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and Social Development and the Status of  
Persons with Disabilities**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki**



## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1105)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP)):** Good morning. I'm going to call the meeting to order.

My name is Chris Charlton. I'm sitting in today for Ed Komarnicki, who is normally the chair of the human resources committee. I very much appreciate your being here today as we undertake our study entitled "Exploring Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities". We have a two-hour agenda today. The first hour will be your opportunity to make brief presentations, and then committee members will take the remaining time to follow up and ask you questions.

Do we have three presentations or two? We have two presentations.

I don't know if you have a preference about who goes first, but may I invite Ms. Krassioukova-Enns to perhaps go first?

Oh, all right. Ms. Fletcher Rattai, I'll turn the floor over to you. Welcome.

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai (Executive Director, People First of Canada):** Thank you for having us here today.

I'm going to start by briefly telling you who People First of Canada is. We are the national voice of Canadians labelled with an intellectual disability.

I was going to do a PowerPoint, but we had some technical difficulties, so I have to read off my slides. I apologize. The following information represents the current views of People First of Canada on employment for people with intellectual disabilities.

People with intellectual disabilities should have choice and opportunity to earn a living through paid employment in the labour market. Employers must be open to a diverse workforce. Job accommodations and supports need to be provided where needed, and wages should be equal to those of persons without disabilities.

Historically, people with intellectual disabilities have been placed in sheltered workshops and long-term make-work projects on the assumption that people were thought to be unemployable. In these workshops, the work is devalued and the pay is often less than \$2 a day. Furthermore, people are congregated and segregated in these work placements.

We believe that all people have value; that people labelled with intellectual disabilities are the untapped labour market and bring a wealth of skills and talent to the workplace; and that with appropriate supports, labelled people have proven to be loyal, reliable, conscientious employees. Research shows that these people are sustainable employees. This means in plain language that they don't job-hop.

I am going to read a quote from the Hon. Philip Lee, who is the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba:

We're recognizing employers today for doing the right thing for others. But we're also recognizing them for being smart.

It's good business to connect with workers who really want to contribute. It's good business to make accommodations that help you retain workers who are committed to what they do.

For people with intellectual disabilities, accommodations include plain language, the right to an adviser—and in our world, an adviser is a person without an intellectual disability—and job-related accommodations.

Plain language is critical for people labelled with an intellectual disability. Plain language helps make information more accessible and understandable. People with intellectual disabilities have the right to full benefits of employment beyond a paycheque. There are social, personal, and community benefits that come from being in the regular workforce, not in a sheltered work environment.

What can People First do? We can continue to educate members about their rights and their responsibilities in relation to the workforce in Canada. We can work with employers to promote the benefits of hiring people labelled with an intellectual disability, and we will continue to promote real work for real pay for all Canadians.

We will ensure that all citizens with intellectual disabilities have the right and the opportunity to work and be employed; ensure that sheltered workshops are not options for employment of people with intellectual disabilities; and ensure that job accommodations are provided so that people with intellectual disabilities can be employed.

What you, the government, can do is increase employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. Working together, all parties can help make positive change in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by helping to ensure equal and valued employment.

Thank you. I'm going to turn the mike over to Shane Haddad. Shane is the president of People First of Canada and resides in Regina.

**Mr. Shane Haddad (President, People First of Canada):** Good morning. I'm glad to be here today.

You don't know me but I'm not that much different from other people you know. I'm married, I have three kids, a grandchild, a dog, a house, a car, and all the stress that comes with those things.

I'm an involved parent, a community member, and a volunteer with a Diamond Jubilee medal and a Saskatchewan Centennial medal for my contributions. I love sports and I'm an avid Roughrider fan.

**Voices:** Hear, hear!

• (1110)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Your time is up. No.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Shane Haddad:** I thought we were on Canada's team.

I have stood at podiums and sat on panels like this many times before. I have done it in my own community, in my province, and across the country. I have presented at the United Nations and now at the heart of my country's government, here at Parliament. I have spoken about issues like closing institutions and making schools more inclusive. I have spoken for my community on behalf of others and for myself.

Today I am here to speak to you about employment issues. I thought I would use my own experiences. When I introduced myself, I told you some things about my life. Here are some other things about me.

I was put in a residential school when I was young and didn't receive a very good education. I don't have my grade 12. I have worked in a sheltered workshop. All my life I have struggled to be employed and support myself and my family. When I was a young man looking for my first job, I didn't have my grade 12 education and I wanted to work in maintenance. I did more training to try to get those jobs. I got my boiler papers, but didn't have my high school diploma. I would apply for jobs in the field, but didn't get hired even with my papers. I kept trying to work and eventually I got a job with a lawn care company. I worked for it for a while before I decided to start my own yard care company. I knew the work and the equipment and I liked doing it. I started advertising and got my own customers and kept going from there. I was around 30 then so I have been in the business for 20 years.

