. CRWDP is pleased to have had Mr. Onley give the opening keynote at the National Launch, and serve as a CRWDP champion.



The Hon. David C. Onley,
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Photo Credit: Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Community Caucuses

CRWDP is planning to host community caucuses in each of the provincial clusters this fall. These town hall meetings will bring together people with disabilities, community organizations and other interested parties to discuss how the Canadian disability policy system can better support the active engagement of people with disabilities in the labour market. Please spread the word. Anyone interested in knowing more or getting involved can contact one of our four regional offices – British Columbia BCcoordinator@crwdp.ca, Ontario ONcoordinator@crwdp.ca, Québec QCcoordinator@crwdp.ca, and Newfoundland and Labrador NLcoordinator@crwdp.ca.

Work Disability Prevention and Integration

Conference and CRWDP Student Forum to be held in Toronto

The 3rd Work Disability Prevention and Integration (WDPI) Conference: Implementing Work Disability Prevention Knowledge is taking place in Toronto this fall, from September 29th to October 1st. The biennial conference is an international forum for research and knowledge implementation related to work disability across all causes of work incapacity. The conference is being organized by **Dr. Patrick Loisel**, who serves on the CRWDP Executive Committee and is the Program Director of the Work Disability Prevention CIHR Strategic Training Program. The co-organiser is **Dr. Glen Pransky**, Director of the Center for Disability Research at the Liberty Mutual Research Institute. Several CRWDP academics will be presenting their recent research studies at the conference. For more details check out the conference website at <http://crwdp.ca/wdpi2014>.

CRWDP is hosting a Student Forum at the conference on the afternoon of Monday September 29th. The event is an opportunity for new academics to learn more about the Centre and the opportunities it has to offer students. For details about the **CRWDP Student Forum** check out our website www.crwdp.ca or email us at crwdp@iwh.on.ca.

Partner Profile

Confederation of Québec Disability Organizations (COPHAN)



The Confederation of Québec Disability Organizations (COPHAN), a non-profit organization incorporated in 1985, aims to make Québec inclusive to ensure full social participation of persons with disabilities and their families. It brings together 54

provincial and regional organizations for people with disabilities and represents all functional limitations and disabilities: functional and/or mobility impairments, physical and neurological conditions, developmental, visual and hearing impairments, learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, autism spectrum disorders and mental health conditions.

COPHAN relies on the expertise of people with disabilities and their families so that their recommendations can inform policy decisions at the federal and provincial level, in the broad field of social policy. COPHAN's positions are based on the belief that defines "the context of disability" as the result of the interaction between personal factors (e.g., the type of disability or impairment) and environmental factors (e.g., barriers to inclusion); hence, the importance of having a universally accessible environment to enable the full participation of all individuals in society.



Student Fellow Profile

Margaret Oldfield, University of Toronto



Margaret Oldfield is a PhD Candidate in the Graduate Department of Rehabilitation Science at the University of Toronto. Her research examines how women with fibromyalgia stay at work despite numerous challenges. The research draws on the perspectives of women with chronic illnesses, their family members, and their workplace supervisors and co-workers. Although work-disability literature recommends that employees with disabilities disclose their need for accommodations early, initial data analysis indicates that women in Margaret's study used other strategies to stay at work. Further analysis may explore how the women deflected moral judgement in the workplace, particularly disbelief about invisible impairments and stereotypes about chronically ill employees.

One of Ms. Oldfield's most recent publications is a chapter entitled, "Portrayals of fibromyalgia and paid work: Too sick to work?," in *Working Bodies: Chronic Illness in the Canadian Workplace*, published in May 2014. This is the first Canadian anthology on chronic illness and work. See our **Research Highlights** in this issue for details.

