

CENTRE FOR INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP



An Exploratory Analysis of WorkBC: How is it Working for People with Disabilities

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a place of mind

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AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF WORKBC: HOW IS IT WORKING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities have consistently shown high levels of unemployment and underemployment in Canada and British Columbia (see Appendix 1; CDS 2012). In 2011, the employment rate for Canadians aged 25 – 64 with disabilities was 49% compared to 79% for Canadians without a disability (Turcotte, 2014). While much attention has been given to this issue there have been few significant improvements in employment statistics for people with disabilities. The pervasiveness of the problem and changes to federal-provincial responsibilities and funding levels has promoted policy makers to explore new approaches to employment support for people with disabilities across jurisdictions including the province of British Columbia.

Much evidence-based research has been conducted to determine what types of techniques and interventions are most effective in facilitating labour market connections for people with disabilities. This research constitutes a vast and sophisticated body of technical knowledge needed to help people succeed with their employment goals. This is matched by an equally voluminous and complex web of disability and employment policies and programmes from federal and provincial governments. As noted above, neither of these bodies of research or policy has translated into significant improvements in employment outcomes. An analysis of the literature on employment and a review of the tangled web of disability employment policy and programmes is provided in Appendix 1.

Traditionally, the majority of employment support services for people with disabilities were provided by small, community-based, disability-specific service providers. These organizations often

provided case management and specialized services in accordance with knowledge and awareness of disability employment issues and the broader concerns of the population. As a result of restructuring there has been a significant reduction in the number of these types of service providers in favour of both more generic approaches and private contractors.

As Coward (2013) notes, “British Columbia has one of the largest and most complex systems of active labour market programs and supports measures in Canada” (p. 2). Programmes were provided through a number of different Ministries, agencies and contractors. After an extensive review led by the Employment and Labour Market Services Division (ELMSD) of the then Ministry of Social Development, seven key components to a new approach were identified. These included:

1. A single program with a diverse array of services that can be tailored to meet the needs and eligibility of each client. Program flexibility allowing service providers to be more responsive to what is and is not working for clients, and allowing the ministry the ability to respond more expediently to changes in the economy and demographics.
2. Supplemental services must be provided to all eligible clients through every Employment Services Centre (ESC) across the province through a variety of service mechanisms (satellite offices/outreach services) specifically designed to meet the needs of targeted populations.
3. A single window approach to improve client and public navigation of the employment and labour market system.
4. Service delivery through partnerships and collaboration with other provincial ministries, community organizations, and employers through the sharing of information to more

strategically invest funds.

5. Improved efficiencies in administrative and management processes through a single case management and financial system that supports integrated service delivery.

6. A single program with a more comprehensive performance management system for greater consistency and flexibility in addressing community needs.

7. Improved performance management, client focused, and consistent across the province.

(Coward, 2013)

The key outcome of the review was the establishment of WorkBC which began in April of 2012. This new model integrated a number of former federal programmes and provincial programmes and is administered through contracts covering 73 Catchment Areas and delivered through a 101 WorkBC Employment Services Centres in communities across the entire province. The new model integrated over 400 federal and provincial contracts into a single point of entry service delivery model “designed to implement an integrated client centered, flexible employment and labour market system of employment services” (Coward, 2013, p.7). This move to a ‘one stop shop’ model resulted in a significant reduction in the number of disability specific employment service providers in favour of this more integrated ‘generic’ model of employment service delivery.

As with any service transformation, there have been concerns raised about the current restructuring. Specifically, concerns have been raised regarding the impact of the loss of specialized disability service providers in favour of a more generic approach. While it is not uncommon for new approaches to experience ‘growing pains’, it is important to understand how these shifts in policy and practice affect individual experiences and outcomes. The research reported on in this document is

intended to contribute to this understanding and inform adjustments to policy and practice to better support people with disabilities' employment aspirations.

This report details the findings of an exploratory qualitative study examining how labour market restructuring initiatives have impacted people with disabilities in British Columbia since the inception of WorkBC in 2012. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings and recommendations based on this research. Ethics approval was granted by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Review Ethics Board. In order to provide a broader context for understanding the current study and the context and history of disability employment policy and practice, a review of the approaches to disability employment in the literature and a detailed review of the policy history is provided in Appendix 1 & 1A. It should be noted that the research presented here is based on a specific snapshot of individual experiences and opinions at a specific point in time, namely between February and June of 2014. Subsequent to the research reported on here there may have been changes to policy and approaches which address some of the issues raised in this report.

METHODS

Descriptive qualitative methods (Sandelowski, 2010) were used to examine the research question, "How have BC labour market restructuring initiatives impacted people with disabilities (PWDs) in British Columbia over the past decade?" Participants comprised both service recipients (SRs) - individuals who identify as a person with a disability (PWD) - and service providers (SPs) - individuals who are or who have been involved in providing employment supports to PWDs in the context of the BC Labour Market.

Sampling and recruitment

Convenience and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants for the present study. Calls for participation were distributed via a number of channels. Recruitment for both service providers and

service recipients was conducted through contacts at identified organizations (both employment support providers - e.g., WorkBC Centres - and disability organizations). The project coordinator contacted individuals from organizations across the province via email and followed up with phone calls. Examples of organizations contacted were associations for community living, WorkBC Centres and contractors, and provincial disability organizations (e.g., Disability Alliance BC). Recruitment materials were emailed to a contact person who agreed to distribute the project information to potential participants. Individuals interested in participating in the research were invited to contact the project coordinator who arranged for the individual's participation. Recruitment took place from the beginning of January 2014 to March 31, 2014. In total 48 service recipients (SR) participated and 46 service providers (SP) participated (see below for demographic information).

Procedures - data collection and analysis

Individuals were given a choice of participating in an individual interview or a focus group. Interviews were conducted by trained qualitative researchers. 23 individual interviews [7 SRs and 16 SPs] and 13 focus groups were conducted [38 SR participants and 30 SP participants took part in focus groups]. The individual interviews lasted between 15 to 70 minutes and the focus groups lasted between 26 minutes to 2 hours and 36 minutes. Data collection began in February 2014 and was completed in June 2014. All interviews and focus groups took place in an accessible location in the participants' local communities. A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure that all participants were asked similar questions. Examples of questions asked of service recipients included: "What help do you need to find or keep a job?" "What services have you had to find or keep a job?" "What do you think are the qualities of a good employment support services?" "What changes would you like to see to make sure you get the right support to find or keep a job?" Examples of service provider questions included: "What changes in service delivery have been made by your organization since the creation of WorkBC?" "What effects on clients have you seen since these service delivery changes were implemented?" "What information would be useful to you in planning your organization's future service delivery?" All

interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to compare, contrast, and categorise the data into themes (both within and across transcripts). The data were coded, organized and re-organized several times as categories were developed, and an exploration between and within subcategories led to the development of an initial coding framework and preliminary findings. Analysis was undertaken separately by authors RH and SL and then discussed among the whole team and further refined. Regular analytic meetings with members of the research team to discuss and monitor coding consistency and periodic full team data analysis meetings provided a process of peer debriefing to ensure that the findings were internally consistent and supported by the data, thus enhancing the credibility and confirmability of the findings (Creswell, 2007). NVivo^{qsr}, a qualitative software programme, was used to manage the data and facilitate data analysis.

Findings discussed in the results section are supported by participant quotes. All identifying information has been removed and or changed to protect the confidentiality of participants. The following codes will be used to indicate which transcript and participant the quote is taken from:

- (FG#1, P2) refers to focus group #1 and participant #2 in that specific focus group. Where possible, the focus group participant is indicated by “P#”.
- (INT#2) refers to an individual interview with participant #2.

RESULTS

Description of Participants

Service Providers

In total, 46 service providers participated in this research representing a diverse group of respondents. Some SPs worked for (or previously worked for) agencies that are WorkBC contractors through the Employment Program of BC implemented in 2012; these included primary contract holders with WorkBC (both for-profit and non-profit organizations) as well as secondary contractors who are funded by a primary contract holder with WorkBC. Other SPs had knowledge and experience of providing employment services to job seekers with disabilities in BC through their current position supporting individuals with disabilities in a local agency or through previous roles providing employment support/services through a community agency previously contracted to provide employment supports through the former labour market program - the Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities (EPPD implemented in 2002 and re-designed in 2007).

Below are tables providing demographic information about service provider participants.

Geographic breakdown:

Lower Mainland	11
Vancouver Island	5
Interior	11
North	19
TOTAL	46

Place of employment:

	INT	FG	TOTALS
Non-profit* ¹	12	20	32
For-profit	1	4	5
WORK BC (primary contract holders)	2	6	8
Self-employed/consulting	1		1
TOTAL			46

Role at workplace:

	INT	FG	TOTALS
Management	9	14	23
Support workers / counsellors	6	16	22
Self-employed/consulting	1	0	1
TOTAL			46

¹ Some SPs participants worked at non-profit agencies who held secondary contracts with Work BC (n=4)

Years on the job:

1 year or less	16
2 – 5 years	15
6 – 10 years	9
11 – 20 years	2
Over 20 years	4
TOTAL	46

Service Recipients

Of the 48 service recipients, 18 were male and 30 were female. For the purposes of this research individuals self-identified as having a disability. The following tables provide further demographic information.

Geographic breakdown:

Lower Mainland	16
Vancouver Island	1
Interior	18
North	13
TOTAL	48

Age:

Under 24	9
25 - 30	7
31 - 40	11
41 - 50	11
50+	10
TOTAL	48

Nature of disability²:

Agility	7
Chronic condition	14
Communication	6
Intellectual/ Developmental	17
Emotional/psychological	14
Hearing	4
Learning	20
Mobility	8
Seeing	5
Other	5

² *Some participants reported more than one type of impairment.

In general, the findings of this exploratory study reveal that overwhelmingly participants, service providers and service recipients interviewed, were in agreement that the WorkBC model of service delivery was not working effectively for people with disabilities in BC at the time of this study. In the subsequent section we describe the findings in greater detail. We begin with a description of the findings from interviews with service providers followed by the findings from interviews with service recipients. Of note, the order of discussing the service providers first is not to privilege these findings, but rather, presenting the findings in this way provides a clearer picture and context from which to understand the service recipients' experiences.

Service Providers Findings

Of all the interview data with service providers (n = 46), only one SP spoke positively about the WorkBC model in relation to the systems' ability to meet the needs of disabled job-seekers. Instead, the majority of SPs pointed to system level aspects of WorkBC that negatively impact service delivery for PWDs. In fact, many SPs referred to the model as a "faulty system" or described the model as "not working". Systemic factors highlighted by SPs included: the underlying philosophy of WorkBC based on a business model and the fee-for-service structure; the "one-stop-shop approach"; a lack of knowledge and training on the part of employment support workers to support PWDs; an inflexible, rigid structure that includes a 4-tier system to categorize clients and over burdensome administrative processes including the Integrated Case Management System (ICM); and, finally, heavy caseloads.

Taken together, according to the SP participants, these factors result in a system that negatively affects both SPs positioned to support disabled job-seekers in finding and gaining meaningful employment and, importantly, the PWDs' (the service recipients) experience and employment outcomes - accessing and securing appropriate employment. That said, many service providers also expressed the position that WorkBC as a model could work if funded properly, including funding to effectively support

specialized populations like job seekers with a disability (e.g., increased flexibility built into the system and increased knowledge and skill development for frontline workers). The next section unpacks these findings in more detail ending with a discussion of SPs' suggestions to improve the system.

The underlying philosophy

Most of the SPs participating in this research described the philosophy underpinning the WorkBC model as a “strong business philosophy” that is a “performance based” or a “fee-for-service” model. This was problematic for many SP participants. Particularly, SPs from non-profit agencies (e.g., contracted non-profits with WorkBC secondary contracts, or non-profits who previously delivered employment services and/or currently support PWDs in the province) saw this as a conflict and an underlying philosophy that results in poorer services and outcomes for disabled job-seekers. For example, one SP discussed how at times decisions made based on a business model would be different than decisions based on a social practice model:

It wasn't what it was intended when WorkBC came out, but it's what some of the WorkBC have become - 'cuz these are companies, right? These are for-profit companies, they're not non-profit. So anyone who's doing things for service, you're naturally going to put your business hat on. And I would do it too, right? I'd put my business hat on and say, "This person's more eligible than this person." Or, "This person's more job ready than this person"... It's not that they're flawed in their thinking - it's a different thinking. It's not a social model, it's a business model.(FG#11)

Another SP explained: “Profit models where you're looking at providing services to persons with disabilities or women fleeing abuse are non-compatible. I cannot make profit, should not wish to make profit off of working with persons with disabilities” (FG#9).

Further, when SPs referred to WorkBC as “performance based” or “fee for service,” they

described how the funding structure can impact service delivery for clients with more complex needs. SPs described structural economic disadvantages and disincentives to work with disabled clients with complex needs: e.g., often clients with a disability require more time and the client must complete the service before the provider is paid for their work. One SP explained, *“So their billing system is problematic ... to get the money for the job placement, you have to find a job and put them in the job, and if that person doesn’t find a job, which of course takes up hours, you’re not going to get a dollar ”* (FG#6, P3).

Another SP added, *“Once you start getting into clients that require more, the services are there and there’s a lot of top end billable access to funding; there’s a lot of money there but you have to do the service, successfully complete the service before you get it, and you’re limited on time...”* (FG#6, P2).

Some SPs described how this created professional and ethical challenges:

We get fifty-two weeks or forty weeks - depending on what tier they are of classification of person, how they ‘tier’ a person in the WorkBC initiative; so if you’re Tier Three, you have forty weeks to get employment. If you’re Tier Four, you have fifty-two weeks and you must complete all of the group of activities, put their employment discovery profile, and get them placed within a certain period of time. [It’s] pay-for-service. And it can be challenging to work under a perspective of that kind of funding, because you end up spending a lot of time working with a person to get them to those needs, and in some cases you’re almost feeling like you’re pushing them along and you... you philosophically sit back, you remember you’re client-centered, you’re wanting the best ways, but see - their sponsor is really pushing you to make sure that you meet your outcomes, your target, otherwise your contract may not be renewed. So there’s - you’re in this rollercoaster of a hamster ride. “How do I be client centered, yet how do I fulfill the sponsor, yet how do I do I make this work for me financially?” It’s a struggle. And it’s not the most client-centered place to be. (FG#11)

Some SPs explained how performance pressures negatively impacted how clients were assigned and/or chosen, leading to what some have referred to as “creaming” - selecting and prioritizing work with clients

who are easier to find job placements for. For example, one SP described how she has observed this happening at an agency level:

...the people that broadened the WorkBC initiative here have hired a lot of people internally to feed their own programs. So they'll take the most employable people and feed them to their own folks. So, if I'm an employment counsellor for disabilities, they're sending them to (name of service provider) and the people that are most employable I'm gonna keep for myself. This fulfills my program's targets because my outcomes are at a hundred percent; they secure them employment, and the really tough ones, they will farm out. (FG#11, P3)

And several participants in focus group 6 described:

P1: We have to be very strategic then in who we're working with at what point... And it's sad and unfortunate choosing, because if I know that I've got to keep my numbers for, you know. And I have to get results, well, I'm not going to get results with someone who's going to take up the time. And I think that's unfortunate, and that's just how it is.

P2: WorkBC is very outcome driven. Like [X] said, we can't bill for a job development or a placement until there is one.

P4: What I don't like about outcomes driven, ... when you say that, that sounds like a really good thing to an outsider, because you say, "Oh yeah, you've got to outcome." "Outcomes" the wrong word.... It's performance-based. I mean, "Wow, you got someone hired." That's their goal. But, you might have got someone hired in a position that's not going to last or you're not going to be able to sustain it. So that's not an outcome. (FG #6)

According to many SPs in the study, performance based economic practices negatively impact disabled job seekers in both the employment seeking process and in employment outcomes; performance based incentives potentially penalize job seekers who face more complex barriers in terms of finding employment in the labour market.