The work is seasonal. When Mother Nature is your boss, life is often about feast or famine. That is the way I have been living for a long time. I have wanted to get other work but it is difficult. I have more challenges than other people when it comes to being employed. Some of those challenges are because of my disability, but others are not.

My most recent challenge in employment is that I found a job but I didn't know if I should or could take it. I needed a job, but the employer's philosophy was not what I believe. Everyone who works at this business has a disability, except for management. I could see

the words I had fought against all my life: segregation, congregation, and isolation. I could also see a paycheque, my bills paid, food on the table, and gas in the car. As an activist, I did not want this job, I did not want to give up my ethics and beliefs for a paycheque linked to my disability and nothing else. As a responsible husband and father, I needed this job. I wanted to provide for my family and for our future.

This is my challenge, but it is also yours. Employment for people with intellectual disabilities is not about a party or a political affiliation. It is about people, about dignity and respect, and about rights.

• (1115)

I support people with intellectual disabilities in my country. To be included and valued: all parties in our government must also choose these values to help increase not only the employment opportunities, but also the real employment of people with intellectual disabilities.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Krassioukova-Enns, if you would make your presentation, that would be terrific. Then we'll go to questions from the members on all three presentations.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns (Executive Director, Canadian Centre on Disability Studies):** Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to share our view, to share the work of many people in Manitoba and in Canada and around the world.

I'll just start with a couple of words about the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, because this is quite a unique organization. It was established in 1995 by a pioneer and leaders from four sectors: the disability community, academia, the government, and the private sector, with the idea that the main gap at that time was identified: the lack of shared knowledge among these four sectors about what disability is, what professionals know—and I am talking about those working in all four areas including the disability community—and what they have to know to have the critical ability to review their policies and practices and to develop joint strategies and implement them.

The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies was established as a working partnership model among four sectors. This term is quite commonly used right now, but in reality can such a partnership work? I think today we are discussing if there can be a working partnership between the government and the private sector to address the existing gaps and the need to change the practices within the private sector, not only to hire people with disabilities when some leaders in the private sector understand, but to make it a systemic issue so that tomorrow when those leaders retire, the good initiatives will not disappear.

I want to talk about a few things. The framework that we are using at the Canadian Centre for Disability Studies was developed in 2002 when we worked with the World Bank to look at their lending mechanisms for success.

The framework consists of three parts: access, inclusion, and participation. In those three areas different questions could be asked. Many of you are familiar with different ways of using a similar framework, but if you use the framework we can look at the barriers that were identified, for example, in the latest report about access for people with disabilities to jobs, advertisements, training opportunities, education opportunities, and stable jobs, as well as opportunities to move from one region or province to another without losing benefits and support.

Such questions could also be asked about access by the private sector to the most current knowledge and practices that can be applied on a systemic basis.

There are three main issues in particular that we would like to bring from our research over the last 10 to 15 years.

First is the fact that Canada is a country of many who live in two parallel domains, the private domain and the public domain. We have policies and practices for the public domain—they are good policies and practices—and we have different policies and practices for the private domain. Sometimes they work together and sometimes they don't.

The second issue is the existing silos among many sectors, such as education, employment, transportation, housing, supports, etc. There are numerous good working practices, promising practices and policies in all those sectors, but how many of them are competing? How many of them are trying to address similar target groups without utilizing human resources, financial resources, and best practices?

The third area is how easy and how often we incorporate our own learning through best practices, research, and development in a systemic way to address a constantly changing environment. For example, how often are research recommendations or best practice recommendations from whichever sector they come incorporated on a policy level by different levels of the government?

Those are three particular issues within the framework of access, inclusion, and participation.

I want to highlight some barriers and also identify some recommendations.

● (1120)

The barriers to employment for people with disabilities are not new. We know them. We have done the research for the last probably 10, 15, 20 years. One of the most prominent barriers is negative attitude. Quite often it's based on a lack of knowledge. How good are we in using the knowledge that already exists within the disability community, within the public sector, to change the attitude? How well are we using the strategies?

The biggest barrier in the workplace consists of two particular things: transition from education to employment for all of us, and returning to work. These two biggest transitional issues are the

barriers to how well our graduates will be equipped to compete in the open labour market. Do we provide them with opportunities of mentorship or internship, to compete and utilize our diverse options, but also utilize the technology of the 21st century?

Some income and disability support programs actually discourage people with disabilities from seeking career progression because they could lose their disability support. We don't think about the long-term transition approach in this case.

There is also a lack of job accommodations and support for people with disabilities seeking employment, such as transportation, communication devices, housing, flex hours, modified job tasks, and an accessible building environment.

I would like to highlight some recommendations today, but there are more I could highlight.

The government, business sector, and disability community need to work together and with a particular focus to promote positive employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. It is important to look at what policies and practices from the public sector domain are successful and how they work and whether they should and could be applied to the private sector. We don't need to reinvent the wheel. They work. This particular question is especially important right now. For Canada there is a question about what is the corporate responsibility in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Is it only the responsibility of the government, only the responsibility of the community, or is it a joint responsibility between the government and corporate sector to implement this?