Academic Profile

Mieke Koehoorn, University of British Columbia



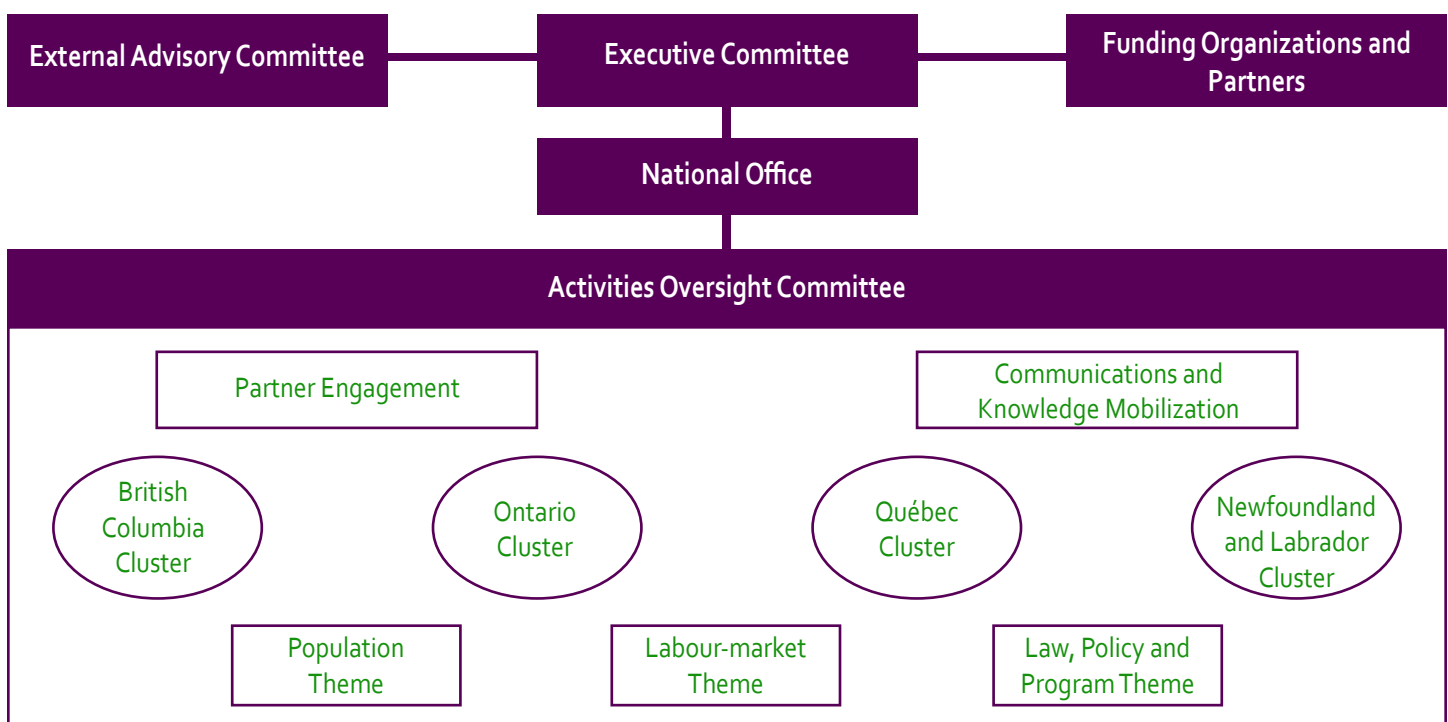
Dr. Mieke Koehoorn is a professor in the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. She also holds a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Chair in Gender, Work and Health. Within CRWDP Mieke serves as provincial co-lead of the British Columbia cluster, and also leads the population analysis theme, one of the Centre's three overarching themes. She comments, "I joined CRDWP because I saw the potential to make a real difference in work disability policy in Canada. Supporting people with disabilities to (re)enter or stay in the workforce in the longer-term would translate into a workforce that reflected the abilities of all Canadians. This is important for policy to promote." Mieke's research focuses on current and emerging issues in

occupational health. She has a special interest in developing and linking data to enable cutting-edge research on occupational epidemiology. She is involved in research projects investigating sex, gender, work injury, and workers' compensation; surveillance and compensation of occupational diseases; the evaluation of workers' compensation policies and programs; and the epidemiology of occupational disease and injury.

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. It currently has five members each from different countries, four who are distinguished researchers and one a distinguished policy maker. The mandate of the Executive Committee is to oversee the initiative budget, ensure relevance and timeliness of initiative activities, and enable key Centre events such as national symposia. It has five members—the two centre co-directors, a representative from each of the injured worker and disability communities, and an academic representative. 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. These include four provincial clusters (British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador), three cross cutting Thematic Groups, a Partner Engagement Team and a Communications and Knowledge Mobilization Team. Focussed committees are also struck on an ad hoc basis to develop specific areas. Currently there is a Seed Funding Committee working on CRWDP seed grant funding calls, and a Student Capacity Building Committee focused on creating opportunities for students to engage in Centre activities. Below is a schema of our governance structure. For bios on the individuals involved in CRWDP governance, see the website page www.crwdp.ca/governance.





Research Highlights

Recent publications by our researchers

Cooke GB, Donaghey J, & Zeytinoglu IU. 2013. The nuanced nature of work quality: Evidence from rural Newfoundland and Ireland. *Human Relations*, 66(4), 503-527. <http://crwdp.ca/Cooke-et-al-2013>

This article is about perceptions of job quality and how they can change for people across different life stages and circumstances—ideas that could readily be applied to disability.