The ‘one-stop-shop’ approach negatively impacts individuals with disabilities

The idea of a one stop shop for job seekers is a lovely idea, however, as we all know if you tried on one size fits all pantyhose there really isn't such a thing. So, that's what we're trying to accomplish in a WorkBC centre - is a one size fits all, and one size does not fit all. (FG#2, P3)

Our analysis revealed that SPs in the study agreed that the WorkBC model, the “one-stop-shop” approach, was not effective for job seekers with a disability. That said, when discussing the WorkBC approach to employment support services, some SPs agreed that the ‘one-stop-shop’ approach is potentially a good model streamlining employment programs in BC for job-seekers, if properly funded. SPs explained that this model was intended to reduce barriers to job-seekers by simplifying the process and reducing the potential number of different actors/agencies involved. In fact, there was general agreement that for job-seekers with minimal barriers to the labour market, the one-stop-shop approach was a good model. That said, there was clear agreement across the SPs (with the exception of one SP) that the ‘one-stop-shop’ was not working for SRs with disabilities. For example, one SP explained:

The province's desire to have a very business style model for services - actually I support that for many of those services. I think that mainstream job seeker who's worked ten, fifteen years, had a layoff, just needs to have a little bit of resume brush up, maybe need first aid ticket, and out the door they go, absolutely. There should be checks and balances in place that says, you know we pay you proportionate to the amount of work you do. I think, however, that if you're looking at the specialized populations they don't fit into that model. (FG #9)

Another SP described,

Well, again it goes back to that one size fits all, like under the old model there was lots of different programs out there - lots of different, you know... you could refer people out,

depending on what their disability, or what their barrier to employment was or what their age was. There were all kinds of factors, and then there were choices, sort of like a menu of where people could go, right, because there was more. Now it's, "Now we've got this service delivery model where it's a one-stop-shop", and so, you know - there's, "Everybody's good at everything" - only they're not. So ...it's like grading the curve, right? Our people don't grade on the curve; they have their own curve, you know? So it doesn't work for people with disabilities. It doesn't work for tier four clients, you know, and so trying to find the appropriate assistance for our clients to find, get, and keep the job through Work BC, it's too; it's too linear, right? It's great for sort of your average Joe job-seeker, but... (FG#2, P3)

Similarly, a SP from a non-profit disability organization shared:

I've had phone calls from people who say, "I don't know where to go", and I said, "Well, go to [Work BC]." And, they say, "I've been there and they haven't done anything for me." And not to say that [WorkBC] isn't trying, it's just that person, it's just not a fit for them. It doesn't work, so... And I know [WorkBC] is trying and it's trying really hard... It's just not everybody's gonna fit into that piece. And ... they can't fit into that piece either of trying to understand all the disabilities out there because it just isn't going to work. (Int #1)

Importantly, some service providers highlighted that a one-stop-shop-approach created inaccessible and non-inclusive environments because employees were unfamiliar on how to create and practice inclusion. For example, one service provider who was supporting an individual with a disability made arrangements to meet his client at a WorkBC office. He described how the environment was not inclusive or supportive of his client's particular needs:

Like I went one day [to the WorkBC centre] and I said, "I'll meet you there." I was taking him to meet the case manager to put in an ops funding application. He got there a few minutes ahead of me, and I got there. And, [pause], like "Whatcha doing?" "I don't know. They gave me this piece

of paper. I don't know what to do with it." ... Nobody said, you know, like, "Do you need help with this?" "Can you read this?" "Are you okay?" Nobody wants to say in front of other people, "I can't read this" right? ... It's not set up to be fully inclusive. It's just not. (FG#2, P3)

Another service provider similarly described how clients at the WorkBC office were handed forms and directed to complete the paperwork, however the clients were not literate. Another service provider described that sometimes clients are given a schedule containing three weeks of activities to complete (workshops, etc.). The number of activities was overwhelming for one of her clients and did not take into consideration the client's unique needs to take things at a slower pace and with support. The impact of inaccessible and non-inclusive environments on job-seekers with a disability is negative, and some SPs underscored that systemic barriers and a lack of accessibility will lead to clients walking away.

Well, lots of clients, I think, on their own walk away. Like they don't have somebody that walks them through. It's very intimidating ... you're supposed to be motivated and that would be fine if you were a person- I mean that still wouldn't be fine if you're a person with you know, all your faculties and everything about you, but for majority of clients that have some issues, they just walk away. (Int#22)

Another support worker provided a similar example:

I took a client in there who ticked off, "Yes, I'm a person with a disability." And she gave in her form and the girl [receptionist] looked at it and said, "Ok, there's the computers, help yourself." She just looked at me, and I thought to myself, "Now if I wasn't here what would have happened?" Right? Not that I'm the big saviour, but I'm just saying like, "Would she have ran? Would she have cried?" I don't know what would have happened, but she sure as heck wouldn't have gone back... (FG#2, P3)

Lack of specialized services and knowledge/training to support PWDs

Finally, to underscore the challenges of a one-stop-shop-approach in supporting job seekers with disabilities, service providers expressed concerns regarding the loss of specialized services and referenced the need for qualified service providers who are familiar with and have a skill set that includes expertise with specific disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability, brain injury, autism, vision impairment, etc.). In fact, the majority of service providers emphasized their collective belief that specialized services are necessary to ensure success for people with disabilities. In the past, before the implementation of WorkBC, when a PWD approached an agency that served individuals with disabilities, they could expect support from staff with expertise. However, many service providers conveyed a general expectation now is that there is no certainty that the PWD will be working with a skilled service provider with respect to supporting job-seekers with a disability when going to a WorkBC centre. For example, one service provider described,

The requirement is that the staff have to work with too many hats. Who has those specializations? And so I think, the standard, and, without bad mouthing any particular organization, [they're] doing the work with the best that they have... There used to be an expectation that the person you were going to see had some experience, and that's not the case anymore - broadly speaking. In some centres that would be the case, but those could be an exception to the rule and what it used to be before this new model was there was specialized centres; so one for immigration, one for disabilities, which was us, you know, one for First Nations, ... however the piece behind that was you could go to any employment agency, ... nobody has the chance to specialize, right? (FG#9, P3)

Underlying the concern about lack of specialized services and expertise were service providers' experiences that many employment support workers in the one-stop-shop model lacked knowledge and training to support the unique and diverse needs of disabled job-seekers. For example, one SP stated, "No

one can be an expert at everything” (FG#2, P3).

The language around the whole creation was, “This will be easier for clients that are barriered. Well, it’s easier when they only have to get to one spot and not have to go across the city.” But what’s happening here, those individuals are having to go in and teach the person that they’re working with what it means to be schizophrenic or what it means to have Autism. And they’re repeating their story over and over again because [of] the system... (FG#9, P3)

As described above, lack of knowledge and training creates a situation where clients must frequently explain what their disability is, what their specific impairment is, and what their needs for accommodation are. Importantly, some SPs explained that the lack of training for the WorkBC staff can translate into the staff being unable to ascertain whether an individual is employable or meeting the WorkBC standard of demonstrating employment readiness. The subtleties of some disabilities are very difficult for an untrained worker to recognize:

So, if I could give you a very basic example, if someone comes into my office and they’re falling down drunk and they haven’t got shoes on their feet and they’re sick and they haven’t eaten for three days, they’re not employment ready. There’s steps that need to happen to get that individual ‘employment ready’, also they can’t go to work if all of these things are happening. Having said that, a person with a disability who has autism, for example, who doesn’t make eye contact, doesn’t always answer all the questions, that’s a product of their disability. I mean, to be understood, it doesn’t necessarily mean that that person’s not employment ready. It’s very different. But what happens is when someone who doesn’t know what it looks like to be autistic, or know what it looks like to be a bit different, or schizophrenic or bipolar, or ... and I can go on. There is a – they can say, “I don’t know what to do with this client, so the only option I have is to say this client isn’t employment ready.” And so disabled people who could work, who want to work, are unable to access those. This is because the people who are the gatekeepers don’t

know how to work with them to achieve employment readiness.... (FG#9)

Thus, the lack of knowledge and training relating to PWDs and specialized skills can have far-reaching implications with respect to assessing an individual's job-readiness as well as the broader issue of understanding the unique and diverse needs of supporting individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment.

An inflexible, rigid system

SPs highlighted that a centralized, structured, generic approach to employment support services impacted specialized populations negatively. One participant described the system as driven by structured benchmarks and activities *"rather than client focused"* (Int#3) and, as such, not user-friendly or accessible for PWDs and their supports. For example, some SPs explained how some PWDs do not have the physical stamina or ability to sit in an office for hours and hours waiting to meet with a succession of workers or be put through a series of assessments. Processes that a non-disabled individual may be able to move through fairly quickly may prove to be very challenging for persons with a certain kind of impairment. Thus, an inflexible system with rigid requirements can present some enormous barriers for PWDs, in fact, becoming inaccessible. Further, some SPs described the restrictive parameters as a linear system that did not allow for flexibility or movement within the system to provide appropriate accommodations and supports to PWDs. In particular, participants underscored problems stemming from a 4-tier system to classify clients and highlighted challenges arising from an over-burdensome administrative system.

At the time of this research, WorkBC used a 4-tier system to classify clients. SPs described the practice of classifying job seekers into predefined categories - a "tier based system" - as highly structured not allowing for flexibility in the system. There are four tiers. Tier 3 and Tier 4 clients (PWDs are usually

Tier 3 or 4) are those seen as having the greatest barriers to employment and are eligible to receive a higher degree of support. That said, strict benchmarks, demarcated service/support options, and timelines remain in effect as described previously, when agencies and workers are doing this work in a performance based environment, this may create complicated professional and ethical pressures.

In addition to the tier based classification systems, SPs described an over-burdensome administrative process: *“The administrative burden on this WorkBC model is flawed”* (FG #6,P2). Interestingly, SPs who were managers described the effects that a “flawed” administrative system is having on WorkBC staff: *“I think I’ve seen more of the effects on my staff... you know getting frustrated with the system”* (Int#5, SP). Another SP explained,

...the integrated case management system, ICM³ system - the horror of that system... so much of what (SP in FG) talks about, the opening and closing cases, is not necessarily done because a person, a case manager is unhappy with the person or not wanting to. It’s the prompts from the ICM that only allow certain parameters for a person. So if John Henry comes up and he’s already had twelve weeks in the career planning stage, that’s all the ICM will allow... We’ll have twelve weeks, and then have a choice, close the case or move them forward... If John Henry doesn’t know, still doesn’t know what kind of job he wants to go to, they’ve got nothing to enter into there. The case manager has no other choice but to close the file... [SP in FG] talks about the rollercoaster ride about employment. The more you put yourself out there and you have rejection, the further you go down on that rollercoaster... so how many times are they gonna push them down ‘til they get so they’re not gonna try... It’s been unsuccessful. (FG#11, P4)

Many SPs described that these factors *“translate into less client care”* (FG #6, P2) with

³ It is important to note that since implementing WorkBC in 2012, improvements and system upgrades have been made to the Integrated Case Management system. The interviews reported here were conducted in the spring of 2014 and it is conceivable that changes have been made to the ICM.

particular implications for job seekers with disabilities:

...it's impacted them this way too, because the province went on this thorny road, on what they call an integrated case management system or ICM, where contractors have to adhere to a very cumbersome, complex, overbearing system that's hooked into the provincial government, so everything, everything's got to go through this system. (Int #5)

Another SP said, *"I am finding with this model there's a lot of admin work taking away from the time spent with clients, and also directly impacting those clients in terms of making them wait for certain services or not being able to provide certain services"* (Int #18).

Providers discussed the inflexibility of the WorkBC system that does not allow for individualized support - a key principle of supported employment for job-seekers with disabilities. One individual described a situation where the support needed for a client was cited as not possible:

... we have clients who have a brain injury that affects their short term and long term memory, and we're not going to put them in a job where they're going to require those skills, but one of (the) things they need a little bit of help with is appointment reminders and maybe what we're doing in the process of trying to work with an organization that provides assistive technology so that they can have a, a, you know, a Smartphone that they can put things in or some sort of a device that they can carry with them, but in the meantime - a simple telephone call the day before their appointment and what do we get from the WorkBC office? "Can't do it -, that's not the work of our program. We don't do the reminder calls. They must be able to make it to the appointment on their own in order to be considered employment ready." (FG#9)

Finally, in addition, to lack of flexibility, participants underscored the problem of workload.

Heavy caseloads

“I know we struggle with our caseload” (FG#2, P4)

Many SPs, those working for WorkBC and WorkBC contracted agencies as well as SPs supporting PWDs throughout the province in other disability related agencies, noted the heavy workload that EPBC funded service providers carry. SPs typically described an environment where workers have very large caseloads and heavy administrative burdens not allowing them to offer the “best service”. For example, participant 3 (FG#7) shared, *“I think the pressure we’re under and the amount of clients that we have, sometimes, if I’m being brutally honest, it doesn’t allow us to give the best possible service that potentially could give.”* Another WorkBC job developer shared, *“To be effective at what we do, we need to have a reasonable caseload, otherwise, you’re not, I personally - for me personally, I don’t think I am as effective as I could be than if I had a reasonable caseload.”*

As demonstrated by the above findings, SPs expressed significant concerns about the ability of the current system to effectively support disabled job-seekers in BC. That said, they did offer insights and suggestions about how to improve the current model. The following section presents an overview of the SPs recommendations to enhance employment supports for PWDs.

SPs’ Recommendations - Increased Accessibility

The most prominent overarching recommendation was improved accessibility within WorkBC and employment programs more generally. For example, one SP stated,

It would (be) really nice to believe, to understand, to be told that frontline staff in WorkBC centres have had some disability awareness training or some, you know, some training around

you know, being fully inclusive and how to look for those signs. How to make it so a person doesn't have to announce to the world that they can't read or, you know, whatever, that, that would be, that in itself would be huge, I would feel ok about sending people to WorkBC if that happened. I would feel better about it. (FG#2, P3)

Some participants conveyed specific strategies about how to achieve this. The same SP quoted above described implementing a practice of universal design that would prioritize access to disabled job-seekers that would in fact make WorkBC more accessible to everyone: “[For example], saying to everyone and then it is inclusive, you know - ‘Do you need some assistance with that application?’ If you said that to everybody, then people with disabilities aren’t going to feel any different, you know? It’s a simple thing right” (FG#2, P3). As she portrays, making a practice universal makes it accessible for all job-seekers. She further illustrates this practice:

It makes me think of is, you’ve probably all seen that picture right, of the municipal building or some big post office, whatever, some building and it has you know, a ramp and it has a set of stairs and they’re both covered in snow, and then- you know what I’m going to say, right? It’s like, “Well, which one do we do first?” And the guy says, “Well of course we’re going to do the stairs first because there’s more people that need stairs than a ramp,” which is really ridiculous, because everybody can walk up a ramp, but not everybody can go upstairs. So, it’s that shift in mindset right, that if you offer the same thing to everybody, you are being fully inclusive, and I think that there’s ways to do that in all public service (FG#2, P3).

Universal design was one recommendation to increase inclusive practices. SPs also identified additional strategies or changes that would enhance access. These strategies were: 1) more specialized services (including specialized services for Aboriginal jobseekers with a disability); 2) more knowledge/training of job developers and employment support workers; 3) more flexibility and increased funding for needed supports; and, 4) more cooperation (including co-agency support/side-by-side

services) and sharing of best practices. Finally, participants in the present study underscored the importance of increased intervention on the demand side of employment for PWDs including employer and community education.

