

From Grassroots to Government: A Policy Perspective from BC

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Objectives Today

- To introduce an “ideal framework” on employment for persons with disabilities
- To outline activities by, and relationships between the federal and provincial governments in employment
- To identify challenges and opportunities

General perspectives on employing persons with disabilities

- *Optimists*: strong economic growth, “tight” labour market with shortages, expanding opportunities and talent pool
- *Sceptics*: many obstacles and barriers persist in Canadian society and economy
- *Pragmatists*: recognize need for sustained private reforms and public actions as well as intergovernmental leadership

'Ideal Framework' on Employment Policy and Practices

- Help identify the prior learning, skills and experiences of people with disabilities
- Knowledgeable job counseling and assessment services that identify and further the employment goals and needs of clients
- General life skills training for people with disabilities who might need this for job search and for obtaining and keeping employment
- Program advisors to help strengthen the self-esteem of people with disabilities seeking to improve their employment prospects
- Work experience programs for people with disabilities who have had limited attachment to the labour market

'Ideal Framework' II

- Coordination of services to link people with disabilities to education and training that will further their employment goals
- Adult basic education and literacy upgrading programs
- Transportation services that are available, affordable, and accessible
- Assistive aids and devices for participation in apprenticeship and internship programs, college diploma and university programs
- Technical support to help employers with issues of disability and employment (information on job accommodations and workplace integration; consulting services to assist in job accommodations)

Federal-Provincial Relations in Supported Employment

- *Labour Market Agreements:*
 - Began April 2008
 - For people not eligible for Employment Insurance (EI)
 - Approx. \$396 million over 6 years
 - Targeted at several under-represented groups
- *Labour Market Development Agreements:*
 - Begins February 2009
 - For people who are eligible for EI
 - Nearly \$300 million per year
 - BC assumes responsibility for design and delivery of federally funded employment support measures

Other Federal Activities: Income Tax Measures

- Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit
- Canada Employment Credit
- Full Exemption of Postsecondary scholarships and bursaries
- Tax Credit for Public Transit Passes
- Textbook Tax Credit
- Trades People's Tool Expenses Deduction
- Working Income Tax Benefit and Disability Supplement

BC Activities: Grassroots

- Activities and Services:
 - Career Fairs
 - Employer Recognition Events
 - Social Enterprises
- Policy Studies and Advocacy:
 - Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC
 - SPARC BC
 - BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
 - BC Association for Community Living

BC Activities: Government

- Provincial Disability Strategy
- Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities
- 10 by 10 Challenge
- WorkAble Solutions web site
- Disability Supports for Employment Fund
- 2010 Legacies Now Access Works program
- Customized Employment Demonstration Project

Challenges and Opportunities

- Keeping focused while economy slows
- Monitoring and learning from results of LMA and LMDAs
- Ensuring the participation and voice of service users as well as providers
- Building on symbolic gestures and one-time grants in BC's Disability Strategy
- Developing general and specific employment supports and services

An Agenda that Works

- Setting provincial goals on employment for adults with disabilities
- Coordinating employment measures with reforms to income assistance and tax relief
- Ensuring sustainable and dedicated funding for persons with disabilities under labour market agreements
- Supporting a range of employment options of real work for real pay