Torjman S. Disability Policy Highlights. 7 February 2014, Chestnut Hotel. Toronto: Caledon Institute of Social Policy, April 2014. <http://crwdp.ca/Torjman-2014>

This report is the text of a speech delivered at an Ontario Cluster meeting of CRWDP. The report presents an overview of disability policy highlights from 2006 to the present. It traces major developments in legislative, program and data/research areas, including the creation of the Registered Disability Savings Plan, Opportunities Fund, Enabling Accessibility Fund and post-secondary education grants. It also discusses the various federal-provincial/territorial labour market agreements designed to help enhance the employability of Canadians with disabilities.

Oldfield M. 2014. Portrayals of fibromyalgia and paid work: Too sick to work? In S.D. Stone, V.A. Crooks & M. Owen (Eds.), *Working bodies: Chronic illness in the Canadian workplace (1-31)*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press. <http://crwdp.ca/Oldfield-2014>

This chapter is one of several essays compiled into a publication edited by Stone, Crooks and Owen. While significant research has been produced in the field of disability studies, little attention has been paid to experiences of chronic illness. *Working Bodies* emphasizes the workplace as an important site for understanding such experiences, as employment status has an enormous impact on social and economic standing. The essays in this collection examine the perspectives of both workers and employers, painting a picture of the challenges that people with chronic illness face in an already demanding labour market. The focus on the Canadian workplace allows for an in-depth understanding of this context and for comparisons between populations and across workplace environments.

Heymann J, Ashley Stein M, & Moreno G. 2014. *Disability and Equity at Work*. Oxford University Press, USA. 464 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-998121-2. <http://crwdp.ca/Heymann-et-al-2014>

Employment rates of people with disabilities continue to be very low in comparison to their able bodied counterparts in developed countries, and they are even lower in developing countries. This is the case even though human rights and equal opportunity have been promoted internationally for decades and many countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Canada. In this book **Dr. Jody Heymann**, along with two co-authors, provides policy recommendations for different contexts, such as countries with different income levels, and for individuals at different stages in their work life. The book focuses on feasible solutions and discusses the roles of different actors in the disability policy system.

Regional Activities

News from our clusters across Canada

CRWDP has academic and partner participants actively involved in the initiative from across the country. In particular, there are critical masses in four provinces, which are supported by a part-time coordinator and provincial co-leads. This new feature of the CRWDP newsletter provides updates on the current activities within these clusters.

British Columbia cluster update

The British Columbia cluster co-leads, **Dr. Mieke Koehoorn** and **Dr. John Calvert**, are currently re-connecting with partners who supported the grant application and are reaching out to new candidate partners. The leads are dedicated to learning and listening to partners and other stakeholders. The group wants to identify issues and concerns that workers and organizations are facing across the province. Once the priority issues are identified, they plan to develop a provincial research strategy. Early findings have indicated that the system in BC is fragmented and difficult to navigate. Consequently, many people with disabilities are not well served. The fragmentation of the support network has been a major concern for stakeholders. They are also concerned about how to develop processes so the currently under-resourced system can function more effectively. The BC cluster will continue to meet with partners and stakeholders over the summer and into the early fall. It aims to develop a research agenda that is not only feasible for the cluster but also one that addresses the knowledge gaps identified by partners. In addition, it will undertake capacity building initiatives to strengthen the network of stakeholders from around the province. Students, academics, and organizations interested in participating in the activities of this cluster should contact the provincial co-ordinator **Mary Catherine Breadner** at **BCcoordinator@crwdp.ca**.

Ontario cluster update

The Ontario Cluster co-leads are **Dr. Marcia Rioux** and **Dr. Linn Holness**. The cluster hosted its first meeting in February of this year. The meeting convened over 30 investigators, system actors, community partners and employers who gathered together for a half-day session to discuss how people, when disabled, can be better retained and integrated into the Canadian labour market. **Sherri Torjman**, Vice-President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, gave an opening talk on **Research Highlights**. Discussions at the meeting were organized around three major themes: population analysis; labour-market analysis; and law, policy and program analysis. The group agreed that Ontario cluster research would be focused on informing practical applications at the level of law, policy, programming, employer practices and pedagogy. It is planning to hold a second cluster meeting in the fall of 2014. Interested students, academics, and organizations are welcome to attend. Contact the cluster co-ordinator **Natasha Altin** at **ONcoordinator@crwdp.ca** to get involved.