First, as illustrated above in the results, there was strong agreement that a one-stop-shop approach that lacked specialized services was not working for disabled job-seekers. Not surprisingly then, a strong recommendation from SPs was that specialized services would improve the experiences and outcomes for PWDs and, more so, that specialized services are needed:

Certainly, we heard that direct experience from persons with disabilities - the lack of specialized services and the niches that you need. Like you say, you can have a very highly skilled career counsellor with lots of career counselling stuff behind them, but if you're working with someone on specific medications with schizophrenia and many other barriers as well... it's a specialized skill for sure. (FG#9, P1)

Another SP offered that funding a specialized support person within the existing system might improve access and employment outcomes for PWDs: *"It would be helpful for one of those counsellors to be more of an employment specialist for people with a disability"* (Int#20). Another SP stated,

Now if they had the one-stop-shop and there was financial resources to allow for departmental development- so in this one-stop-shop we will resource this contract to allow for a disability services department, and a specialist on site who knows about workshops for a person with a labor abuse situation, whatever the case – if the system allowed for the development of specialization, but the funding isn't there. (FG#9,P3)

Second, many SPs also underscored the importance of improved knowledge and training regarding how to better support disabled job seekers. For example, one SP shared, *"I'd like to see also some more structured tools on disability environments for the work site"* (FG#11, P3). And, another SP

encouraged increased knowledge around assistive technologies for employment counsellors (e.g., FG#7). All of these recommendations implicate a more systemic concern around increased flexibility and increased supports within the existing system.

Third, as shown in the description of the findings, SPs expressed the view that the highly structured system of service delivery was not working for PWDs. As one SP explained,

Well, and sometimes I wonder if they have to be by this set schedule; this set agenda. This is what you can do. This is what you can't do. And I think also, learning to think outside the box... What about creativity? Going back again, these people are individuals and what may have worked for somebody at twelve weeks might take twenty-four for somebody else. (FG#11, P4)

SPs explained that a lack of flexibility impedes them from providing the appropriate support based on an individual's particular needs. That said, a number of participants indicated that with increased flexibility and supports, they felt they could meet the needs of PWDs.

A fourth recommendation from SPs on how to better support PWDs and improve the knowledge of workers and their practice was through improved cooperation (among workers and across agencies) and through opportunities to share "best practices": e.g., *"[We need to] share our best practices, what does work well, and maybe, on, like an asterix beside that, is coordination between the different service providers" (FG#7, P2)*. And another SP shared, *"Best practices, I'd love to hear how people are working around the system to make it work... I think what information is good to know, um, is where people have found employment and really good kind of employment placement stories that we don't get to hear" (Int#11)*.

SPs explained that there were places in the province where WorkBC was doing a better job than other places - SPs identified that these differences were sometimes directly related to a particular agency (e.g.,

they might have a worker with expertise in supporting PWDs) and the positive differences were sometimes attributed to the geography and unique community. For example, one SP shared,

Well and, and looking at the (smaller town in north) model, like the (smaller town in north) model takes that business model and puts a face on it, social face and makes it work. So if they can make it work in that small community - how come we can't make it work in other areas? So, perhaps looking at that model, spending time to understand why that model's working well, and the people being served underneath it are being served at a hundred percent still employed stats, I mean that's a testament to those people in that office and the way that they're doing it. They got something right. (FG#11, P4)

SPs believed that lessons could be learned from these agencies and locations where there were successes and that a mechanism for cooperation and sharing of best practices would be valuable.

So that's a real challenge for us, so we've talked about it... and several of us have talked about how we want to build a round table and start having discussions together as a group, how we can best support people in the specialized population together... I think service providers of the north, particularly employment services, need to meet a regular basis. (FG#11, P3)

Later this same SP also underscored the importance of cooperation among agencies:

I've been around, belong to a huge network of people. So, rather than there being a competitive spirit in the room, [we need a] more collaborative spirit in the room. If we all shared our thoughts, our ideas, and even our employers, rather than holding these cards tightly... let's meet the needs of the community based upon who we have as people and make the matches more secure. (FG#11, P3)

One example of cooperation that a couple of SPs described involved “side-by-side” or co-agency support for disabled job-seekers, where the employment agency partnered with a disability agency and

cooperatively supported PWDs in finding employment: e.g., *“to run the two systems side by side works really well for our clients” (Int#11)*. It’s not possible within this present research to know the extent to which this co-agency employment support is happening in the province but this arose as an example of best practice from SPs in three different geographic locations.

Finally, SPs were in general agreement that no matter how great the employment system is, employment outcomes for PWDs require increased intervention on the demand side of employment for PWDs including employer and community education: e.g., *“Get employers involved in the conversation at more of a systemic level. I think that would benefit all of us in the long run” (FG#7, P4)*. And participant 3 in the same focus group added, *“Yeah, education in the community at large.”* Lastly, another SP explained,

There is such a need for, you know, education with unions, for example, about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, um, working with the government, working with employers, providing them some you know, training programs, sensitivity awareness programs and just delivering. There needs to be more people like me who would be able to work with employers, with unions, with the industry, to um, to just, you know, help these clients. They all have wonderful abilities and it’s looking at the person first, and not the barrier, that’s what needs to happen. (Int#18)

The preceding discussion centred the findings of service providers. That said, a discussion about how to improve employment outcomes for PWDs in BC requires the input and voice of PWDs themselves. As one service provider eloquently stated, *“I mean it’s easy enough for us to say, you know, ‘This is what we feel is needed,’ but it’s nice to hear what people with the challenges actually want or believe they need, right?” (FG#9, P2)*. We turn now to describe the findings from our focus groups and interviews with participants who self-identified as an individual with a disability.

Service Recipient Findings

Experiences with WorkBC

Generally, for the majority of PWD participants the current model is not meeting their needs and they strongly communicated that overall there is a lack of understanding about how to support individuals with disabilities who are job seekers. For example, SRs shared: *“I don’t feel the program is a success for disabled people” (FG#1, P2); “[It] needs a lot of improvements” (FG#1, P2); “I just recently started going to WorkBC... I find that they need a lot of help. They don’t have a clue what to do [to support PWDs]” (Int#4).* In fact, in their descriptions about what wasn’t working a prominent finding emerged: the problem of a non-inclusive culture/system and issues of access. That said, in addition to these negative experiences, PWDs described what they wanted and their employment goals; they described barriers to employment; and, finally, their interviews included factors for improving the employment supports and services and employment outcomes for PWDs in BC. The following sections outline these findings in more detail.

Lack of inclusive practices and issues of access

As mentioned above, PWDs described issues with accessibility: *“I think there needs to be more, um, accessibility” (FG#1 P4).* PWDs indicated both explicitly and tacitly that they experienced WorkBC as being a non-inclusive culture/system where issues of access were problematic. These issues of access included: a lack of awareness by WorkBC staff in how to support PWDs in their employment needs and goals, and a lack of specialized supports.

First, issues of access were evident throughout the interviews; that is, they named access as a problem and, at times, shared stories that unveiled barriers and problematic practices that created a culture of non-inclusiveness. These examples existed at a systems level and a structural/geographic level. For

example, one SR described the challenges he faced trying to navigate the WorkBC system (specifically, the process of trying to access WorkBC through the Ministry and the subsequent steps):

Like dealing with, dealing with them (the Ministry), personally, is so aggravating and depressing in itself because you never get a clear answer ... and most people with disability don't understand the loopholes you have to jump through. And it should be more concise, it should be more clear... (FG#1, P3)

Another participant added,

P7: I get so frustrated sometimes with the phone systems...your current wait time is like 10 minutes, like OK. And if you've got a cell phone, [you're paying]... You've gotta find some place that's got a landline so you can wait that period of time... or you're having trouble understanding what they're asking, the questions... sometimes it feels like people are talking a total different language... A barrier like! (FG#1)

Service recipients also shared how current practices created hurdles or obstacles that made their experiences with WorkBC difficult. Some participants communicated that there was a lack of support and/or accommodations when it came to completing required activities. In fact, participants described a culture that expects job-seekers to be non-disabled. One service recipient shared, *"They say lots of things. They teach you. They program, but there is not real assistance. I feel that you are on your own; you have to do all the things on your own"* (Int#19). Further, current practices that privilege computer literacy can be problematic for PWDs. One individual with an anxiety disorder explained,

It's really hard to get around it and that's the problem... I don't know. I wish if I went to the place they could help me, just sit down and do the search, kind of thing, but then they don't have enough time to do the search. They just kind of are pointing me in a direction and telling me to do it myself (Int#17).

Another participant described,

Yeah I think it's just the general, they expect people to generally be computer wise and very good at electronic gadgets that you know, perhaps people aren't, like myself... and you know everybody else is just flying over your head going, "Yeah, OK, well how come you're stupid? You don't know what you're doing." (FG#1, P5)

In addition to systems level access problems, some service recipients described physical and material access issues that differed depending on where one is located geographically in the Province. This was more pronounced in interviews conducted in the North.

They've cut our nearest centre, like in [neighboring town] to even use a computer we have to go to [next neighboring town] or to [town]. And it's just, for [people with] disabilities, it's really lacking. If you're wanting a job out in the oil rigs and you're young and healthy, they'll get you placed right away. But you have to fight if you have a disability with [employment search agency] ever since they changed everything over and closed the private agencies; it's made it more difficult. (FG#1, P2)

And, participant #4 stated, “Again a lot of people I’ve been talking to they say it’s a waste of government money, especially in more rural areas, people are saying, ‘We can’t even get to WorkBC sites’.”

Secondly, SRs often shared stories that described situations where job developers or job coaches didn’t have the skills or knowledge to support job-seekers with a disability:

Well, they’re so focused on getting a job, they’re not really focused on the different needs and different learning experience, or the different way we learn... And, so they just, they just need someone with a diversability that knows it, that lives it, to actually go and teach them what they need to know. (Int#4)

SRs shared stories where access and accommodations were problematic and where they felt that the worker didn't understand their needs: *"I've gone to [WorkBC in town] and stuff, but I don't really find that they're helpful when it comes to maintaining work... they don't always realize the realistic part of having a disability"* (Int #2). These experiences lead to a lot of frustration.

It's frustrating. And then what's frustrating is this accommodation which they say that's their mandate, "Accommodation to make a person able to do the job or help in some way". Well, they keep bringing up my mobility issue as a problem. Well it was never a problem when I worked before with children and all this. And, um, it seems to be a problem, or they're identifying it as a problem to me. And I don't see where that's a problem if the accommodation is there; like they don't understand between accommodation and disability. (Int#15)

Further, some participants expressed that some job developers or job coaches demonstrate an attitude of low expectations towards PWDs seeking employment: *"Well they talk down to ya"* (FG#1,P6). And, service recipient #8 lamented,

'Cuz there's some job coaches I find that will push a job that's convenient for them but it's not really what [the individual] would choose, but it's a job sitting there [laughs]... "Just take that one for now." ... We think we want our dream job, but they're looking at jobs that we'll just take, we'll just take them, like fast food chains, to help them build up their PWD stats type of deal. They're not looking at what would actually make [people with disability] feel happy, and a lot of people may not understand that they have choices though too, that's the other thing. (Int#8)

Similarly, participant #15 shared,

The people in those jobs need better training, better understanding of some of the issues um... Like if they were in an employment program, would they like to be encouraged to volunteer as

opposed to employment? Do they not have bills to pay? You know? (Int#15)

And, one participant recounted, *“I had to do something that’s much lower than my abilities and my knowledge” (Int#19)*. It is noteworthy that PWDs described how the low expectations can translate into making only low paying jobs available or questioning why a PWD wants to work and stop receiving government benefits: *“Because people are so scared if they work, well they’re gonna just mess up their assistance cheque” (Int#4)*. And, participant #6 explained,

The funny thing is that when I was telling my WorkBC job developer that I want a full-time job - I don’t want to get the income assistance anymore, I want to pay taxes like everybody else does, and then she said, “Why?” [laughs] She said, “Why don’t you want to get income assistance anymore?” I said, “Because I don’t want to get it for the rest of my life. I want to be able to have a full-time job and afford to buy a house.” And, you know, I got married last year, and now I have to support my family too. I’m not paying rent right now. I live with my mom, but it’s difficult, you know, I need to have my own place. (Int#6)

Waitlists and worker turnover/changes were also identified as a source of frustration by many SRs. *“They switch counsellors so readily and the one time they switched me to someone who I never met with. It took 8 months for them to get to me with a new counsellor. It’s just frustrating” (Int #15)*. And, participant 17 described, *“They had a new person, but they transferred the person over and it worked well, but the person only lasted like a month.”*

I know many people that are applying but I don’t think any of them are getting any services, um, most of them I know are going to university, because that’s the only way for someone who’s blind to find a job, we have to get more education, and more and more, I know someone who has a Masters’ who doesn’t have a job right now, who’s blind, and I don’t think they’re going through WorkBC, ‘cause you know something else is that they’re not specialized in helping someone

who's blind (Int#6).

A change in workers and job coach turnover may be a factor that job-seekers without disabilities also face; that said, when understood in the context of the experiences of job-seekers with disabilities, the barriers and challenges that PWDs face by waitlists and worker turnover are intensified.

Finally, some participants echoed service providers' call for specialized supports and/or spoke about the lack of specialized supports: "*They don't know like a lot of disabilities*" (FG#1,P4). For example, one participant who was both a WorkBC contractor and a PWD explained:

Well first of all CNIB - they were specialized in blindness and they knew, already they knew all about accommodations, and the WorkBC staff have no idea how to support someone who is blind for example, and actually I, I called CNIB and I asked them do you still have those, that career service, and they said, 'No, WorkBC took it from us' and they suck [laughs]. (Int#6)

And, another participant pointed to a loss of specialized supports that negatively impacted the services she received:

And, it's just for disabilities, [Work BC] is really lacking. If you're wanting a job out in the oil rigs and you're young and healthy, they'll get you placed right away. But you have to fight if you have a disability... ever since they changed everything over and closed the private agencies, it's made it more difficult. (FG#1, P2)

Employment Goals

When asked to state their goals, the majority of service recipients simply stated that they either wanted a job or wanted to work more.

You know, we don't want to be a burden to society. We want to work and be a part of community. Social services doesn't pay all my bills you know. They pay the basics. So, if I want the internet, or if I want to go out for a movie or something, I've got to pay for it. So, I need to work. (Int #4)

I would like to get more hours because right now I'm only doing it for two hours (FG#3, P7)

There were various reasons for wanting to work - some wanted to be able to live independently or just get off PWD benefits, while others had goals like eliminating debt or buying a house. Funding further education or saving to open their own business were other reasons given for wanting to be employed and earn an income, as well as the ability to 'live comfortably', pay their bills, and achieve a greater degree of happiness.

I'm just speaking for myself, I don't know about these guys, but I feel like if I could just get a job, I'd be happier, and be able to pay my bills and be able to just make more money and live comfortably. I mean we've all been here, I've been [WorkBC] for about two months now. Some of them have been here for longer but, I just want to get a job (FG#5, P3).

Specific career goals were sometimes cited, particularly those that involved disability or to do with accessibility, like being an advocate; some of these individuals already did this kind of work as volunteers and wanted get further training or education in the field.

My dream job is to help a person or people with disabilities in life skills, like going out, teaching them how to use a bus, taking them shopping if they need to go shopping, taking them out if they want to go swimming, teach them how to get around the community, take part in community events type of thing, um, that type of deal. (Int#8)

I want to be a self-advocate for women and men... for people on disability and help them get work or go to places with them, and become like a coach for them, and if they need somebody to go to Work BC with them and take them down there, I'm willing to go. You know. That's the type of person I am. I want to... I want to be a voice. That's my goal. I want to be a voice for everybody who has disabilities and let it be known that we need services. (FG#8, P8)

Other participants wanted to become self-employed, while others wanted employment that allowed them to work out of their homes, like medical transcription, for example – particularly if they had mobility issues. Service recipients with university education wanted to find work commensurate with their education and field of expertise. One participant described his wish to find a job that supported mental health, like a job where one could use his creativity.