The next recommendation is to develop and provide initiatives that promote entrepreneurship opportunities for people with disabilities, such as accessible loans, training in and support for business management, and networks for entrepreneurship for disabilities.

I would like to mention one example. From 1996 until 1999, our centre conducted three stages of studies on access to business opportunities for people with disabilities. Based on our findings and recommendations, Western Economic Diversification started a government program to support access for people with disabilities to business opportunities with funding of up to \$18 million. This program is active still. It's very successful in providing tools to transition from school to work with employment services and opportunities for work experiences.

Think about internship, mentorship, and the new opening opportunities with the change in the demographics in both private and public sectors. Also, think about working with employers in creating inclusive workplaces and helping them to equip with necessary resources. I'm going back to the framework of access, inclusion, and participation. We have building codes for our public premises. Why don't they apply to private premises?

What can the federal government do? Employment services are a responsibility of the provinces and territories; however, there are certain roles for the federal government to play in improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities, by providing direction and guidance, facilitating inter-regional collaboration, and assisting regional efforts in identifying and filling in the gaps.

•(1125)

Some specific initiatives that we see could address those gaps include establishing a systemic mechanism for knowledge exchange, again taking into consideration all four sectors: the disability sector or community, academia, governments, and the private sector. For example, there could be a clearinghouse on previous and current initiatives, best practices, and policies across Canada, again including public and private. There could be the gathering, generating, and exchanging of knowledge about best practices worldwide and knowing what we already tried, what worked, what didn't work, and ensuring that this information is not only available, but also utilized. We could facilitate inter-regional initiatives, the premier initiatives that duplicate the successful models in a province to others, and inter-regional employment recruitment strategies. Also, we could gather longitudinal data that connect promising employment strategies and practices for people with disabilities and positive outcomes.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

We'll start our rounds of questioning with Mr. Sullivan.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Thank you, all three of you. Those were compelling words and compelling examples.

I want to start with Shane and Shelley.

Your story is a typical one, I think, of many individuals who would like to have permanent, ongoing, non-precarious employment, but the systems out there provide sheltered workshops or other such congregated, segregated, and insufficient employment. What is the federal government able to do to change some of that? We're looking at this through a federal government lens. A lot of the issues that you deal with are local and provincially regulated, but the federal government spends a lot of money on disability issues, and on disability supports, and on EI. How would we change some of those regimes to make it more likely that you'd be in more stable employment?

It's a tough question, I know. Any one of you can answer that question, and I know you have an answer ready to go.

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** Olga, you can answer it, too, if you want.

I'm not sure, because so much of it is provincial. We know that the federal government is putting money into things like the opportunities fund and labour market agreements.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** There have been studies for the past 35 years on employment and disabilities in Canada at the federal level, and every one of them has recommended that there be a Canadians with disabilities act, like there is in the U.S. Is this something that would help?

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** People First of Canada believes that we have the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and that's our act. That's the act we follow. We believe the work has been done and that these should be our guiding principles. People First has not strongly advocated for a Canadian disabilities act.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** So what—I was going to use the word “enforcement”, but that's a little strong—compelling mechanisms need to be there? We've signed the declaration, now how do we get people to apply it?

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** Because Canada has signed it, we're bound to follow it. That's our job, to make sure that we're following it and that we are following it as it is.... I was at a federal disability conference last year where one of the civil servants asked that question to a panel of federal lawyers, and the federal lawyers' response was, “We're bound to it now; we signed it so now it's just making sure it's enforced.”

•(1130)

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** How do we at the federal level force the provinces to abide by it, for example? They're really tough questions, I know.

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** I don't think I have the answer.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Ms. Krassioukova-Enns wanted to get in on that as well, I believe.

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** I will not be able to answer for the whole disabled community, but I am very glad the Council of Canadian with Disabilities will be part of the next panel. I absolutely support the previous statement.

There are a number of aspects and they are clearly identified in the convention and the supporting documents. It is the responsibility of the provinces and the federal government to ensure that all policies and practices are aligned with the UN convention. How to do it is the question. I'll go back to some of my earlier points.

We are a country of two domains, public and private. Under the UN convention, what is the responsibility of all levels of governments, implementing agencies, and citizens, including the corporate sector?

What is the responsibility of the corporate sector under any UN convention? This is where the federal government probably has to facilitate the dialogue, but also to apply the framework that will keep the private sector accountable for both economic and social development in this country. We know there will be no economic development without social development. If we do not invest in the development of full human potential, we will not be able to count anything. We will not be able to pay taxes. What is the role of the federal government in ensuring that the private sector, corporate sector, is aware of their responsibilities under the UN convention? That is the first point.

The second point has to do with the provinces and territories and the standardization of practices and services, which is where there can be some issues. There is a need for the federal government to facilitate interprovincial and interterritorial dialogue to ensure at least a minimum standard of service so people with disabilities will not feel they are at the bottom of the waiting list when they move from one province to another.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you.