Regional Activities (continued from previous page)

Québec cluster update



A recent Québec cluster meeting. Standing, from left: Geneviève Baril-Gingras, Université Laval; Ysabel Provencher, Université Laval; Jean Bernier, Université Laval; Sylvain Lacroix, RASST; Marie Laberge, Université de Montréal & CHU Sainte-Justine; Mario Paquet, RASST; Denyse Lamonthe, Québec Cluster Coordinator. Seated, from left: Olivier Collomb D'Eyrames, CPHAN; Normand Boucher, Université Laval & CIRRI.

The Québec cluster co-leads are **Dr. Ysabel Provencher** and **Dr. Marie-José Durand**. Following the CRWDP launch in February, the cluster held its first meeting in March. It was an opportunity for academic participants and partner representatives to get to know each other and to meet the national office group, who joined the meeting via teleconferencing. After a brief introduction about CRWDP, **Dr. Normand Boucher** presented examples of relevant research topics in order to stimulate discussion. Following this exercise, Ysabel Provencher encouraged participants and partners to identify themes that would be relevant to CRWDP and particu-

larly to the Québec cluster. Preliminary themes were developed at this first meeting. To further develop these themes, a survey was administered in April to cluster academics and partners to canvas them about their research interests in relation to the five themes. A second cluster meeting was held in June, following the announced seed grant funding call from the national office. At this meeting, the themes identified at the first meeting and through the survey were displayed on a board. Each academic participant and partner representative was asked to write a research topic they felt was important on a post-it note and place it under the appropriate theme on the board. The exercise brought together academics and partners around common themes. As a result, the Québec Cluster planned to submit several grant applications to the seed grant call. In addition, other themes have been identified for the next round of funding. Overall, engagement in the Québec cluster remains unabated and all are eager to get underway with research on critical issues in work disability policy. A new partner, the Coalition of Social Assistance and Welfare of Témiscouata (RASST), has been actively involved in cluster meetings since March and will be formally joining the initiative. To get involved with the Québec cluster, contact the QC coordinator **Denyse Lamothe** at QCcoordinator@crwdp.ca.

Regional Activities (continued from previous page)

Newfoundland and Labrador cluster update

The Newfoundland and Labrador cluster, whose co-leads are **Dr. Barbara Neis** and **Dr. Stephen Bornstein**, held its second meeting in May. At that meeting the group arrived at a consensus on the top five priority research themes for the cluster: 1) mental health issues among military, ex-military, police, corrections, and security personnel; 2) strategies and approaches used by employers in relation to hiring people with disabilities; 3) social selection processes affecting the educational and career paths of people with disabilities; 4) policies governing income security systems and their effects on employment status for people with disabilities; and 5) economic impacts arising from the non-employment and under-employment of people with disabilities. The group is eager to develop a roster of research projects under these themes over the next several years. The cluster recently welcomed a new partner—the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador (COD-NL). The COD-NL is an advocacy organization that promotes the rights of individuals with disabilities. Its principal role is information, education, and awareness. COD-NL is being represented by Kelly White (Executive Director) and Kim White (Manager of Strategic Initiatives). A new academic co-investigator has also been added, **Dr. Rose Ricciardelli**, who is a faculty member in the sociology department at Memorial University. Her current research program explores experiences within the criminal justice system, and includes a focus on risk perceptions and coping strategies among corrections officers. Students, academics, and organizations interested in participating in the activities of this cluster should contact the provincial co-ordinator **Chrissy Vincent** at NLcoordinator@crwdp.ca.

Bancroft Speakers Series

Bancroft Institute for Studies on Workers' Compensation and Work Injury is an initiative associated with CRWDP. Based in Toronto, Bancroft is a collaborative of injured workers, advocates and academics. Its goals are to address the needs and concerns of injured workers in Ontario and across Canada through community-engaged research activities, and to promote education and research on workers' compensation and injured worker experiences. One of Bancroft's main events is a speaker series held several times a year. In 2013, two sessions were held. The first had a keynote by John Stapleton, Scholar and Innovations Fellow at the Metcalf Foundation, who is also a CRWDP collaborator. Stapleton spoke about how social assistance disability income expenditures have recently been growing faster in absolute terms, but also in terms of their overall share of disability expenditures in many Canadian provinces. The second session had a keynote by Dr. Ron Ellis, an administrative law lawyer, teacher, academic, and arbitrator. Ellis spoke about the issues presented in his recently published book *Unjust by Design – Canada's Administrative Justice System* (UBC Press, 2013). This fall, another speaker series session is planned. The keynote is Dr. Iggy Kosny, who will speak about work injury and mental health. For more information on the speaker series contact the Bancroft Institute at BancroftInstitute@gmail.com.



We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all our academic participants.