Of note, some PWDs emphasized that flexibility and accommodation were important factors to consider when considering job development and their employment goals. For example, a few participants discussed their goal of part-time work because often the nature of the person's disability made full-time work not possible. Others said that their goal of part-time work as a kind of gradual entry into the workforce was to ensure their success and avoid being overwhelmed. Another reason for having a goal of part-time employment was to top up their PWD benefits and avoid having their income "clawed back"; as one participant put it, if people receiving PWD benefits work full-time, "*They are working for nothing*" (FG#5, P3). Thus, part-time work allowed them to supplement the PWD benefits without losing that income.

And, participant #2 described the benefits of part-time employment.

My only employment goals right now is finding another part-time job eventually, and, whatever it

is, if it's going to be customer service or if it's going to be in hospitality or anything like that, it's probably the first thing I'm going to go for... That's just a means to an end so I have extra income. So that way maybe I can save some money, I can pay off debts, and my biggest thing is to get my credit back in order. So that way I can go and maybe be able to save up enough money, or maybe get a loan or student loan to go back to school for my counseling. (Int #2)

Unfortunately, there was frustration on the part of some participants that so much effort and time was spent accessing the system and going through WorkBC programs and activities rather than simply being employed and meeting their employment goals:

I went there for quite some time and I notice, you know, it's a hassle every time I met the person. You know, try to get resumes done or just... It's just a hassle for me. I just want to work somewhere. Like work instead of going through all the systems to get work. You know, I want a 9 to 5 job but for me it's always "Do this", "Do that", "Go see this", you know? (FG#8,P3)

And, some service recipients reported that their goals had been lowered or dropped; one participant reported that, “Let’s say my sights have been lowered substantially – if I can have a car, not starve to death and live in a nicer neighbourhood, I’m happy, that’s about as far as I’ve gotten. You know...” (Int#23). Another individual shared,

My employment goals at this point have not been met. Um, I had to change them and adapt them. My basic employment goal is not, is to get a few hundred dollars extra a month from a casual labor job to supplement my person's with disability. At this point in my life I'm not going to be able to work full time now. (FG1, P#2)

Barriers to success/employment

When discussing their journeys to finding and keeping meaningful employment, PWDs named

and described barriers to employment. Ultimately, lack of successful employment centred around experiences where the job was not a good fit: e.g., *“I didn’t fit in there very well. It was a good experience but it was way too fast paced, and you make mistakes and - I mean it was good experience”* (Int#17). Factors that contributed to a lack of employment fit and barriers to employment included: lack of employment options, lack of accommodations and supports, and societal/structural/attitudinal barriers.

Participants reported a lack of employment options for PWDs. In fact, many PWDs maintained that there are preconceived ideas about the kind of employment that PWDs can do which are almost always low paying jobs.

It’s very hard to find jobs, it took me, it took me almost a year to find (charitable organization), and I was on EI for a while for medical reasons, but if I didn’t have the medical reasons it’d still be hard. It’s not easy. A lot of people look at disabilities as one class type of people; they need to just be in the daytime programs, one of those, the greenhouse work, the cooking work, like just washing dishes; a lot of them can do a lot more. (Int#8)

PWDs also described the lack of accessibility and, subsequently, a lack of accommodations and supports. Many workplaces are not always accessible particularly in terms of location and accessible transportation to get there. If a PWD doesn’t have a car, he/she will have to walk or take a taxi. Location and geographic accessibility are also problematic when it comes to shift work and work schedules. It is difficult to keep a job when it is challenging or expensive to get to the work site. In fact, transportation was a key barrier that impacted PWDs’ lack of options for employment. As one participant described, *“A lot of us with disabilities we take transit. We take buses because we don’t have licenses to drive, right? For me to get to (big box chain) took me an hour and 45 minutes”* (Int#8). Relatedly, shift work late at night might prove inaccessible depending on transit as well as the individual’s support and accommodation needs. For example, some participants emphasized the importance of flexible work hours and/or part-time work to ensure access to employment and the employee’s success. For example,

What I find a lot, and this was pressure from my last full time employer, or was supposed to be full time employer, was that they want everyone like full-time, full hours, you know. They're not willing to accommodate on your hours or on your productivity. There just seems to be a wall and,... "We want a normal person; we don't want a disabled person." (FG1,P#2)

Another participant required accommodation and found barriers to obtaining accommodations. When asked if there were any policies pertaining to accommodations in the workplace, the participant responded,

Well they're within the handbook - there were some very general statements, but you know I don't think they were necessarily adhered to, and, you know I am the first person probably with a physical disability, so it was a little bit of first, just trying to learn as we went along, and yeah there were definitely some challenges, and yeah...yeah, quite difficult, things that you know, for instance - just having the bathroom be accessible and you know, being able to get from my vehicle into the building, and how I managed in the winter months when there's a lot of snow, you know I would definitely need to have some assistance, and you know trying to arrange that, and how to just manage, uh, co-workers' comments and suggestions about how I should manage my disability. (Int#7)

Finally, many PWD participants described experiencing discrimination as underscoring the societal and attitudinal barriers that job-seekers with disabilities face: *"Employers, it seems to be around here, especially in [town] or in [neighboring town] or in the [area], they're not willing to accommodate people with disabilities and they're not really willing to like have information about your disability"* (FG#1, P2). And, participant #6 stated, *"Employers always, like they look at me, I have a disability, I have less experience, what's the incentive for them to hire me? They would just hire someone who doesn't have a disability, and who has more experience, and it's happened a lot"* (#6). Participant #2 shared,

I think employers need to take a look at what they're asking because they are tailoring jobs to healthy people. And the majority of people in Canada are not 100 percent healthy. I think it is close to over one third have some type of physical uh either disability or it's going towards a disability. It's untreated and there's health conditions that are untreated that are going to lead to a disability. And the population is we're having a higher population of baby boomers. ...I think they need to take that into consideration that not everyone's 18 and bullet proof anymore. (Int#2)

And, another participant explained,

And they don't want to have um, and they don't want to give people a chance, but nowadays they're supposed to be. Everyone should be equal. But I think there are still places that don't open the doors much. And, like, people in this room, we fight all the time. (FG#10, P1)

Mental illness was specifically mentioned as a disability that both was stigmatized and misunderstood by employers. For example, several participants in focus group #1 emphasized,

P6: There needs to be more empathy out there.

P3: Yeah.

P4: Way more empathy.

P2: Absolutely! Way more awareness.

P4: Not enough awareness.

P6: 'Cause depression and mental illness have a stigma attached to it - where we're basically no good and that cannot be happening in this day and age.

Lastly, one PWD who identified as an ethnic minority described his frustrations related to employment barriers as a person with a disability and an immigrant to Canada:

I gained my Master's degree in my country and I was someone there, in the film and theatre

industry, and art. I was teaching. I was doing, I was doing fine, yeah even with the depression and anxiety, yeah I can manage that and but, here the barriers that I try to overcome are very high; and, anytime that I overcome one barrier, it seems I see a higher wall in front of me, after passing a hill, then I see a mountain and then I have to, to go climb up that mountain and this is draining me down, because it makes me- How many years I have left? How many? I'm no longer very young... then these things give me more anxiety.... I had to do something that's much lower than my abilities and my knowledge, when I speak with people that they are doing lots of things, they say 'how much you know about history, how much you know about the drama and art' so I grown up in that situation, I wasn't a person that was no one in my country. (Int#19)

Factors influencing positive employment journeys

In the present study, an individualized approach to employment supports emerged as an overarching finding. That said, service recipients identified related factors that worked together with and/or informed how to successfully carry out an individualized approach to employment support. The following section discusses these findings.

Individualized approach to employment supports

When asked about what factors contribute to positive employment experiences - seeking and securing a job - service recipient interviews underscored the importance of an individualized approach to employment supports. For example, participant #15 explained,

Well, listening to what the client needs and not generalizing every client. Looking at them individually. And looking at their strengths and knowing that if you're determined enough, you can work with the limitations - you have to be able to work with the limitations. 'Cuz a person, you don't want to focus on their limitations, they already know what they are 'cause they've dealt with them. (Int#15)

Such an approach requires an understanding of how to support a job-seeker with a disability as well as understanding the diverse needs and abilities of this complex heterogeneous population; and, when it came to suggestions for success, service recipients underscored the importance of “matching” and employee/workplace “fit”. As participant #23 explained,

Basically, they match you to a job, they match your skills and abilities, and they listen to you [laughs] ... find out both your strengths and weaknesses you know, and go to your strengths, and don't pitch somebody in where it's not possible, you know. (Int#23)

But, service recipients pointed out that as part of the matching, focus on the employer is also key to a successful individualized approach:

P3: I think it should be part of an employer's training that there will be at some point in your life somebody who has a mental or physical disability.

P4: [interrupt] Or both.

P3: And to be aware of how to react to that person.

P6: 'Cause each situation is different...

P7: Not everybody's a cookie cutter thing. So everybody, everybody's situation's got to be catered to their situation. (FG#1)

Participant #2 explained,

I would say just more of maybe support from employers. If the employers were given something, maybe even an information email, or something like that, before I start working for them, maybe something from a service provider that they could hand them, or I could take into my interview, saying, “Hi. You've hired someone with a disability. This is not a bad thing. This can be a rewarding experience for you and this person.” And it can kind of explained what to expect from me. And not to burden me with and not put an assumption on me that I can't do something, right?

Maybe kind of pave the way for me so I don't look like I don't have to do it all myself - that there's supports out there. (Int#2)

Finally, an individualized approach to employment supports requires creativity and as participant #4 stated, "A willingness to think outside the box:"

The willingness to think outside the box, you know? Just because somebody might not be able to read, colour code them, put a blue dot on the thing then maybe put a blue dot where you need to- like if you're stocking shelves. And then just think of little things that would help. Um, help the individual learn and be successful. (Int#4)

And, as demonstrated in the above quote, service recipients emphasized the importance of not only matching the employee/workplace context but ensuring that the individualized and necessary accommodations and supports are in place. In fact, several factors emerged as integral to facilitating a successful employment journey for job-seekers with a disability. These were the characteristics and abilities of the job coach or employment support worker; the importance of appropriate accommodations and supports; the need for ongoing and ancillary supports; and, the significance of addressing the demand side of employment including societal attitudes.

Job coaches and support workers

I don't know, I wouldn't be, I wouldn't have been able to go to college and get my certificates without the help of providers and people standing behind me and saying "You can do it!" You know, giving the encouragement. (FG#8, P8)

Based on interviews with service recipients, job coaches and support workers who were actively involved in facilitating and supporting the individual's employment success were a major factor influencing positive employment experiences. Several service recipients made reference to their job

coaches who helped them with transportation to or from the job and who taught them to do tasks (e.g., like learning a computer system required for the job). Transportation was a critical area where practical assistance is often required - both in finding employment as well as keeping employment. One participant described how a WorkBC job coach facilitated his employment success:

People, like if they don't have a way to get to the job they will help, they help out being able to go... um, basically (for profit agency) provides any type of support for people who have disabilities... like for me for example, being able to get my yearly bus pass. I didn't know how to do that at first and (the job coach) was really big help with that. (FG#3,P1)

Participant 3 in FG#3 echoed her point, “*I need support, like a worker to come with for the next little while to show me what to do; so, something like that, yeah.*”

Further descriptions of positive job coaches/workers included those who stayed onsite when needed during early employment days: regularly checking in with service recipients around their needs and process as well as assisting the PWD with navigating the systems that might hinder employment success were highlighted as positively supporting the job-seeker with a disability. For example, service recipients described support workers accompanying them to the job site to apply for a job or to hand in the resume. The support worker might assist with communication with the manager or supervisor. In fact, one participant described how her support worker facilitated her finding a job:

She came with 'cuz she's the one that got me the job and she came with me, and she drove me. Like she drove me there, and we're like, it was fun. I enjoyed doing it with X. She sat, she came with me. You know, she taught me how to do things... then she would go out for an hour, and then she would come back and make sure I was doing it right. It was fun, I enjoyed doing it (FG#3,P4).

And another participant described,

I usually get help here [non-profit agency]. I usually get some help because, um, I find if I look for a job they won't hire me; so I have to have someone to help me. That's the only way I can work. That's the only way or they won't hire me... I try to do it by myself and they won't hire me. They won't. (FG#8,P7)

Other supports described as helpful by PWDs included assistance with creating a resume. Drop-in groups offered peer mentoring opportunities with others job seekers that some individuals described as helpful and encouraging. Finally, job coaches and/or employment support workers were critical in assisting job-seekers and employers in ensuring that appropriate accommodations were in place.

Accommodations

Accommodations and supports were central to facilitating a successful individualized approach to supporting job-seekers with a disability and ensuring a good “fit” between the employee and the workplace. One critical area that was repeatedly raised throughout the study was the practical importance and necessary assistance with transportation:

The worst part when I started was I still couldn't walk very far [physical disability]. They got me a driver... so, when I first started they had somebody drive me around to do all this, plus interface with the jail, (place of employment), and after a couple of years of steady employment, I managed to lease a vehicle. (Int#23)

Many service recipients were not able to take the bus or their work site was not close to transit. At times the SR did not have money for bus fare until they received pay. And, some SRs who have physical disabilities have mobility challenges requiring assistance with transportation.

Of note, some service recipients highlighted the importance of accommodations for cyclical disability that may require flexible accommodations and supports that enables her/him to keep her/his job

during a flare-up but that might lessen or be withdrawn when the health situation improves. One service recipient who described having a cyclical impairment shared a story of a support worker providing support on the job site in a way that enabled her to keep her job; then when her health improved, the support was withdrawn. The example of cyclical disabilities or chronic illness highlights the relationship between the diverse and unique needs across and between disabilities and the importance of an individualized approach to employment supports that takes into consideration this complex diversity.

Importantly, service recipient interviews repeatedly underscored that accommodations and supports cannot be viewed as only at the workplace for success to happen. In fact, it is clear in the present study that ongoing and ancillary supports are important and a part of an individualized approach to employment supports.

Ongoing & ancillary supports

Repeatedly, participants underscored the importance of addressing ancillary needs that were not specifically employment related in order for them to effectively engage in the labour market through paid employment or to be able to actively seek employment. For example, several participants made comments or observations about the importance of free or very inexpensive services of a practical nature - like free meals, recreational classes, help with grocery shopping and general life skills, pain clinics, exercise classes or peer support that supported them in a more general way to maintain health and well-being that in turn assisted them to work or look for work. Clothes and shoes were mentioned as some jobs require specific items and many PWDs did not have the ready cash to purchase the needed items until they begin to receive paycheques. For example, one participant shared.

There was no funding for me when I started my part-time job that I ended up having to leave. I didn't have money to get proper footwear that they wanted me (to have). They wanted me to have black dress shoes... If I'd had gas cards or some kind of transportation for the extra cost of gas. The first month of work is always going to put you into the red... Maybe some kind of lunch

service. If there was somewhere I could go and have a free lunch besides having to go all the way back to the [homeless shelter] or, if there was somewhere that locally would give a discount for people that are working with a disability... (Int#2)

Another participant explained,

I mean there needs to be some kind of allowance, like we need more money for transportation 'cuz like busses just don't do it. Like, when I was working at [store], you know, we have to, you'd have to be available from open to close and any, on any of the weekends... It's kind of crazy, like they don't allow for cab fare, you know, or something to get home safe. (FG#1,P4)

And participant #8 shared,

[ACL] will help you if you need shoes or pants, though, right? But yeah, everyone's cut back on how much, unless it's a real hardship. But, if it's just a thing to help you get a job... 'cuz we don't have the nice clothes. When you're on PWD you can't afford the best type of shoes for work or whatever. I know [ACL] have helped me get shoes. (Int#8)

Thus, service recipient interviews highlighted the interconnection between accommodations and supports and integrated policy frameworks that would make it possible to develop an individualized employment plan that includes ancillary supports and accommodations to facilitate success for job-seekers with a disability.