I'm sorry, I don't mean to cut you off, but your time is up.

We have Mr. McColeman next.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Thank you for making the trip to Ottawa today in some pretty difficult weather conditions. We really appreciate your being here and being able to talk to you as people at the grassroots level of this issue who have spent a lot of time considering different things.

I have a little preamble to full disclosure. I'm the father of a 26-year-old intellectually disabled son. Wearing the parent hat, one of the biggest frustrations that was brought up here today in the testimony of Ms. Krassioukova-Enns was the many different silos that have to be navigated by families in order to access programs, and how those silos tend to evolve into, I will say, institutionalized bureaucracies that protect their turf as one of their top priorities. I don't know how I can say it any more diplomatically than that.

The things I want to drive at and ask you about and get your thoughts on are how the federal government can hold to account the people who get the money to provide efficient, measurable, accountable outcomes at the highest possible levels. Because it is true, we send the money to the provinces, and they deliver most of it into existing programs. The expert panel's report entitled, "Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector" inspired my motion—you're aware of the motion I'm bringing to Parliament—and I think that rethinking has to extend through many channels. So much has been done, 35 years of research, as mentioned by Mr. Sullivan. This is not complicated from my point of view and should not be.

As government we should work together with employers to create opportunities in that environment. I don't want to say dismantle, because that's the wrong word, but how do we improve things to be less of a silo culture? I throw that out to you to respond, Ms. Krassioukova-Enns.

• (1135)

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** Thank you.

It's probably one of the most crucial questions. The silos are coming not only from the government, but the silos, unfortunately, are also coming from research organizations, from service organizations, from any sector that you take, from particular sectors that develop and deliver the service, such as education, employment, housing, etc.

There are a number of mechanisms that could be used. The UN convention could be used as one of the mechanisms because the UN convention requires that people be consulted, but be consulted to ensure that they are informed and they are able to contribute to the decisions. Article 32(b) of the UN convention talks about the fact that it is government's responsibility to build the capacity of the community organizations to deliver the outcomes that are required. If the government will not perform their responsibility to ensure that there is constant capacity building at the provincial level, it will be very difficult to require this. This is one thing.

The second one is interprovincial dialogue. We would be able at least not to compare oranges and apples, but to use the same strategies, the same approach. One particular concept I can put on the table, and actually a few months ago it was recognized by the UN as a best practice model, is the liveable inclusive community as a conceptual model. We could look again at the way we plan and

implement initiatives in Canada, look at the two domains, public and private, look at all sectors, but to use this framework of inclusion, access, and participation with a series of strategies. This could be another tool. Again, if all the people who will be implementing had this knowledge.... We have to start to look at the competence of the people who are responsible for implementation. Competence comes with practice but also with responsibility.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** There was one other comment you made that I would like clarification on, because I come from an entrepreneurial background, having my own construction company. I believe most of the building codes in Canada, national and provincial building codes, do now require all publicly and privately built buildings to be accessible. It may not include the renovation or the refitting of older buildings, although institutions have to do it, such as churches and schools and such, but that is a national standard, I believe. On that accessibility question that was mentioned, that perhaps we could put that over to the private sector, I think that's already being done.

I want to ask Shelley one last question. My time will be up. You mentioned in your testimony about advisers, or other people would call them coaches or mentors in the scheme of things. With the kind of client base and the kind of members you have, how important is that component to the success of an individual getting into the workforce?

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** When we talk about accommodation right for an intellectual disability, it's the most difficult disability, I believe, to accommodate. We know that if somebody has a hearing impairment, you would not ask them to go to work without having sign language interpretation available for them. We wouldn't ask somebody to come to work in a wheelchair and not provide a ramp for them. This is a very difficult disability to accommodate. The accommodation is the adviser.

I worked in the employment sector for intellectual disability prior to my working at People First of Canada, and when people were hired, we guaranteed them 100% of the job done at full wage. We did not do subsidies, but we guaranteed 100% of the job done, and that was with the help of a job coach. It didn't cost the employer any money. We provided that for them. In the People First world, the accommodation of an adviser is critical. It's critical in everything. I have to tell you, People First is unique. They make the rules. These are their rules, so they're the people who say, "Please don't ask me to speak to a reporter without my adviser at my side because I may not understand the question or I may interpret it differently, and I need to make sure somebody who knows me and knows how to communicate with me can make sure that I'm understanding."

• (1140)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

I'm sorry, we're going to have to move on to the next round of questions.

Madame Boutin-Sweet.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Haddad, ladies.

Ms. Krassioukova-Enns, I wanted to ask you a question that you had already started to answer.

Can you hear me?

[English]

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Please finish your answer.

I want to talk to you about social assistance programs that are, of course, in provincial jurisdiction. People on social assistance can get help depending on their physical or intellectual disability. But when they have a job, they can lose that social assistance. So there is no universality of support.

