



# Atlantic Dialogue on Moving Forward Together:

A pan-Canadian strategy for disability and work

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

## Summary Report

A summary of the key points and resources noted in presentations and discussions during the *Atlantic dialogue on moving forward together: A pan-Canadian strategy for disability and work*, October 28, 2020.

## Resources

**Video recording** of the *Atlantic dialogue on moving forward together* event:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnXt55jSKuQ&feature=youtu.be>

**The Pan Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work:**

[https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/dwc\\_strategy\\_-\\_moving\\_forward\\_together.pdf](https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/dwc_strategy_-_moving_forward_together.pdf)

**2020 Strategy in Action—Pathways and Impacts DWC National Conference** (November 25 & 26 and December 1 & 2, 2020)

<http://www.crwdp.ca/en/annual-conference-2020-disability-and-work-canada>

# Summary of Presentations

## Opening Remarks

### **Emile Tompa**

Director, Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP)

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

The Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) was designed to carry out research that could be used to help improve Canadian work disability policy in order to enhance access to employment and income security for all citizens.

#### CRWDP mandate

- Bring together various stakeholders in the Canadian work disability policy system, including employers
- Identify problems and challenges associated with program coordination and complexity
- Facilitate dialogue, problem identification, and policy action
- Support multiple transdisciplinary research projects, including international comparative work
- Build capacity for research on work disability policy
- Build capacity for active partner engagement in research and knowledge mobilization on work disability policy challenges
- Build consensus on a roadmap for work disability policy change

#### The Disability and Work in Canada Initiative (DWC)

- independent initiative that spearheads strategy development and implementation, an annual federal-provincial policy roundtable, and annual stakeholder conference

#### Over the last 7-years, CRWDP has:

- Contributed to the CSA Z1011:20 Work Disability Management System Standard
- Built substantial capacity for partnered research and knowledge mobilization
- Funded seed grants and other projects
- Spawned spin-off projects

- Undertaken a large study for Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) on the cost of exclusion - an untapped potential of \$338B (18% of GDP) identify(ing) future initiatives.

## Statement of Support

**Hon. Arlene Dunn**, Government of New Brunswick  
 Minister of Aboriginal Affairs  
 Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business  
 Minister responsible for Opportunities New Brunswick  
 Minister responsible for Immigration

## How can we use this challenging time to make breakthroughs on disability and employment?

### Alec Farquhar

Chair, Engagement  
 Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy

Background: the Disability and Work Canada Strategy

- A recent, important initiative to coordinate efforts to reduce barriers to inclusion and employment and provide a framework for collaboration and increased impact.
- Began in 2017 as a small coalition of [Inclusion NL](#), the [Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups](#), [Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy](#), [Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work](#), and the [Ontario Office of the Worker Adviser](#).
- Draft *DWC Strategy* launched December, 2019 with significant support from across Canada by persons with disabilities, governments, especially the Federal Government, labour, employers, disability organizations, and researchers.

Current challenges for *real* progress on the employment of persons with disabilities:

- COVID-19 is having far-reaching impacts on realities for persons with disabilities and the overall context for employment
  - DWC partner organizations have had to re-orient their efforts to respond to the impact of COVID19
  - persons with disabilities not only face setbacks without sufficient supports but may also be left behind again in the recovery.

How can we meet challenges and move forward together?

- How can we use this moment when Canadians realize that “we’re all in this together” includes persons with disabilities?
- This requires strategic thinking and collective action

Opportunities:

- The [Speech from the Throne](#), September 23, 2020  
 “COVID-19 has disproportionately affected Canadians with disabilities, and highlighted long-standing challenges. The Government will bring forward a Disability Inclusion Plan, which will have:
  - a new Canadian Disability Benefit modelled after the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors;
  - a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities;
  - and a better process to determine eligibility for Government disability programs and benefits.
- ensure a disability lens within the extraordinary collaborations in civil society in response to COVID19
- imagine disability policy within new visions and thinking
- connect with new players and partners including new workplaces which could benefit persons with disabilities (PWD)
- engage new economic sectors
- factor the costs of exclusion and the benefits of inclusion into understanding of new economic realities.

## **Facilitating dialogue: Atlantic Canada Snapshot on inclusive employment**

Kathy Hawkins, Manager, InclusionNL

*Note: Discussions were not recorded . What follows is a summary of key points discussed, organized by theme (not necessarily in the order in which they were discussed)*

What are some examples of successful initiatives and support networks?

- Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)
  - [Welcome to Finance: The Toolkit](#) A toolkit presenting the results from the CCRW Financial Sector Survey, recommendations,

strategies, and best practices that community agencies can use to support jobseekers with disabilities through the hiring stages.

- [Premier's Council on Persons with Disabilities](#), New Brunswick
  - [Comprehensive Disability Action Plan for Persons with a Disability](#) (July 2020) identifies the need for:
    - systemic responses to equal access to equal opportunity;
    - public engagement on new provincial accessibility legislation;
    - not just focused on the built environment, but also on education, employment, technology, transportation, supports, poverty reduction.
- Identify, support, highlight achievements and successes of specific disability supportive employers such as Tim Horton's
  - unfortunately, support often leaves when workplace champion leaves
- Goal is to better support business to become *disability competent*
  - inclusive *and* accessible
    - workplace design only one aspect
  - build on Alec Farquhar's theme of opportunities
    - develop language that businesses understand (profit, cost, incentive) and tools they can employ – especially in terms of the [Canadian Accessibility Act](#)
    - highlighting cost effectiveness and tapping into underutilized and important resources
    - invest in concepts of PWD as *employees* and *customers*
  - identify new, and strengthen existing, partnerships between community and business;
  - continue to identify and support workplace champions
- Funding, funding, funding ... The DWC Strategy needs to include recommendations for sustained funding for training that is accessible to all;
  - there is a lack of adequate funding for ASL interpreters and other supports in workplaces

## **With thanks**

The organizers gratefully acknowledge the support of the participants, the contributions of the speakers, the service of the event's ASL interpreters, and the assistance of Mandy Penney and Laura George of InclusionNL.