Attitudinal/Societal/Demand Side

Finally, and not surprisingly, service recipients tacitly and explicitly highlighted the significance of addressing the demand side of employment and societal attitudes in order to reduce barriers to the labour market and increase employment success for PWDs:

I think they need to, they need to talk to employers, all employers, like employers who aren't

small businesses maybe medium businesses, they should talk to them and have them set at a certain quota, based on the popula- the percentage of the population who has a disability, they should have a quota to hire people with disabilities, and there are a lot of companies doing that, and, and uh, they hire, they do hire a lot of people with disabilities. (Int#6)

And participant #4 in focus group one stated, *I think it should be a law that you have to have people working who are disabled (FG#1,P4).*

Thus, service recipients recognized the need for change at the employer, demand side of the labour market that would reduce barriers to employment for PWDs, but this further involved addressing societal and attitudinal barriers. For example, the following quote points to the discrimination that exists in the labour market that needs to be changed: *“When you're called in for an interview, you should be able to say, ‘I have a disability,’ and not be discriminated for it” (FG#1, P2).* Participants in focus group #10 lamented,

P3: A lot of companies don't want people like us, you or me because -

P1: They're scared!

P6: They're scared of disabilities...

P1: ...And they don't want to give people a chance, but nowadays they're supposed to be.

Everyone should be equal, but I think there are still places that ... don't open doors much. And, like people in this room, we fight all the time.

Addressing the ongoing societal barriers and the demand side of the labour market are key priorities. Because as service recipients pointed out, and exemplified by the following quote,

It's hard to get a job. It's hard for people to even get your foot in the door. I mean some people get so frustrated they want to give up: why get up in the morning, to get up to go out to do anything when they're getting told 'no' or doors slammed in their faces? (FG#1, P1)

DISCUSSION

The move to the WorkBC model was underscored by laudable goals and principles easier access, a more integrated system of employment supports, and a results driven approach. The latter goal was certainly supported by the failure of previous systems to make a significant impact on disability employment rates. What the research reported here though suggests, is that in seeking to develop a more generic, results driven system, many of the more disability specific aspects of an effective employment system have been lost or muted in the transition. The good news is that none of the issues raised are insurmountable, and with appropriate ‘tweaking’ the WorkBC model can be modified and improved to address the key barriers identified in the research and evolve into an effective system of employment support for people with disabilities. Finding a better balance between disability specific supports and the ‘one-stop-shop’ approach’ of WorkBC has clearly emerged as the key message. Below we summarize the key issues emerging from the research and offer recommendations for addressing these moving forward.

- A lack of specialized disability supports
 - As a result of the reduction of the number of contractors under the WorkBC model, there appears to be a shortage of specialist supports for individuals with disabilities who may require more robust supports to both find and retain employment. From the current research we cannot determine the extent of this problem as it likely has regional variations, however, a consistent message from both service providers and PWDs was that this lack of support undermines their ability to find and retain employment. This seems to be more acute in rural/remote areas and with regards to people with episodic or more complex disabilities. This is to a large degree an issue of finding the right balance between a ‘one-stop-shop’, generic approach and necessary specialist supports.

- A lack of comprehensive accessibility in WorkBC Centres
 - As above, this likely has significant variation across the province but a consistent message from the respondents was that many offices and systems do not currently provide comprehensive accessibility. By comprehensive we mean going beyond issues of physical access to address the full range of access issues including issues of literacy, plain language, personal assistance requirements, and an environment that is non-threatening and minimizes potential stressors for job seekers. Cost of phone usage, transport to centres, and requirements to have access to IT are also issues of concern raised by respondents which impact accessibility.

- A lack of inclusive culture and knowledge about disability
 - Again this will vary across the regions but respondents frequently noted a lack of knowledge and understanding of disability by WorkBC staff and contractors. This relates to the above issue and resonates throughout this section. It can act both as a barrier to accessing support and in a failure to identify and address the needs of disabled job seekers.

- Inflexible or cumbersome protocols and administrative systems
 - While an efficient and effective system is an important goal for any employment support system, rigidity in application may have unintended consequences. For PWDs this may limit their ability to get the type and degree of support they require. Examples included the tier system which determines the number of weeks of support persons can access and the concept of ‘employment ready’ which if wrongly interpreted can serve to exclude many PWDs who with the right type of support are more than job ready. These issues become more acute in the context of a ‘pay for performance’ type system (see below).

Comments regarding the ICM system are also relevant here however this is largely a technical issue that WorkBC and the MSDSI are aware of and are working to improve.

- Results or a ‘pay for performance’ approach can unintentionally exclude or inhibit disabled jobseekers.
 - While a results based focus is commendable in many way and helps to avoid previous patterns of disability employment services being funded with little or no accountability for actually getting people jobs, in a generic system such as WorkBC it can have the effect of marginalizing those who require complex or intensive (and often costly) support. In the absence of sufficient disability specific providers and contract particulars which recognize the distinct needs of providers working with this population, it can result in a “creaming effect’ leaving those who want to work but require extensive support marginalized. A further issue here was the feeling described by several respondents that they did not share the same goals as the workers and were ‘pushed’ to accept jobs which did not conform with their personal employment goals.

- Lack of coordination/integration with disability support system
 - Many respondents indicated that while they want to work a lack of disability supports such as aides and devices or accessible, reliable transportation severely restricts their ability to find and retain employment. While this is outside the specific scope of WorkBC, it is a critical component in ensure PWDs are ready for and able to undertake employment. Better awareness of WorkBC staff about disability supports and how they can be accessed so that they can provide referral information and work collaboratively with these services will enhance the prospects of PWD in gaining employment.

- Lack of communication across WorkBC and contractors
 - As noted in the report, respondents indicated that there were many examples of good practice across the province but mechanisms for sharing best practices and collective problem solving are limited.

- Overburdened system
 - Service Provider participants indicated that they are often hindered in providing the level of support an individual may require due to high caseloads. This is exacerbated by performance based systems which may encourage workers to focus on ‘quick wins’ in a context where they are unable to effectively address the needs of their entire caseload.

- Additional Issues
 - Several other issues were noted that are beyond the remit of WorkBC but impact the employment outcomes of PWD. These include employer attitudes, stigma and reduced expectations. In addition, respondents noted the lack of a ‘demand focus,’ i.e. work with employers to make them more receptive to employing PWDs. Many of these issues are being addressed through other initiatives of the MSDSI, other government ministries and the not for profit and private sector. The Accessibility 2024 initiative notably seeks to directly address many of these issues as do initiatives such as Ready, Willing and Able. The limited focus of these results-based services on the employment needs of the person creates frustration for the person with a disability. Much of this frustration stems from the fact that many barriers fall outside the mandate of these employment services (Cohen et al., 2008; Barrett, Scott, Wiles, & Symmons, 2000; Blanc, Cisternas, Smith, & Yelin, 1996; Kaye, 2003). Issues that fall outside the parameters of these services but directly impact the person’s employment situation include, but are not limited to, lack of affordable housing, one-on-one advocacy services, accessible transportation, difficulties accessing income assistance and related

benefits, medical coverage, and home support services (Cohen et al., 2007) (Hockman, 2010, p. 11). For WorkBC, it is important that they are aware of these barriers and communicate with other government and non-governmental sectors about challenges they encounter with regards to these issues and in turn seek advice and how they can help inform and support these initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. WorkBC should undertake a review of the balance between generic and specialist services for PWDs and adjust accordingly to ensure that timely, effective and appropriate supports are available so that PWDs are not unduly disadvantaged by the 'one-stop-shop' approach and to maximize their employment outcomes. Regional variation should be a key aspect of this review.
2. WorkBC should undertake an accessibility audit of all its direct and contracted services to ensure all persons regardless of their disability can access services in a fair and equitable fashion. This should include particular attention to those with cognitive and mental health related disabilities and literacy (including computer literacy) related needs. Economic accessibility should also be considered with particular regards to phone usage, transport and IT.
3. WorkBC should review its current caseload numbers and ensure staff and contractors have the resources they require to effectively meet the needs of disabled jobseekers and to avoid unintended disadvantage to those who may require more intensive or complex support.
4. WorkBC should consider increased training for staff and contractors on disability related issues to improve awareness, reduce stigma, enhance awareness of other disability supports and enhance accessibility.

5. WorkBC should review its protocols and systems to increase flexibility with regards to disability related needs. Of particular concern are issues with regards to job readiness, length of support and 'pay for performance' related issues which may have unintended negative impacts on disabled jobseekers.
6. WorkBC should seek ways to enhance communication across staff and contractors to share best practices and promote a shared learning culture across the organization.
7. WorkBC should continue to work with other disability related support systems and government to support and enhance social conditions and support systems which promote and support PWDs' job readiness and retention and reduce attitudinal, structural and social barriers which reduce PWDs' opportunities and ability to find and retain employment.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

As noted in the introduction, employment outcomes for persons with disabilities have been largely static despite a plethora of programmes and approaches and significant investment by government and the non-profit sector. In this respect, the WorkBC initiative is a welcome attempt to try a different approach. Work BC's approach of providing easy access through a 'one-stop-shop' approach and reducing the somewhat disjointed and ad hoc system of specialist services which had evolved over many years has many potential strengths and advantages over previous approaches. The key message of this report is not that WorkBC has been a failure or cannot evolve into an effective vehicle for enhancing the employment prospects of PWDs, but rather that it needs to find a better balance between disability specific supports and the generic system. Further, for a generic system to be effective, it must ensure there is sufficient knowledge and awareness of disability related issues and accommodations so that they

do not inadvertently exclude or disadvantage PWDs. Embracing the idea of ‘universal design’ broadly writ within all aspects of the system is critical to ensure that ‘generic’ does not translate into ‘mainstream’ service and further marginalizes those with disabilities.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that this study is a ‘snapshot’ in time. Since the study period, WorkBC has implemented changes which may address some of the concerns and issue noted here. It is hoped that this report will further strengthen and support the process of refinement and improvement in the system and contribute to the goal of ensuring that PWDs are able to seek and retain employment on an equal basis with other citizens in British Columbia.

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APPENDIX 1

A Review Of Disability Related Labour Market Policy In Canada And British Columbia And Brief Overview Of The Scientific Literature On Employment And Disability

B.C. has a vision of becoming the most progressive place for people with disabilities to live in all of Canada. (Province of BC, 2014)

The Government recognizes the contributions that persons with disabilities can and do make to the economy, and that employment provides all individuals with a sense of dignity and independence. It also recognizes . . . that there is a good business case for hiring persons with disabilities.
(Government of Canada, 2014)

We are a population in waiting – waiting for government to implement strategies and approaches which support people with disabilities to exercise their skills and expertise. Such action by the Government of Canada would demonstrate that they both recognize and value the place of people with disabilities in this country – after all, there is no “THOSE PEOPLE”. We are you.
(Council of Canadians with Disability, 2013a)

These quotes, representing different stakeholders, all express an explicit desire to promote the inclusion of persons with disability in the Canadian labour market and society. And yet, the history of employment outcomes for people with disabilities suggests that there is a large gap between rhetoric and reality. This becomes abundantly clear reviewing the literature on employment and employment policy regarding persons with disability.

This review will provide a brief overview and framing of the approaches noted in the literature on best practices and barriers to employment rather than a review of this ample literature which has been the subject of multiple reviews over the years (see for example Dowler and Walls, 2014; Crawford, 2004; 2012; Stainton et al 2009). A summary of key barriers and promising practices is provided in Appendix 1A. The key focus of this review will be to provide an historical and critical review of the myriad of policy and program initiatives related to the employment of persons with disabilities in Canada and British Columbia in order to both elucidate this tangled web of policy and provide a context for understanding current initiatives. We begin with a brief look at the statistical picture of persons with disability in Canada and in British Columbia.

The Statistical Picture

A general comment needs to be made about disability related statistics before taking a closer look at them. It is important to underline that census statistics are descriptive in nature. They give us a picture of the distribution of a given population at a particular point in time. They cannot tell us anything about causation; they do not “account for” anything. Currently data is typically drawn from three main surveys administered by Statistics Canada⁴ that report data on persons with disability: the 2001 and 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Surveys (PALS)⁵, and the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). The CSD uses a different definition of disability than that of the PALS in order to better align with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities definition of disability. Therefore, Statistics Canada stresses, “Because of the major differences in concepts and methods between the 2006 PALS and the 2012 CSD, it is neither possible nor recommended to compare the prevalence of disability over time between these two sources” (Statistics Canada, 2012c). Province of British Columbia reports continue to use PALS data. However, PALS statistics do not include persons living in residential care or on First Nations reserves. The BC provincial reports go back and forth on whether or not to adjust the data to include an estimate for these populations (Canada – BC Labour Market Agreement Persons with Disability Annual Report LMAPWD AR, 2013). For these reasons, among others⁶, there are discrepancies in the disability rates cited. This paper will use 2012 CSD statistics whenever possible.

According to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), 3.8 million (13.7%), or more than one in ten working age Canadians report having a disability (activity limitations), and these numbers are expected to increase dramatically as the population ages (Statistics Canada, 2012a). If we consider persons with disability in the context of their family relationships, it is reasonable to estimate that disability policy directly affects 35% of the Canadian population (Canadian Disability Policy Alliance,

⁴ Federal Government Reports also use the General Social Survey, 2008 [Canada]: Cycle 22, Social Networks (Statistics Canada, 2008). The BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons With Disability Annual Report (2010) uses the 2008 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (See Statistics Canada, 2011).

⁵ The first HALS survey was conducted in 1986. Its name was changed to PALS in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2012c).

⁶ Some reports also use demographic projections to estimate current statistics from earlier PALS data (For instance, LMAPWD AR, 2010).

2010). Further, it is increasingly recognized that, “At some point in our lives we all will use services built and designed to make Canada more accessible and inclusive” (Council of Canadians with Disabilities, 2013b). Disability policy, then, is not simply a concern for small minority of Canadians—it affects us all.

The disability rate in British Columbia (14.8%) is higher than the national average (13.7%) by more than a full percentage point; CSD results indicate that 546,746 British Columbians report activity limitation (Statistics Canada, 2012b).

As noted, employment statistic can be confusing and different survey methodologies are not easily comparable. Disability statistics are particularly difficult to interpret as labour force participation rates, those who are currently in work or looking for work, are usually much lower for PWDs than the general population and employment statistics only report those in the labour force so they can easily under-represent the gap between those with and without disabilities. Table 1 indicates that for those between the ages of 15-64, BC’s participation rates and employment rates for PWDs are slightly higher than the national average but still lag considerably behind those without disabilities.

Table 1: Participation and Employment rates persons with and without disabilities (CDS, 2012)

CANADA	<i>PARTICIPATION RATES</i>	<i>EMPLOYMENT RATES</i>
<i>Persons With Disabilities</i>	53.6	47.3
<i>Persons Without Disabilities</i>	79.3	73.6
BRITISH COLUMBIA		
<i>Persons With Disabilities</i>	54.8	48.4
<i>Persons Without Disabilities</i>	78.2	72.7

It is important to remember that persons with disabilities do not represent a homogeneous group (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada [HRSDC], 2012) and general labour market statistics do not necessarily gives us a sufficiently nuanced picture to effectively analyze how various groups within the disability community are doing relative to one another and the general population. The

disability experience is wide and varies according to, among other things: the age of the onset of disability (early/adult onset); whether or not the disability is permanent, episodic or progressive in nature; whether the person is healthy or has chronic health issues; whether the disability is visible or invisible; whether it is physical, sensory or cognitive; and in degree of severity. Therefore, federal guidelines recommend:

Government policies and programs should ensure equality of access to support services regardless of gender, age, cultural background, type of disability, or how the disability was acquired. In addition, every effort should be made to ensure that people with disabilities can access, read and understand all information that is made available to the public (HRSDC, 2012, p. 8).