A little earlier, you mentioned minimum service standards from one end of the country to the other. You were just starting to answer that question, but you did not have a lot of time to do so. So please finish the answer.

[English]

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** I don't have all the data now to respond to your question. I'll try to give you the framework, and at a later time I can provide it.

The main challenge for people with disabilities is in the transition between being off work and going back to work. Very often people with disabilities are the last to be hired and the first to be fired. We know that this group of people will constantly be in transition.

They're not able to address the transition because when they go back to work, they lose their supports, and sometimes they can't be sure that it will be long-term work, that it will actually meet their requirements and their needs. There is a fear among people with disabilities that they will lose support when they go back to work, and then will have to start the whole process of waiting again.

This is the first issue. The whole system of income support has to be addressed together with providing employment opportunities and paying salaries. It should not be diminished immediately when a person starts a job. It should be built into ongoing support. That is one thing.

• (1145)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** How could the federal government help people facing problems like that?

[English]

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** I cannot say exactly, but I think in B.C. there was one particular demonstration project that was based on looking at longer term or prolonged income support for people with disabilities who had full-time jobs, to ensure that they would not be caught between the gaps, between the silos, when anything happened to their employment.

The federal government, again, should look at and do comparative studies of what worked. Look at how this could be incorporated systemically in provincial policy. See if the federal government will pioneer interprovincial standards for this.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Could employment insurance be part of the solution?

[English]

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** Sorry, I did not hear what you said.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Could employment insurance be used for that kind of thing?

[English]

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** Probably, but I don't know. I cannot answer that right now.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Ms. Fletcher Rattai, do you have an answer?

[English]

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** I do.... Well, I have a thought.

In order to run that through EI, people have to be eligible for EI. I can tell you that in our community, people are not eligible because they're not being employed at all. They don't work enough to qualify for EI.

I also want to say—and forgive me, we're People First, not the most politically savvy organization out there, so I don't know if this is cross-jurisdictional or not—that the number one factor for the people we represent to go to work is the loss of their health coverage. That's very real, and it's very scary for them. People will choose not to go to work because they can't afford to maintain their health.

We also have members who have chosen to go to work and have not been able to maintain their health. One of our founding members actually chose to go to work and died because he could not maintain his health.

This is very real for our members. This is very real for Canadians. Again, that's provincial, so I don't know if federally anything can be addressed around that issue, but I would say that this is among the top three barriers to the population we represent in terms of gaining employment in Canada.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Daniel.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

And thank you, witnesses, for being here.

Congratulations, Mr. Haddad, for starting a business and being very successful at it. Even able-bodied people can't do that. I'm delighted to see that you've been very successful at doing that.

We did have witnesses at the last session who talked about employment among disabled people being at about 50%. That seems to be an average, but I think in certain disabilities, such as with folks who are blind, it's as low as 20% or 25%, from what I've heard from CNIB.

In addition to that, and talking from the business side, probably about 80% of all the businesses in Canada are small to medium-sized businesses, so employing a disabled person in a business that maybe has 10 to 20 people or something like that is a big burden, in the sense that they're not necessarily making huge amounts of money to be able to support something like that.

My question for all of you is, what do you think the Government of Canada can do to encourage employers to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities?

**Mr. Shane Haddad:** I think one thing they could do, for instance, is look at getting the mail out across Canada. Maybe the Government of Canada should look at it like the Olympics training for life. You train somebody in my field to work, they retire as a person working with a disability with the Government of Canada. But they always ask, "Do you qualify?" We always say don't look at our disabilities, look at what we can do. I know a lot of people who could deliver the mail. They know how to read and they have a driver's licence.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Okay, that's in the public sector. What about the private sector, where you're trying to encourage small to medium-sized business to actually take on somebody with a disability? In a small to medium-sized company, and you've created one yourself, there is a tipping point in terms of how much effort you want to put into that, where hiring someone who is able-bodied....

Should the federal government be putting in some kind of legislation with regard to insisting that people actually take on people with disabilities in small or medium-sized companies? That's kind of the direction I was going in with that question. Does anybody else want to make comments on that?

• (1150)

**Mrs. Olga Krassioukova-Enns:** One thing we have to remember is that the right thing to do is to hire, to provide opportunities for everybody. It is our responsibility to ensure that the work environment is inclusive. This is just a statement.

There are a couple of things, particularly for private business. Small and medium-sized enterprises are less equipped and they have fewer human and financial resources to accommodate, it's true. But at the same time there are numerous provincial mechanisms that they can tap into.

I'm familiar with some initiatives through, for example, the Chamber of Commerce, where they can access the best practices, or some partnerships with provincial governments where small and medium-sized enterprises can access best advice from human resources at the provincial level, because there is already capacity within the provincial government to deal with this issue, addressing training, addressing accommodations.

Again, they can leave this to be formulated more formally between provincial governments and the private sector to tap into the existing resources.

