Working Together on Employment

People with Disabilities, Labour Markets, Public Policies, and Canadian Federalism

Michael J. Prince
Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy
University of Victoria

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Disabilities, employment and health

- Employment as:
  - a sign of inclusion or belonging
  - financial support if not security
  - providing structure, self-esteem, identity
  - independence from welfare, charity
  - entrée to other work-related benefits (e.g., LTD)
  - access to professional networks and friendships (informal social and economic support)
  - eligibility for social insurance programs
  - contributing to quality of life and well-being
The federal condition of our body politic

- Disability and employment in relation to our body politic
- Public policies on supporting the active participation of people with disabilities in the labour force
- The role and influence of the institutions of federalism and intergovernmental relations on policies, labour markets and people with disabilities
Outline

- Diagnostique of people with disabilities and the Canadian labour market
- Research lessons and gaps in knowing what is, why, and what works
- Brief history of Canadian employment programs for persons with disabilities
- Vision for reforms and reform ideas
- Concluding thoughts
Diagnostique: current situation

- In 2006, there were 2.4 million Canadians with a physical or mental disability in the working-age population of 15 to 64 years of age
- Employment figure for persons with any disability in Canada was 46.5% compared to 75.5% for people with no disability
- Employment rate varies by types of impairments. In 2006, the employment rate for persons with a developmental or intellectual disability was 25.5%
- Where working, people with any disability have earnings of about 70% of those for people without disabilities
Diagnostique: 2

- In 2005, the median earnings for people with disabilities were $18,521 compared to median earnings of $27,496 for people without disabilities.
- Canadians with disabilities are twice as likely to be living in poverty - that is, below the after-tax low-income cut-off line - than are non-disabled Canadians, 20.5% v. 10.2%.
- This represents approximately 500,000 working-age people with disabilities in Canada living in difficult and restricted low income circumstances.
- This disproportionately high risk of living in or near poverty is a pattern that has more or less persisted for the past 25 years.
Research lessons

- Large proportions of individuals with disabilities who are without paid work would like to work, should “the right conditions” exist

- Sheltered employment for disabled people generally has high administrative costs and low transition rates toward standard and supported employment

- “Right conditions” include personalized employment counselling, work-focused interviews, early vocational rehabilitation measures; policy/procedural flexibility by employers in terms of how and when key job duties are performed; and, financial incentives to assist people with disabilities with living expenses associated with their impairments
What works

- Research is clear on the importance of the availability and affordability of essential aids, devices, personal supports; having in place accessible built environments, including workplaces and community infrastructure; and, readily available and appropriate transportation services.

- Employment services and supports relevant to the needs and circumstances of working age adults with disabilities.
Research gaps

- Financial incentives of earnings supplements and wage subsidies
- Labour regulations, human rights and equity legislation
- Supported employment arrangements, such as personal assistance at the workplace
- Social enterprises as places of employment and skills development
- Employment service providers and job brokers
- Interactions among income benefit programs, public and private, and tax measures
- Labour market outcomes of adults with disabilities in the recent period of economic growth and tight labour markets
- How the need for, and availability of on-the-job supports affects the employment trajectories of people with disabilities and best practices by governments and employers, [solo and together] to support individuals in this connection
Brief history of labour policies and persons with disabilities


- 1990s – about 2000: activation measures for economic inclusion

- About 2000 – present: devolution of federal measures and innovation
1970s – 1980s

- Canada Pension Plan Disability launched, 1970
- UI sickness benefit introduced, 1971
- *Canadian Human Rights Act*, 1977
- Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982
- Canadian Jobs Strategy, 1985
- Disabled Persons Participation program, 1985
- Federal Contractors Program, 1985
- *Employment Equity Act*, 1986
- CPP Disability reforms, 1987
- Reforms to Canada Assistance Plan and to Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons, 1988-90
1990 – about 2000

- National Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, 1992-96
- *Employment Equity Act*, 1996
- From UI to new Employment Insurance system, 1996
- CAP ended, 1996-97
- Reforms to CPP Disability, 1997
- Opportunities Fund launched, 1997
- Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities replaces VRDP, 1997
- Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy, 1999
Around 2000 – present

- Devolution of EI Part II programming and design to all provinces and territories, from late 1990s
- Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD) replace EAPDs, 2004
- Canada Access Grants for college and university students
- Disability Supports Deduction (replaces Attendant Care Deduction)
- EI Compassionate Benefit
- Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit
- Canada Employment Credit
- Enabling Accessibility Fund, 2007
- Working Income Tax Benefit, 2007
Current federal presence in labour market policy for persons with disabilities

- Canada Studies Grants to Persons with Disabilities
- Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program
- Opportunities Fund
- Social Development Partnership Program – Disability Component
- Working Income Tax Benefit – Disability Supplement and other tax measures
- Labour Market Agreements
- Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPDs)
Existing LMAPDs: an overview

- **Principle**: persons with disabilities should be fully included in Canada’s social and economic mainstream

- **Goal**: to improve the employment situation of persons with disabilities

- **Objectives**:
  - Enhancing the employability of persons with disabilities
  - Increasing the employment opportunities available
  - Building on existing knowledge base of research, best practices, data collection practices
Key priority areas of the LMAPDs

- **Education and training**: technical aids and equipment, interpreter services, transportation, income support

- **Employment participation**: work and volunteer placements, school to work transition programs

- **Employment opportunities**: workplace-related disability supports, self-employment, job coaching and mentoring

- **Connecting employers and persons with disabilities**: awareness strategies, labour market information

- **Building knowledge**: data collection, program evaluations
Existing LMAPDs: an assessment

- Built upon intergovernmental agreements and programming from the early 1960s
- Focus tends toward individual and supply-side
- Varied spending patterns and priorities:
  - Mental health and addiction services (Manitoba, NB, NS, Saskatchewan)
  - Community services, education and employment (NL, PEI)
  - Adults with developmental disabilities (Alberta, BC, Ontario)
Existing LMAPDs: assessment (2)

- Complex organizational contexts and mixed delivery systems
- Recent governance reforms in some provinces (e.g., Ontario, BC)
- Few summative evaluations of LMAPDs completed
- Annual reports by provinces vary in their accessibility, range and consistency of information, and the depth of analysis
Vision for reforms

- Retain a federal role to serve Canadians with disabilities, to foster innovation and to share what works; given huge unemployment and non-participation rates of persons with disabilities

- Maintain a cost-sharing agreement with the provinces like the LMAPD; eliminating a designated program risks losing a policy space for the voices and needs of people with disabilities
Reform options for new LMAPDs

1. Significant *additional monies* over the next five years for select areas of federal investment
2. Sign *multi-year agreements* again to support longer term planning by provinces, disability groups and service providers
3. Shift the continuum of employment services, promoting *supported employment options*
4. Stretch the *duration of support services* from the often short term focus
5. Stimulate *supply of supports for on the job* more readily and accessible in workplaces to people with disabilities and to employers to further the employment of people with disabilities
6. Strengthen *reporting and sharing of results*
Concluding thoughts

Benefits of these sorts of reforms:

- expand education and employability options and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities
- enhance economic and geographic mobility
- reduce number of people in segregated and sheltered workshops and wholly dependent on social assistance
- ease the rate and depth of poverty and expand economic inclusion and earned income
- help businesses and social enterprises
- boost personal well-being
- maintain a collaborative approach to federalism
Thank you

Michael J. Prince
Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy
Faculty of Human and Social Development
University of Victoria

mprince@uvic.ca