In general though, some trends are consistent in the data: the disability rate is increasing, in part as a result of the aging population; those with higher levels of education have higher employment rates; and; more persons with a disability are in the lowest income brackets than persons without a disability (Stats BC, 2009). Again, it is important to keep in mind that general statistical information needs to be tempered with more refined and multi-factorial information for specific groups and combinations of groups such as people who do not live in major cities, women, Aboriginal people, seniors, youth, persons with severe or episodic disabilities and different disability types (BC Stats, 2009; HRSDC, 2012).

Barriers and “Best Practices”

This section will offer a critical review of the concept and history of the literature on barriers and best practices. We will not attempt to review this literature directly as there are literally 1000s of studies and meta-studies on ‘best practices’ and related issues. Rather this section will examine theoretical and conceptual issues associated with this literature and its evolution. A summary table of the key barriers and promising practices to address them as discussed in the literature is provided in Appendix 1A.

It is important to underline that the impetus behind barrier research grew out of a new understanding of disability that emerged amidst disability activism in the 1970s called the socio-political

in North America) or social model (in the UK) of disability⁷. Lyn Jongbloed and Ann Crichton observe, “This new definition of disability recognizes that improvement in the status of persons with disabilities requires alterations in the external environment rather than changes in individual functional and economic skills. It acknowledges that discriminatory attitudes rather than functional impairments are the principal problems confronting disabled people” (1990, p. 33). The social model entails a radical change for professionals working with persons with disability; instead of asking, ‘What is wrong *with* this person,’ the fundamental question becomes, ‘What is wrong *for* this person.’ The focus becomes “the identification of disabling barriers” (Morris, 2004, p.24).

It is now more than 30 years since the socio-political model of disability was first articulated. A few comments are in order. First, there is an unmistakable tension between traditional understandings of disability (the medical model) and the social model. The core debate concerns where you locate “the problem” and thus, efforts of remediation: in the individual and/or in society. Generally speaking, most organizations in Canada have come to understand disability “as a complex interaction between the health condition of the individual and the contextual factors of the environment” (WHO ICFDH, 2001) (See for example, Statistics Canada, 2012a; HRSDC, 2012). Second, in the social model, there is a clear distinction drawn between impairment (the bio-medical condition) and disability (disabling barriers resulting from discrimination) (UPIAS, 1975). While this has been criticized on a number of fronts, what is important here is that the social model stresses that the bio-medical condition, in itself, is not a barrier. It may involve functional limitations for individuals, but *barriers* lie in the society that does not accommodate those limitations. The key point here is that *barriers* be clearly defined as those systems and structures in the social organization of society (such as attitudes, practices, information/communications, policies, technologies, and environments) that prevent full participation of persons with disability in society.

Finally, it should be noted that the work of identifying and removing barriers is central to the

⁷ There are differences between the American (also called the Minority Group Model) and the British social model (See Harlan Hahn (2002) and Mike Oliver (1990) respectively). However, at issue here, is that both grew out of disability activism and draw attention to barriers and social discrimination.

implementation of human rights and employment equity legislation for persons with disability in Canada and around the world⁸. The first stated purpose of The British Columbia Human Rights Code 3(a) is “to foster a society in British Columbia in which there are no impediments to full and free participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of British Columbia.” It is a very real concern that the recitation of lists and categories of barriers may serve to mask the fact that any discussion of barriers is fundamentally a question of discrimination and human rights.

The history of barrier research in Canada dates back to the ground-breaking 1981 *Obstacles Report* (Virtual Museum, 2003). In 1980, the all-party Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped was formed to evaluate existing programs for persons with disability in Canada and to make recommendations for improvement.⁹ The final report included 130 recommendations “that touched every aspect of the social, economic and legal situation of persons with disabilities, including human rights, leadership and coordination of disability issues, employment, income, disability supports, access to information and communications, transportation, and issues affecting Aboriginal people with disabilities, among others” (Collin, 2012, p. 2). The *Obstacles Report* is significant not only because it helped ensure the inclusion of persons with disability in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Virtual Museum, 2003) but also because it remains the most comprehensive investigation to date into programs for persons with disability in Canada. Between 1981 and 2012 some 20 reports and studies have emerged from the House of Commons alone, most dealing in part or exclusively with economic inclusion and employment (Collin, 2012). Influential reports include: *The Report of the Royal Commission into Equity in Employment* (1984), *Equality for All* (1985); *A Consensus for Action: The Economic Integration of Disabled Persons* (18 June 1990); *Pathway to Integration: Final Report, Mainstream* (1992), and *In Unison: A Canadian*

⁸ Examples include: the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990), the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Australia, 1992), *The Disability Discrimination Act* (United Kingdom, 1995), the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2001), the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005), and *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (ratified in Canada, 2010)(PSC, 2011).

⁹ To get some idea of the scope of the evaluation, over two years, collectively, the seven Special Committee members and 23 staff, visited five countries (United States, Great Britain, Sweden, France Germany), held briefings with 17 government departments and agencies (municipal, provincial and federal), held public hearings in 18 cities across Canada, heard the testimony of over 400 witnesses (including persons with disability, their families, service providers and disability related organizations) and reviewed over 600 written submissions (Lever et al., 1981).

Approach to Disability Issues (1998). It cannot be over emphasized that the barriers discussed in more recent studies are largely those addressed in these early reports written 15-30 years ago (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2011).

While barrier research grew out of the activism of persons with disability, the history of best practices is rooted in the literature of professional organizations in fields such as: social work, education, disability management and rehabilitation (See for example, Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, 1998; Dunn et al., 2008). Government agencies borrowed the term and researchers such as Osburn, Caruso, and Wolfensberger (2011) maintain that its use is highly problematic; what constitutes best practice is not always clear, may not be evidence-based, and is often determined without input from the “practiced-upon.” Osburn et al. assert,

Simply saying that something is “best practice” does not mean that it is, in reality, the best practice, or even a good one. Further, labeling something a “best practice” can be conceptually misleading. Perhaps worse is that the circumstance where the “best practice” label presents a “stamp of approval” that has the effect of preventing the analysis of the pros and cons of a practice (2011, p. 216).

With respect to labour market policy and programs for persons with disability in Canada, the complexities involved in program evaluation and the lack of comparable indicators across service providers, programs and ministries means that there is little formal evidence to demonstrate that policy and/or programs have achieved measurable success¹⁰ (Crawford, 2012; Graefe & Levesque, 2013). Where there are successes, these are not necessarily attributable to policy/programming alone. Therefore, the “best practices” mentioned in the literature could perhaps more aptly be called “best-that-we’ve-got” practices. Crawford follows Human Resources Development Canada’s lead and adopts the term “promising practices” (2012, p. 8). The concern is not whether or not these promising practices may be helpful, but rather that calling them “best practices” hides the reality that the issue of employment for persons with disabilities is a problem that has not been solved. Thinking that we have achieved “best practices” can impede learning,

¹⁰ There is a growing emphasis on evidence-based practice for programs for persons with developmental and mental health disabilities, particularly with respect to supported employment and social enterprises (See for example, Cohen et al., 2008; Morrow et al., 2009, CMHA Ontario, 2012). The discussion here concerns provincial employment programs more broadly.

innovation, and the development of “better” practices.

Another way that the expression “best practices” gets used in the barrier literature involves a turn from the “negativity” of focusing on barriers towards a more positive framing of the situation. A good example of this is found the 2013 study by the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities:

We explored the barriers – some physical and many attitudinal – but chose to focus on the positive. Our goal is to shine the light on best practices and successes among Canadian employers who have welcomed people with disabilities into their ranks. Their examples can help us learn and do better (p. 4).

The important element here is “their examples can help us learn and do better.” In light of the critique of “best practices” presented, a better way to discuss successes like these in the future might be to call them something like “Examples to Learn From.”

There is a vast amount of academic literature written about barriers and best practices. A Google Scholar search using the key words “barriers to employment persons with disability” returns over 200,000 results. On March 1, 2014, narrowing the search parameters to “Since 2014” reduced the number to a stunning 3,210 academic articles. Tightening the search again by adding “Canada” to the string of search words, trimmed that down to 1,100¹¹. Note that this represents only the academic literature on the topic and does not include the grey literature. The sheer volume of the literature raises certain questions: Are we, as researchers, service providers and government agencies, in danger of mistaking talk for action? More pointedly, could the energy expended talking about barriers become a barrier to change?

One of the key messages submitted in 2013 to the Standing Committee on Finance by the Council of Canadians with Disability states:

Barriers to employment have been well documented over the years and HRSDC should create a user-friendly report highlighting current barriers and where possible best practices to address these barriers (2013a, n.p.).

Therefore, one recommendation of this present paper is that a meta-study (or scoping review) be initiated towards that end. Particular attention needs to be paid to how barriers and promising practices are defined

¹¹ As of March 30, 2014 that number had increased to 1,930.

and determined.

A key issue that consistently arises is workplace discrimination. Although BC Stats (2009) refers to it as “perceived discrimination”, in 2005, more than one half of all complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission were related to disability (Lindsay, 2011). In an employee survey by the Public Service Commission (2011), “77% [of employees with disability] indicated that they had experienced discrimination on the grounds of mental or physical disability” (p. 13). This provides a caution that getting people work is only one of the challenges that we must address if we are to reach full equality in the workplace.

Labour Market Policy for Persons with Disability in British Columbia

One might think that a literature review of employment policy for persons with disability in British Columbia over the last ten years would be a fairly straightforward endeavor. The reality is however that the ground is continually shifting. There are changes in funding bodies and structures; federal-provincial responsibilities; changes in ministries and names of ministries; in programs and service providers; and, in who is or is not eligible for services. In the literature, disability policy is described as, “impenetrable and unnecessarily complex,” and as, “conflicting, fragmented, incoherent, not user-friendly” (Bond and McColl, 2013, p. 4). Rebecca Bond and Mary Ann McColl in their 2013 review of disability policy in Canada explain:

We use the term “disability policy” as if it referred to an entity that was widely recognized and acknowledged as such. The reality however is quite different. Policy of interest to people with disabilities ranges across jurisdictions, across sectors within government, and across programs within ministries. In fact, there is a patchwork of legislation, regulations, programs, providers and entitlements that requires considerable probing to reveal, and considerable patience to understand. (p. 4)

This is true even within the scope of employment policy in British Columbia.

In this review, the primary sources used for tracing British Columbia’s disability policies are provincial and federal government reports. The first challenge that presents itself is finding the reports. For example, the 2007 Canada – BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Annual

Report indicates that it “is the third annual edition produced under the terms of the LMAPWD” (p. 2). However, we were unable to locate the first two. Therefore, in order to facilitate future policy research, Appendix 1B offers a working reference list of the primary sources and government documents located for this study.

A second issue is that the provincial reports are public-face or what you could call “present-your-best-face” documents. In the midst of all the changes described above, and in the desire to ensure “seamless transitions,” the actual, specific changes being made and their impact and implications for service providers and persons with disability are often glossed over. These have to be ascertained by comparing reports, reading between the lines and the use of secondary sources. Furthermore, there are significant omissions in the reports. For, example, the 2002 *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act* (EAPWD) and its changes in eligibility requirements for disability benefits are not mentioned at all even though it undergirded the development of the 2002 Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities. This review, then, can only be a beginning. It is very probable that other researchers will find details and corrections that need to be added in order to paint a fuller and more accurate picture.

The following section will include: a brief summary of the Federal-Provincial Labour Market Agreement process, and a working Time Line as a general overview of disability employment policies followed by a discussion.

Federal-Provincial Labour Market Transfer Agreements

In Canadian social policy history, employment and training have been contentious issues in the division of powers between the Federal and Provincial/Territorial governments. Harvey Lazar writes that prior to Labour Market Development Agreements, “There was considerable intergovernmental acrimony around which order of government should control” active labour market programming (2002, p. 2). Shortly after the 1995 Quebec referendum, the Federal government offered to devolve employment programming to the Provinces/Territories in order to reduce spending and to create a “more flexible

federalism” (Wood, 2013). Bilateral Federal-Provincial/Territorial negotiations “to establish partnerships for the delivery of Part II Employment Insurance programs and services” began in 1996 (Lazar, 2002, p.2). In the years that followed, the Provinces/Territories negotiated various Labour Market Development Agreements with the Government of Canada: Some signed “fully devolved” agreements (Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut); some reached “co-managed” agreements (British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon); and Nova Scotia negotiated a “strategic partnership” (Lazar, 2002).

Since 2007, the federal government has devolved all Labour Market Development Agreements with the Provinces/Territories. In British Columbia, negotiations began in 2007, an agreement was signed in 2008 and the fully devolved LMDA was implemented in 2009. This involved “the transfer of administrative responsibility for the delivery of over 350 contracts to the Province” (Coward, 2013, p.4).

Currently, there are three separate Labour Market Transfer agreements the government of Canada negotiates with the Provinces/Territories to fund programs designed to meet the needs of unemployed Canadians: 1) Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA); 2) Labour Market Agreements (LMA); and 3) Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPWD). The final two agreements evolved out of LMDAs were designed to fill gaps in programs and services.

1) Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA)

The 1996 *Employment Insurance Act* involved a shift from passive income benefits to active employment programming delivered under Part II of the *EI Act*. The Employment Insurance Account (paid for by the contributions of employers and employees to EI) provides funding for Employment Benefits (long-term services for insured persons), and Support Measures (short-term services for to all Canadians) (Lazar, 2002; Bertrand, 2013).

2) Labour Market Agreements

LMAs were initiated in 2007 to provide programming for unemployed individuals who are not

eligible for Employment Insurance, and for employed persons with low levels of literacy, essential skills and education. “The focus of Labour Market Agreements is to develop skills for unemployed individuals, including—but not limited to—persons with disabilities” (Collin et al 2013, p. 5). The Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement was signed in 2008.

3) Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities

The 2004 federal budget announced the “Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities.” The Multilateral Framework guided the negotiation of LMAPWD’s with the Provinces/Territories and replaced the 1998 Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Agreements. LMAPWDs provide dedicated funding for programs designed to increase the employability and employment opportunities for persons with disability and to demonstrate “the best possible results for Canadians on these investments” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014, n.p.). The Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities was signed in 2004 and renewed in 2014. It is a cost sharing agreement where provincial funds must match (or exceed) those provided by the federal government up to a maximum of \$30.74 million (2012, 2013).

While increased accountability, a focus on outcomes and public reporting are major emphases within the LMAPWD, and the 2007 Canada-BC LMAPWD Annual Report (p. 16) states the commitment of the BC government “to reporting and improving the quality and effectiveness of the reporting over time,” the actual reporting of outcomes for the years 2007-2012 is sketchy at best. For instance, the reports outline four potential kinds of indicators for EPPD:

- Base Indicators: the number of clients to take and complete EPPD. “When clients enroll in EPPD, it is assumed that they will obtain some improved understanding of their abilities and employment options” (LMAPWD AR, 2009, p. 9).
- Partial Indicators: the number of clients who receive disability supports, “an indicator of the program’s objective of reducing barriers to employment” (ibid).

- Incomplete Indicators: the number of job outcomes
- Descriptive Indicators: success stories (Reports underline that these are not summative indicators).

Nevertheless, the only actual statistics offered are at first approximations and then what the reports call “Incomplete Indicators” (they do not reflect clients who may be at different stages of the EPPD process; they do not indicate whether or not these jobs are maintained; and they say nothing about the kind/quality of the position). Statistics for base and partial indicators as described in the reports are not provided in any report, but the descriptive indicators, success stories, always are. Table Two presents the outcomes reported in LMAPWD Annual Reports for EPPD from 2007-2012 and for the disability special population of the EPBC in 2013.