In Manitoba there is one particular successful example. It's a partnership between the provincial government and school divisions to ensure that young adults with disabilities have access to employment training, internships. This is an ongoing program. This addresses both sides. This provides young adults with disabilities with work experience, skills development, understanding how they are able to compete in a constantly changing open labour market. At the same time it provides them with direct links to private business opportunities. The companies are more responsive to the needs. They have more corporate responsibility in this case. It's successful.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much, Mr. Daniel.

Go ahead, Mr. Cuzner.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You're doing a fine job in your DH role today.

Just so that you get a sense as to where I'm coming from with this particular study on this issue, I had a brother who was a year younger than me who had cerebral palsy. He died at age 39. My mother was a long-time advocate and activist for persons with disabilities.

Back in the days when my brother started mainstream school, they suggested that he go to what I think they referred to at the time as the retarded children's class. I remember the battles my mother had with the principals and school boards and how that sort of evolved. My brother was very high-functioning and had a wide circle of friends as he grew up. He opened up a little store and made some money, owned his own car, had a girlfriend, but didn't get married because he was too cheap. He was wise beyond his years.

So just understand that inclusion, access, and participation were ongoing discussions through our lives and in our household. My sister is the director of a workshop now. I watched my mother's opinion on total inclusion in the school system sort of evolve; the battles that she fought early on sort of evolved over time. Before she passed away, she wasn't as convinced at the end of the day if it was right for everybody. It's almost like an individual case by case thing.

I want to get back to Shelley's comments about the workshop experience. I can understand your comments to compartmentalize and put everybody over here because now we've looked after these guys and we don't have to worry about them anymore. But I know that some of the workshops—and I know one in particular which my sister is the director of—had good success in transitioning and helping support transition.

I'll make one more comment. I just want you guys to comment on the ability of these workshops, because it seems that you're very much opposed to workshops. Could you elaborate on your position on that.

The other thing that she's noticing now with some of the students coming out of mainstream schools, public schools, is that they all have teachers' assistants and they're not life hardened anymore. They're getting their noses wiped, and they're opening the doors and closing the doors sort of thing. I know the neighbours looked after hardening my brother, and his brothers and sisters looked after hardening him, getting him ready for the real world, and so the workshop has been doing.... They spend a lot of time just preparing them to make that transition, but they've had great success.

That was more of a rant on my part, a reflection on my part, I think, than anything, but would you elaborate on your position on the group homes?

• (1155)

**Mrs. Shelley Fletcher Rattai:** Okay.

I live in a small rural community outside of Winnipeg. In my home town, we have a sheltered workshop. We also have very inclusive schools in my community. Parents will come to me in my community as their kids are starting school and ask what they need to have in place. I caution them on that aide thing. If your child doesn't need a full-time aide, don't ask for it because kids become very dependent on that. When kids transition out of school into the adult world, they hit a brick wall, absolutely.

We've done a great job with inclusive education and I agree with what you say. Inclusive education should be individualized. It should be what the child needs. Not everybody has to be in a classroom because that's the way we say it has to be now. That doesn't work for everybody. I think it needs to be done on an individualized basis.

Particularly in a rural community, and we hear this across the country, it's very difficult to find meaningful employment for people. In my community of 3,000 people, we have a lot of non-disabled people who leave our community because they can't find meaningful employment.

Our thoughts on a sheltered workshop are if people are being paid to do a job that their support staff are making a real wage at to support them to do the job, then so should they be paid for the job. If you're paying somebody and out of a 30-day month they're bringing home a paycheque for \$38, I don't know why in this country we are not allowed to call that slave labour, because that's exactly what it is. Somebody is being paid to do a job that a factory worker is being paid minimum wage or better to do and yet, for some reason, it's okay for people with a disability to make less than \$1 a day. That's what we're opposed to.

If people are going to day centres or day programs and they are learning skills—and I know at the one I worked at we did that, too.... For people who could, with some skilled training, become job ready and be employable, then, great, we were doing that, but there was a group of people there who I believe could work at video stores. We have people who somebody might see as unemployable, who I know would be the greatest employee because their attention to detail and tasks are beyond anything I've ever seen before.

Did you get where I'm going with that?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Yes.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much. I'm sorry, your time is up.

Thank you very much to all three of our witnesses, Ms. Fletcher Rattai, Mr. Haddad, Ms. Krassioukova-Enns. It's been a pleasure having you here. We've really benefited from your testimony.

I'm going to suspend for a few minutes while you gather your things and the new witnesses take over your chairs. Thank you very much for being here.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

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• (1205)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** I'm going to call the meeting back to order.

I just want to let committee members know that Mr. Bach, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Association for Community Living, was supposed to be with us at the start of this hour. Unfortunately, his flight is delayed. What I propose to do is invite Mr. Beachell and Mr. Nikias to make opening comments. If Mr. Bach joins us, we'll just interrupt the questioning at that time and ask him to make a presentation as well.