Table 2: EPPD Outcomes Reported in LMAPWD AR 2007-2013

Year	# Clients (EPPD)	# Job Placements
2007	To date 17,000 Approx. 4,000 transitioning to new service model	
2008	Approx. 5,000	
2009	Approx. 4,000	
2010		2,605 since 2007
2011		3,242
2012		3,713 since inception
2013	#s for PWD special population not given	No #'s given

While overall reporting has improved considerably since 2012 under the Employment Program of BC where “controls are built into the program model” (LMAPWD AR, 2013) and monthly reports are published, the lack of outcome statistics specific to persons with disability in the 2013 LMAPWD Annual Report is quite troubling. The monthly EPBC report for August 2014 indicates that 71% of case managed clients self-identify as belonging in at least one “special population” (Aboriginal, francophone, immigrant, person with a disability, having multiple barriers to employment, survivor of violence and/or abuse, or youth), and of those, 33% as persons with disabilities. However, outcomes specific to the

persons with disability “special population” are not reported even though the LMAPWD AR states that, “The Ministry is able to identify the numbers of clients accessing services, types of services and levels of supports received in real time” (LMAPWD AR, 2013, p.12).

Table Three provides an overview of Federal and Provincial employment policies and legislation concerning persons with disabilities.

Legend:

	From the Minister’s Council: ESPD Initiatives
	Transition Years
	LMPWD Reports: Accountability
	Social Development and Innovation

Blue Text	BC Policy
Red Text	Agreements with Federal Government concerning Persons with Disability
Bold	Federal Economic Plans
<i>Italics</i>	<i>Legislation</i>

Table 3: Provincial – Federal Disability Policies and Legislation

Provincial Policy/Legislation	Year	Federal Policy/Legislation
	1961	Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Agreement (VRDP)
	1982	<i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i>
	1985	<i>Canadian Human Rights Act</i>
	1986	<i>Employment Equity Act</i>
<i>BC Human Rights Code</i> <i>Disability Benefits Program Act (DBPA)</i>	1996	<i>Employment Insurance Act</i> LMDA negotiations with P/Ts begin (Some provinces “fully devolved”, some “co-managed”)
	1997	Opportunities Fund Created Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement Signed (co-managed)
	1998	Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Agreement (EAPD) replaces VRDP
<i>Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act (EAPWD)</i> <i>Community Services Interim Authorities Act</i> Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD) (Three year service plan) Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities (EPPD)	2002	
Minister’s Council on Employment for PWD	2003	Canada-BC LMDA agreement extended
	2004	Budget 2004 introduces Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (replaces EAPD) Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities signed
<i>Community Living Authority Act (Replaces Community Services Interim Authorities Act)</i>	2005	
Redesigned EPPD	2007	Advantage Canada: requested the negotiation of fully devolved LMDAs with remaining P/Ts Announcement of LMAs
	2008	Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement signed (LMDA) Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement signed (LMA)
	2009	Fully devolved Canada-BC LMDA implemented
	2010	<i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i>
Employment Program for BC (EPBC) replaced EPPD	2012	
Redesigned the <i>Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act</i>	2013	
	2014	Economic Action Plan Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (Renewed)

Timeline: Disability Policy in British Columbia

The Time Line is mainly derived from two overlapping sets of reports: the Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities Annual Reports (MCEPD AR) from the fiscal years 2003-2004 through to 2007-2008; and Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Annual Reports (LMAPWD AR) from 2007-2013¹². The two sets of reports have different audiences and objectives. The first set is written for the provincial government, while the second combines descriptive reporting with accountability measures (budget, outcomes) for the federal government (a requirement of all Labour Market Agreements the Government of Canada has with the provinces).

British Columbia's 2002 Employment Strategy for Persons with Disability (ESPD) was fleshed out in the years 2002-2007. Despite changes in Ministries, funding and service models, the over-all structure of the ESPD remained the same with new initiatives being added each year. To reduce duplication, the symbol ☒ is used in the Time Line to indicate that this is a new initiative for that year—all the previous initiatives continue. This first section of the Time Line is titled "From the Minister's Council: ESPD Initiatives".

For the reporting years 2007-2008, things get a little more complicated. British Columbia's 2007 renewed Disability Strategy set out a different focus (and structure) than that reported in the Minister's Council reports of previous years. Additionally, after 2007, the redeveloped EPPD involved five¹³ services areas and the reports needed to take into account new requirements for the Canada – BC Labour Market Agreement. This called for some creative reporting—in the LMAPWD reports for 2007 and 2008, what we get is two reports in one. The first (indicated in the Time Line as A: Disability Strategy Focus) fits elements of the old ESPD into (and under) the new umbrella Disability Strategy, and the second (indicated in the Time Line as B: Labour Market Priorities) maps "programming components" of the ESPD onto the five services areas cost shared under the LMAPWD. This second section of the Time

¹² One set of reports names years in the format "2003-2004", the other simply states the year "2004". This results in some confusion in synthesis.

¹³ The number of services areas reported 2008-2013 changes from year to year. The author is unclear if this reflects a change in provincial government organization or is a choice made by the author(s) of the reports.

Line is entitled “The Transition Years”.

The annual LMAPWD reports for 2009-2011 contain only part B of the transition year reports above. This third section of the Time Line is called “LMAPWD Reports: Accountability”. Last, in 2012, the EPPD is replaced with the Employment Program for British Columbia (EPBC) under the newly formed Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation. The fourth and final section of the Time Line is called “Social Development and Innovation”.

Name changes in the main ministry responsible for the implementation of employment programs and services for persons with disability are indicated in green: The ministry has been re-name five times in the last twelve years. As a final explanation of the Time Line to follow, information that is obtained from sources other than the Annual Reports and comments clarifying events are included in a text boxes.

2002-2006 Reports from the Minister’s Council—ESPD Initiatives

Ministry of Human Resources

2002 *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act (EAPWD)*
 Disability Benefits 1 → Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB)
 Disability Benefits 2 → Persons with Disability (PWD)

Apr 2002 **Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD)**

3 Core Initiatives for Subsequent Years:

- Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities (EPPD)
 - Dec 2002 Pre-Employment Services
 - Sep 2003 Planning and Employment Services
 - Sep 2003 Assistive Technology
 - May 2004 Self-Employment Services
- Jan 2003 Minister’s Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities
- Apr 2003 Disability Supports for Employment Fund (Vancouver Foundation)

Dec 2003 “A Profile of Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia: Employment, Labour Market Needs and Occupational Projections.” (R.A. Malatest & Associates)

2003 -Transition to business-oriented funding model
 -Contracts are awarded through a competitive bidding process
 -Funding is based on a “fee-for-service” or “pay-for-performance”
 (Cohen et al, 2008)

2004 Recruitment and Retention of Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia Research Project (Minister’s Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities and the British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources)

Jul 2004 Adjudications for PPMB moved to field offices. New medical form.
Impedes: unable to work for >10 hrs
Precludes: unable to work

“Unsustainable growth in PPMB caseload.” “Policy reinforces that clients must try all interventions to overcome their non-medical barriers to be eligible for PPMB.” (MHSD, 2010)

Dec 2004 WorkAble Solutions: Website, Employer Handbook¹⁴, Corporate Video

Ministry Of Employment and Income Assistance

Feb 2005 BC Employer/Persons with Disabilities Inclusion Marketing Pilot Project (The Marketing Pilot) “Living Business Case”

Jul 2005 *Community Living Authority Act* (Replaces *Community Services Interim Authorities Act*, 2002)

Jul 2005 Supported Work Placement transferred from Ministry of Children and Family Development to Community Living British Columbia (Crown Agency responsible for services to adults with developmental disabilities)

Nov 2005 EPPD Review: focus largely on milestones, reporting difficulties
“The transition to the current business model has been difficult for both Ministry staff and service providers” (Heino & Associates, 2005, p.1).

Mar 2006 PPMB *Impedes*: redefined to “impedes financial independence” (\$510/month or work >50 hrs)

2006 10 by 10 Challenge (in partnership with 2010 Legacies Now)
 WorkAble Solutions Online Services Enhancement Project
 WorkAble Solutions Marketing and Mentoring Project
 Minister’s Council Speaker’s Bureau
 Embrace the WorkAble Symposium

2006 BC Human Resources Association becomes the official partner of WorkAble Solutions

Winter 2006 “A formal program evaluation of EPPD took place which confirmed the results from the 2005 Program Review” (LMAPWD, AR2007, p. 20).
Results “determined a need to integrate services... specifically pre-employment services into EPPD” (LMAPWD, AR 2008, p. 23).
Existing contracts with services providers were extended one year (to July 2007).
(authors unable to locate the formal program evaluation).

¹⁴ Included in Appendix 1B.

2007-2008: The Transition Years

Apr 2007 **The Disability Strategy**
The Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD)

- 2007 Re-developed Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities (EPPD)
 2010 Legacy Now Initiatives: Measuring Up¹⁵, Access Works, Accessible Tourism

2007 -Transition to Integrated Service Model
-Shift from a program-centred to a citizen-centred service delivery model¹⁶
-Review of disability program eligibility criteria for streamlining (LMAPWD, AR2007)

Jul-Sep 2007 Official transition period

The ministry selected the Neil Squire Society, BC Society of Training for Health and the Employment Opportunities (THEO BC), and WCG International HR Solutions as the primary service providers.

Oct-Nov 2007 Community Living BC review of its Supported Work Placement Program (Queenswood Consulting Group)

Ministry of Housing and Social Development

A: Disability Strategy Focus:

Five Main Principles:

- 1) Integrated programs and services: to simplify access, streamline processes, reduce wait times
 - 2) Personal supports: (previously Disability Supports for Employment Fund)
 - 3) Housing: (previously Housing Matters BC)
 - 4) Accessibility and Inclusion: (previously Legacies Now partnership)
 - 5) Employment and Income: (previously Ministers Council initiatives, EPPD)
 - BC Training Tax Credit
- July 2008 Amended the Community Living Act
 Created a task force to improve eligibility criteria for CLBC
- Aug 2008 Launched Personal Supports Web-site
- Oct 2008 Opened 2 Personal Support Centres
 Launched pilot program with CMHA-BC Peer Support to improve access for persons with mental health disability

Listed as “Partnerships”¹⁷ LMAPWD 2007, 2008:

- 2010 Legacies Now

¹⁵ Included in Appendix 1B.

¹⁶ Definition of Citizen-Centred Service: “CCS incorporates citizens’ concerns at every stage of the service design and delivery process; that is, citizens needs become the organizing principle around which the public interest is determined and service delivery is planned.” (Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, 2013)

¹⁷ “Partnerships between governments and voluntary or community organizations (VCOs) are an increasingly salient feature of welfare states” (White, 2008, p. 3).

- British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)
- Community Living BC
- Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities Service Providers
- Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PWDAC)
- Post-Secondary Institutions
- Provincial Equipment and Assistive Devices Committee (PEADC)
- Provincial Health Authorities

B: Labour Market Priorities

2007-2008 The Province's Annual LMAPWD Investment \$84 million

Five Services Areas—“Initiatives”:

(Areas that are “cost shared and that most directly relate to the principles and goals of the LMAPWD [education and training, employment participation, employment opportunities, connecting employers and persons with disabilities, and building knowledge]” 2008, p. 16.)

2007

- 1) Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities (MIEA 2007: MHSB 2008)
- 2) Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (2007)/Ministry of Housing and Social Development (2008)
 - Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities
 - Volunteer Initiatives
- 3) Community Living British Columbia
 - Supported Work Placement

2008 Discussion paper: *Defining a Path to Inclusive Employment*

- 4) Ministry of Health
 - Mental Health and Addictions Services
 - Addictions Services
- 5) Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
 - Disability Services
 - Adult Special Education
 - College and Institute Library Services
 - Post-Secondary Communication Access Services
 - Interpreting Services
 - Program Institutional Loans of Adaptive Tech
 - Assistance Program for Students With Permanent Disability

“The LMAPWD agreement differs from the earlier agreements in that it provides BC with greater flexibility in the design of programs and services, and it increases accountability through public reporting requirements that focus on the outcomes of these efforts” (LMAPWD AR 2010, p. 16).
-Change from fee-for-service based funding to outcome-based funding (See Gewurtz et al., 2014)

2008-2011: LMAPWD Reports—Accountability

2008-2009 Labour Market Development Agreement fully implemented
Effects of global economic downturn felt in BC
The Province's Annual LMAPWD Investment total not stated

Jan 2009 Provincial government reorganization: (Fully devolved LMDA implemented)
 Ministry of Housing and Social Development: now responsible for gaming, housing, liquor, and Community Living BC
 Amalgamation of key areas:
 1) Employment Division, responsible for all ministry employment programs, and the Labour Market Services
 2) Transition Office, responsible for oversight of the LMDA transfer and EI Part II programs and services.
 Ministry of Health → Ministry of Health Services

“This amalgamation. . . helped to further align labour market resources, providing opportunities for more direct information sharing and service integration” (LMAPWD AR, 2009).

Four Services Areas

1) Ministry of Housing and Social Development
 Mar 2009 PPMB moved from *EAPWD Act* to *Employment and Assistance Act* (PPMB cannot be assessed for spouses of PWD)(MSDSI)
 PPMB Redefined: Score > 15 Employability Screen + taken all reasonable steps to overcome barriers + medical condition barrier *seriously impedes*

2) Community Living British Columbia
 3) Ministry of Health Services
 4) Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development

Apr 2009 Non Profit Sector Labour Market Partnership Agreement: addresses human resource issues in non profit sector

2009 Equipment and Assistive Technology Initiative (EATI) pilot project.

Funded through LMA, EATI was a partnership between the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and the BC Personal Supports Network who was responsible for delivering the EATI. EATI provided a source of funding for assessment, trialing, acquisition and/or training with equipment and assistive devices for people with disabilities who have employment or voluntarism goals.

Ministry of Social Development

2009-2010 The Province’s Annual LMAPWD Investment \$94.6 million
 Apr 2010 Community Living BC Employment Policy “real work for real pay”
 Nov 2010 Phase I: **Integrated Case Management System** (to replace outdated technology)

Five Services Areas (another shuffle)

- 1) Ministry of Social Development
 - Ministers’ Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities
 - Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities
 - Volunteer Initiatives
- 2) Community Living British Columbia
 - Supported Work Placement
 - Customized Employment Demonstration Project Initiative
- 3) Ministry of Health Services

- Healthy Minds, Healthy People: A Ten-Year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance Use in B.C.
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services¹⁸
 - Case Management
 - Pre-Employment and Education Support
 - Supported Education
 - Supported Employment
 - Therapeutic Volunteer
- Substance Use Services (LM goal improved vocational and educational functioning through reduced substance use)
 - Outpatient Services
 - Residential Treatment
 - Supportive Recovery
- 4) Ministry of Science and Universities
 - Disability Services
 - College and Institute Library Services
 - Post-Secondary Communication Access Services
 - Interpreting Services
 - Program Institutional Loans of Adaptive Tech
 - Assistance Program for Students With Permanent Disability
- 5) Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development
 - Adult Special Education

2010-2011 The Province's Annual LMAPWD Investment \$93.8

Four Services Areas

- 1) Ministry of Social Development
 - (Minister's Council mandate is being revisited)
- 2) Community Living British Columbia
 - Employment Services
 - Information Sharing Agreement with the Ministry of Social Development
- 3) Ministry of Health
- 4) Ministry of Advanced Education (takes on initiatives of Ministries of Science and Universities and Regional Economic Skills and Development)

2011-2012 The Province's Annual LMAPWD Investment \$96.3

- Minister's Council on Employment and Accessibility (new name and expanded mandate)

Four Services Areas

- 1) Ministry of Social Development
- 2) Community Living British Columbia
 - Community Action Employment Plan
- 3) Ministry of Health
 - Mental Health and Substance Use (Merge of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Substance Use Services)

¹⁸ It is not clear whether or not these are new initiatives. However, it is the first time they are reported.