First of all, gentlemen, welcome to the committee. I know that you were here for the last hour of our conversation.

Do you have a preference as to who goes first?

**Mr. Laurie Beachell (National Coordinator, Council of Canadians with Disabilities):** I'll start, if I can.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Terrific. Thank you, Mr. Beachell.

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to be here.

We're pleased to see a parliamentary committee taking an extended focus on disability issues, particularly on employment issues.

We were here for the last hour's presentation and conversation, so some of the questions that were raised I think we will also attempt to address. I assume there will be others as well, so we may modify the presentation.

Our chairperson, Tony Dolan, who is from Prince Edward Island, had hoped to be here, but developed an infection and was unable to travel. Michael Bach, executive vice-president of CACL, with whom we work extensively, is in transit. His eight o'clock flight got bumped to 10:10 and I don't know if that left on time out of Toronto. So he's on his way, and if he arrives, we're most willing to do a collaborative presentation with him.

Here's our expectation and our hope of this study.

Our hope is that we understand that disability is everyone's issue, that disability is a non-partisan issue, and we hope for a consensus report. We ask members of Parliament to understand that disability is no respecter of political ideology, of age, gender, or geographic region of this country, and that there has been a long tradition of consensus around how we move forward incrementally to improve the status of people with disabilities. We need to find that consensus. We need to find it not only here, between community and members of Parliament, our elected representatives, but also with provincial governments and with employers, business, unions, etc. We must find a way forward that actually builds on much of the achievement of the past.

I've circulated a little booklet that we put together called *Celebrating our Accomplishments*. It's available in French and English. It is what we think has occurred over the last 30 years.

Mr. McColeman, you were looking for something simpler and more direct to do. I have been in this business for 30 years, longer than that, actually. I started as a volunteer in 1969, when somebody pulled me into a little group to support some kids who wanted to do physical activity and kids who happened to have a disability, and I've been engaged ever since that time.

I've been at CCD over 30 years. We are not a simple community. We are a very complex community. There are no silver bullets. There is relentless incrementalism. There is a need for ongoing attention, support, and innovation. If that climate does not come together, then, frankly, we begin to stall and we begin to move backward.

We have an organization for every disability, disease, body part, therapy, treatment, and we've got them at the local, provincial and national levels. We are a complex community, but many do operate in silos. What CCD tries to do is address broad social policy issues of concern to people with disabilities, issues like poverty, employment, human rights expectations, transportation and access, international development issues, justice issues, etc., and that's what we've done since 1976. I think that's what we've done successfully in trying to move forward a disability agenda.

Having said that, our latest vision and aspiration you can find within the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We believe that document, which Canada has ratified, sets out a framework for going forward. We had hoped to see the development of an implementation plan at the federal level for that. In that regard, I will go quickly to some of the main recommendations that we would make to your committee.

We would call on the Government of Canada, and on Minister Finley specifically, to develop a five-year strategic plan to address employment needs of people with disabilities. One-off single issue, one-community measures will simply not get us where we hope to be.

We would ask that the plan have the input of the disability community and that there be a technical advisory committee established for input from the disability community into the development of that plan.

• (1210)

We understand from the panel report that it would need to engage employers and it probably needs to engage the provincial

government representation as well. Only in a collective and collaborative way are we going to be able to actually achieve success.

We say that part of that first priority should be for young people with disabilities, those people between the ages of 18 and 30 who move from school to work. If we can get that transition right, if we can help people and support them in robust ways so they have the training, the accommodation, the access they need to be employed, we won't have what we have right now, which is a 38% increase in people with disabilities on social assistance. We don't have a 38% increase in people with disabilities getting jobs; we have a 38% increase in people moving on to social assistance because they cannot get jobs.

There must be a range of services and supports. This is where the complexity comes in: looking at people with mobility impairment, people with vision impairment, people who are hard of hearing, people who are deaf, looking at aboriginal people on reserve, and looking at issues of women with disabilities.

This is not a simple task. That's why, for many years, we advocated for a subcommittee, frankly, that had ongoing responsibility to address disability issues. This committee has a responsibility and we're pleased to be here, but you may need, and we would ask you to consider, the establishment of a subcommittee that would keep a focus on disability, whether that is reform of the Canada pension plan disability benefit, improvements to the registered disability savings plan, or new federal-provincial initiatives around labour market agreements. Those are the kinds of things we need.

We would also say to you that the support systems we designed back in the 1970s and 1980s for people with disabilities were designed in a very different environment, a very different labour market than we have today.

There is need for research on what the impacts are of a much more fluid labour market where people now talk about employment insecurity, part-time, term, no benefits, and short-term contract employment. What impact will that employment environment have on people with disabilities?

You heard Shane and Shelley talk about medical benefits. If you can get those on social assistance but you can't get them if you take a job, what's your choice?