- Assertive Community Treatment (Team Case Management Model)
 - Mental Health and Substance Use Minimum Reporting Requirements (MHSU–MRR).
- 4) Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology
- Learning Disability Assessment Bursary (LDAB)
 - BC Access Grant for Deaf Students (BCAG-DS)

2012-1014: Social Development and Innovation

Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation

Apr 2012 **Employment Program for BC (EPBC)** replaced EPPD
 Work BC Employment Services Centres
 (Devolution Phase 3)

-Integrated program model, “single window” (one program with an array of services), EPBC clients, including those with disabilities, receive services that are both federally and provincially funded. “The program places particular emphasis on ensuring that the needs of clients from specialized populations are being met. On average, sixty nine percent of new case managed clients are self-identifying with one or more of the following Specialized Populations groups: Aboriginal People, Immigrants, Francophone, Multi-barriered, Person with a Disability, Rural and Remote Populations, Survivors of Violence and/or Abuse, and Youth” (LMAPWD AR, 2013, p. 9).

-Number of service providers reduced from over 400 to 73. (Coward, 2013)

-Service delivery through 93 Employment Service Centre storefronts as well as itinerant services, satellite offices, outreach services and remote access services.

-Same “look and feel” and services offered throughout the province.

Apr 2012¹⁹ Self-Serve and Application Tool
 Employment Readiness Information Questionnaire
 Employability Screen: Tool for determining PPMB
 Client Employability Profile
 Employment Plan
 Voluntary Participation Plan

May 2012 Community Living: Customized Employment Demonstration Project ended (140 individuals transitioned into other programs)

Sep 2012 Ministers Council on Employment and Accessibility

- Action Plan Framework
- Presidents Group
- Disability White Paper Consultation and Summit

Sep 2012 The BC Centre for Employment Excellence launched²⁰.

¹⁹ Examples of all tools in Appendix 1B.

²⁰ Established to support the employment services sector, including employers and service providers, to help improve employment outcomes for all unemployed job seekers in the province. The Centre’s maximum budget over three years is \$2 million, and is funded through the Canada-B.C. Labour Market Development Agreement. In addition, a \$1.5 million research fund was set up for three years to support innovative approaches to the delivery of employment services. (MSDSI. <http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/ministry/employment-excellence.htm>)

- Nov 2012 Phase II: **Integrated Case Management System**
- 2013/14 The Province's Annual LMAPWD Investment 86.2 million
- Mar 2013 Phase III: **Integrated Case Management System** (ICM Service Provider Portal)

Queenswood Consulting ICM Assessment Report, 2013: "Overall the concern is that the system is driving practice and not the other way around."

Four Services Areas

- 1) Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation
 - Supporting Increased Participation and Community Inclusion – Demonstration Project (Disability Without Poverty Network)
 - Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations
 - Monthly earnings exemption was raised to \$800 (\$1600 for a couple)
 - Option of annualized earnings exemptions (Phase One)
 - Rapid reinstatement of disability benefits
 - Employment Program BC
 - Self-Serve Services
 - Case Management: Formal needs assessment process, support services, disability supports, specialized assessments
 - Jul 2013
 - Additional service model enhancements to ensure responsive programming
 - 2) Community Living British Columbia
 - Results of Community Action Employment Plan: ("Keys")
 - CLBC employment services
 - Seamless coordinated services
 - Information sharing and measurement
 - Employer engagement
 - CLBC leadership: become model employers
 - Local plans: regional challenges and opportunities
 - Transitioning youth
 - 3) Ministry of Health
 - Developing a Psychosocial Rehabilitation Service Framework
 - 4) Ministry of Advanced Education
- Mar 2014 White Paper Consultations
- Apr 2014 BC Accessibility Summit
- Aug 2014 EATI ended
- May 2014 Disability Consultation Report: *Moving Together Toward an Accessible BC. A Reflection Of The Voices Of British Columbians Heard During The Disability White Paper Consultation*

Discussion

In reviewing the documents for the above Time Line, it is evident that the Government of British Columbia has been actively developing labour market policy for persons with disability over the last decade. In the midst of growing caseloads and fiscal restraints, ministries have paid attention and responded to the concerns of stakeholders, promoted new initiatives, addressed gaps in services and worked to improve accountability. These achievements will be addressed in the next section along with concerns about some of the unintended effects of labour market policy and programs for persons with disability in British Columbia.

There are many examples of the responsiveness of the BC Government to the concerns raised as barriers to employment in the literature. These include among others: a concerted effort to reduce wait times for the processing of applications, bus passes, tax credits and, most recently, raising the monthly earnings exemptions, allowing the option for annualized earnings exemptions and facilitating the rapid instatement of disability benefits. Further, the Ministers' Councils have worked creatively to address the demand side of the employment equation including: WorkAble Solutions, the 2010 Legacies Now partnership, the Presidents Group and the Disability White Paper Consultations/Summit. The widely supported White Paper consultations, completed in March, and the April 2014 Summit offered an opportunity to significantly improve policy and services in line with community priorities. Finally, across services areas, ministries are clearly working to improve accountability. Two examples are Community Living's 2010 Information Sharing Agreement and the Ministry of Health's 2012 development of the Mental Health and Substance Use Minimum Reporting Requirements. These are all indicators that the BC government is taking its vision seriously. In order to effectively continue this work, the unintentional effects of policy also require attention. These include the need to identify policy barriers, address the effects of devolution, and promote organizational learning and innovation.

Generally, disability policy is framed as an effort to address barriers for persons with disability. The issue that presents itself is that disability policy itself can create barriers. This occurs when policy inadvertently reinforces or even reinstates attitudes (beliefs, assumptions, taken-for-granted ideas) about

persons with disability that work against the very change the policy hopes to inspire. The Ontario Human Rights Commission notes:

A systemic barrier is not just a single rule or policy but a combination of policies and/or guidelines that result in the exclusion of people identified by a Code ground such as disability. Organizations should understand and be aware of the possibility that systemic barriers may exist within their organization, and actively seek to identify and remove them.

One systemic barrier that is repeatedly highlighted in the literature (see for example, Chouinard, 2010; HRSDC, 2010; Lindsay, 2011) is evidenced in one of the assumptions the Employment Plan of British Columbia for persons with disability is built upon: that is that the main barrier to employment is the disability and that barriers lie within the individual (clients “have” barriers). This is assumed even though it is well documented “that the major obstacles to employment [persons with disability] face is not the disability itself but systemic and attitudinal barriers” (MHR, 2003, p. 1).

Consider the following description of EPPD clients:

EPPD clients are those British Columbians whose primary barrier to employment is their disabling condition; clients may also have other significant employment barriers that need to be addressed. (LMAPWD AR, 2007, p. 23)

This clear example of *slippage* in scale from the structural to the individual level, social context is erased and socially based problems become ascribed to the individual (Morrow, 2009; Prince 2012). The result is double discrimination; persons confronting discrimination are held responsible for that discrimination. More practically, it can engender a view that those with more complex impairments are not good candidates for employment.

A second systemic barrier is a culture of suspicion. This is perhaps most evident in the on-going concern regarding eligibility for Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers status. A Ministry of Housing and Social Development (2010) report entitled, “Explaining the Decline in the Persons with Multiple Persistent Barriers Caseload” states, “There is evidence that many clients who receive PPMB may not be *truly* barriered, or are able to overcome their barriers” (p. 1, emphasis ours). Besides the questionable reasoning of this report, and the totalizing nature of the PPMB label itself (the person becomes reduced to a bundle of barriers), the fact remains that a primary objective of employment programming is

overcoming barriers. What is revealed is a culture of long-standing mistrust, a culture that spends considerable time and resources to try to separate “the worthy” from “the unworthy” applicants. Other mechanisms such verification, eligibility and compliance reviews often operate according to a similar ethos of suspicion.

While current statistics on the incidence of benefits fraud in BC are difficult to find, the 2004 reassessment of 14,000 persons receiving disability benefits resulted in the closure of only 46 cases (British Columbia Auditor General Disability Report, 2004; cited in BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, 2007). If these were indeed fraudulent cases (rather than failure to meet changes in eligibility), the estimated fraud rate would be only one third of one percentage point. From another angle, the annual report from the BC Office of the Ombudsperson (Carter, 2013) indicates that the Ministry of Social Development received more complaints than any other ministry and that the number of complaints in 2012-2013 were 16% higher than the year before. The bottom line is that suspicion does not translate into respectful practice.

A second set of unintended consequences concerns the impact of devolution on voluntary sector and non-profit organizations. The paucity of research on the topic underlines the need for this present study. However, there are four general areas of concern discussed in the literature limited as it is. The first considers the unequal nature of the relationship between organizations and the partnership state (White, 2008). The concern is that because organizations are competing for government funding for their survival, their autonomy may be compromised, their mission diluted, and their capacity to maintain advocacy roles limited (Alexander, 1999; Scott, 2004; Curtis, 2005; Elson, 2012). A second set of issues revolves around the short-term focus of a contract culture that makes funding uncertain and, therefore, organizational planning (long range), innovation and flexibility increasingly difficult (Scott, 2004; Burnley et al, 2005; Curtis, 2005). More and more, organizational energies and resources are directed towards fundraising and the labour-intensive Request for Proposal (RFP) process rather than service provision, program evaluation or program development (existing programs often get hastily re-packaged and re-fitted for the next round of RFPs) (Levesque, 2012). A third area relates to staffing issues and organizational capacity including:

finding and retaining well-qualified staff, staff-burn out, and a growing gap between the values that first motivated individual employees to enter the field of social services and the service model mandated by government programs (Burnley et al, 2005; Curtis, 2005; Kosny, 2011). Finally, a fourth matter concerns potential consequences of a fee-for-service or fee-for-performance payment structure. Fee structure changes in the 2012 EPBC (MSD, 2009) have attempted to address the problem of “creaming” often raised in the literature (that is, directing efforts towards those individuals most likely to achieve results) (See for example, Hockman, 2010). Again, we see the attentiveness of the government to concerns raised. An issue that remains, however, is that service providers, understandably, direct their efforts towards those activities for which they receive payment. Individuals with disability often come to service providers with complex legal, financial and advocacy needs (Burnley et al, 2005). Connecting people to appropriate referrals and resources is essential, but this takes time and is not compensated for in the fee structure. The result can be a service culture where it is accepted that “people fall between the cracks all the time.” Specific to this current report, the reduction in service provider numbers and consequent loss of experienced of specialized non-profit providers of employment services to people with disabilities may further erode the access and support for those with more complex disabilities. While there is no evidence to date of the impact of this, the current report seeks to shed some light on this issue.

The final unintended consequence of current disability policy is a theme that runs throughout this review: that is that learning and innovation can be stifled in a competitive, present your best face atmosphere. Part of the issue is the need for transparent and responsive program evaluation across Ministries, service providers and programs involving all stakeholders, and the need for adequate funding and the staffing resources to do it (Graefe and Levesque, 2010). The Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training (ASPECT, 2007) has issued a Call to Action towards these ends (See Neault and Pickerell, 2008).

One side of the learning process involves sharing success stories as examples of what is possible and as strategies for promoting attitude change. Reports, policies, and labour market agreements are full of them. However, the flip side of success stories, flop stories if you will, may be just as important.

Stories of those things that were tried but did not work out as expected or problems encountered along the way are vital learning tools. The reluctance to share our less-than-success stories reveals much about the learning climate in disability policy at the present time. These must however be coupled with measurable and comparable outcomes data-most critically, how many people obtained and retained jobs.

If nothing else, this review highlights the long history, complexity and general lack of stability in employment policy for people with disabilities in British Columbia and Canada. While it cannot be said that there has been a lack of attention or investment, the sobering reality is that there have been no significant gains in the employment rates of persons with disabilities as a result. This suggests that the governments' commitment to do better is well placed and that the status quo was not a reasonable option. What remains to be seen is if the current approach will yield better results and whether we can find a stable approach-and retain it-which leads to employment equality for people with disabilities in Canada. It does not benefit any of us to discuss barriers apart from human rights, "best practices" without acknowledging we can do better, or our success stories at a comfortable distance from our less-than-success stories. A united commitment to authentic learning, tangible progress and on-going innovation is called for in order to truly realize the Province of BC's vision: *Becoming the most progressive place for people with disabilities to live in all of Canada* (2014).

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APPENDIX 1A

Working Table of Barriers and Promising Practices

(BC Stats, 2009; Canadian Council on Learning, 2009; Chouinard, 2010; Cohen et al., 2008; Colin et al., 2013; Crawford, 2010; HRDC, 2002; HRSDC, 2010; Goldberg et al, 2007; Government of Ontario, (n.d.); Hole et al., 2013; HRSDC, 2002; Hutchison et al, 2008; Lindsay, 2011; Morrow et al., 2009; Ontario Human Rights Commission; Panel, 2013; PSC, 2011)

Barriers	Promising Practices/Towards Solutions
Process barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulty with application process for EPPD: 23 page form, long processing times, common refusal on first submission, daunting appeal process -Individuals feel demeaned by process and/or ministry personnel -Concern about rapid reinstatement of disability benefits if lose employment -Concern about losing health benefits -Earnings exemptions too low -Many need a combination of assistance and employment income -Unintended outcome “precarious employment” -Difficulty in evaluating outcomes/indicators (-Lack of accountability at all levels of government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regularly review programs to address concerns -Develop professional values/guidelines and feedback systems for program users <p style="text-align: center;">} Addressed by BC government 2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build program evaluation into process at all levels -Establish accountability indicators that are meaningful to persons with disability -Involve persons with disability in program evaluation at all stages
Communication/information barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of plain language -Application forms not accessible -Material not available in alternate formats -Lack of interpreters -Websites not accessible -Persons may not have computer access, or computer skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop inclusive means and tools -Create on-call list of interpreters for all locations -Provide awareness training and standards for IT personnel -Improve access to computer technology and training

Environmental barriers	
-Buildings not accessible	-Consider legislation such as Ontarians with Disabilities Act
-Noise, allergens, lighting	-Accommodations
Barriers in the workplace	Access to Supports and Services
-Need for employer education, inadequate information/tools	-Facilitate training and awareness: for employers, managers and employees
-Lack of incentives for employers to hire persons with disability	-Provide incentives: work subsidies, recognition programs, consider stronger legislation
-Lack of recruitment processes and resources for hiring qualified persons with disability	-Invest human and financial resources in recruitment
	-Develop a recruitment strategy integrated in the human resources and business plans
	-Provide a business case for hiring persons with disability
	-Develop an outreach, marketing and communications strategy focused on persons with disability, non-governmental organizations, and university and college student centres for persons with disability
	-Consider legislation such as ODA
-Employer unaware of duty to accommodate and/or accommodations possible	-Develop practical guides/handbooks for employers, list of resources, contacts in the community, successful examples.
-Difficulty negotiating accommodations or insufficient accommodations	-Use flexible arrangements (telework, part-time jobs, job sharing and job carving, etc.) to increase employment opportunities
-Need for job flexibility	
-Fear of disclosure	
-Social isolation	
-Discrimination: hiring, promotion, job responsibilities	-Provide training in human rights and employment equity legislation
-Negative attitudes of co-workers/need for supportive co-workers	-Develop clear policy on workplace accommodations
-Need for disability advocate in workplace	
-Need for on-going employment support(s)	-Build supports and funding for them into employment plans
	-Employ Disability Lens in planning
-Change in technologies, construction, parking etc. that do not consider accessibility issues	
-Lack of access to work experience, gaps in employment	-Provide internships and CO-OP positions to students with disabilities, including summer employment, so they can gain work experience.
	-Develop networks and partnerships between service agencies and human resources
-Lack of coordinated support services (for employers and persons with disability)	-Fund networking activities

Barriers to Education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need for accommodation in education -Need supports, accommodations that are portable from school to work and to home -Literacy -Need to further Post-Secondary and other learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Coordinate services and supports across ministries
Structural Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Living in poverty -Inadequate transportation -Lack of affordable housing/substandard housing -Need for home support services -Unmet health needs -Difficulty finding a doctor -Difficulty with legal issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review benefit levels -Funding for transportation (especially in remote areas) -Job accommodations in work schedules that take into consideration bus schedules -Coordinate services across ministries -Address barriers to health care -Address barriers to legal system

APPENDIX 1B

Primary Source Documents (Chronological)

Current Canada-BC Agreements

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