We would say that labour market agreements that are negotiated between the federal government and the provinces must include targets and specific accountability measures for how they address people with disabilities. It cannot all be built on employment insurance moneys, because our community is not EI eligible. How do we ensure in those agreements, where we have given away responsibility for the active measures at the federal level to provincial governments, that they—

Here's Michael Bach to join us, so he'll come to the table and jump in where he can.

Current barriers to the labour market are well documented. We would ask HRSDC to create a user-friendly document about current barriers and about success stories.

I want to leave you with a couple of other quick examples. We have done research under a SSHRC, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, grant that is actually documenting a substantive increase in the number of people with disabilities going on to social assistance. That is exactly what we do not want to be seeing, but that's where people are going.

On the programs that we have designed for those insurance programs—Canada pension plan disability benefits, workers' compensation, EI, a number of benefits—frankly, we are not seeing such an uptake there. It is social assistance.

People have not been able to establish labour market attachment in order to become eligible for those programs. Those programs, many of them in the federal realm, are doing most of the heavy lifting.

• (1215)

We believe the Government of Canada must be a model employer and that if we're not doing it right on the Hill and are not doing it right within our bureaucracies, then we are not doing it right.

We would say to you that 5.6%, which I believe is the present stat, in 2010, for the participation of people with disabilities within the civil service.... I'm not sure what that stat will be after we have done a downsizing of the civil service. It would be an interesting study to know how the downsizing is affecting people with disabilities. Were we the last hired and the first let go? Were we the people in term positions that have gone?

The other thing we will say to you, and what that booklet demonstrates, is that the catalyst for change in this country around disability has been and remains people with disabilities. CCD is an umbrella association. The DisAbleD Women's Network Canada is a part; People First of Canada is a member; the Canadian Association of the Deaf is a member; the National Network for Mental Health is a member; the Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada is a member; the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians is a member.

Also, we have a provincial network of cross-disability associations across the country. They are not service bodies; they are collectives of people with disabilities from a cross-disability perspective who have come together and said that these are the things we need to do in our society to make it more accessible and inclusive.

If that voice is not supported, if that voice is somehow diminished, then we can assume that the catalyst for change that has created those changes over the last 30 years will be silenced.

We are pleased to see this study. We hope it is a consensus report. We hope we can get into a discussion around federal responsibility and roles and impact and on how we move this agenda forward. We hope the framework is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I'll leave it there for presentation and hope for questions.

I will turn it over to Michael.

• (1220)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much, Mr. Beachell.

Mr. Nikias, did you want to add anything first?

**Mr. Vangelis Nikias (Project Manager, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Council of Canadians with Disabilities):** Sure. Thank you and good morning.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first international mandatory law instrument of our century; therefore, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities is very pleased that the departmental representatives last Tuesday made positive reference to the ratification of the convention.

With respect to the issue today, the convention contains article 27, whereby Canada through ratifying the convention has recognized the right of persons with disabilities to work. This includes the right to gain our livelihood through freely chosen or accepted work. Canada and other Canadian jurisdictions have undertaken to safeguard and promote the full realization of this right. The rest of article 27 contains specific measures, which you can take into account when you are considering this issue.

We appeal to you today to support, as a follow-up to the ratification, a federal-provincial implementation plan, which is part of what Canada has undertaken to do in the convention.

Mr. McColeman, you raised the question about silos. A carefully designed implementation process of the UN convention, one whereby we progressively, steadily, incrementally take measures to break down the silos and to enable Canadians with disabilities to participate fully in our society is, we believe, to some extent the answer to the question you raised. We appeal for your support for working on such an implementation plan.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Bach, I'm glad your flight landed safely and that you made it here safely. I'll turn the floor over to you.

**Mr. Michael Bach (Executive Vice-President, Canadian Association for Community Living):** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My apologies for being late, but weather conspired against me and the airlines this morning.

First of all, thanks to the committee for initiating this study. We think it's a very important step and in a sense overdue, because we have felt the urgency of this issue. We appreciate the leadership of this committee in taking it on.

I'm executive vice-president of the Canadian Association for Community Living. We're a national association of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have 40,000 members, 300 local associations across the country, and 13 provincial-territorial associations. We work in close partnership with the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and also in very close partnership with People First of Canada, which presented earlier today.

I want to start by saying that CACL is fully supportive of the 10 broad messages and recommendations of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. We've worked closely together over the last number of years to formulate a shared national disability agenda, so we're fully behind and supportive of those recommendations.

Today I want to bring some perspectives on people with intellectual disabilities in particular.

There are in broad terms about 500,000 working-age adults with intellectual disabilities. The usual trajectory for a person with an intellectual disability is to turn 19 and go on social assistance. That's the expectation and that's what happens for people. Generally, one-third of people on social assistance in provinces across the country are people with intellectual disabilities. We think it's time to end that trajectory.

Given Canada's labour force and labour productivity challenges, we think this is a huge untapped labour source. We were pleased to see the recommendations of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in their report, "Rethinking disAbility", which recognizes the untapped pool. We're supportive of the broad directions of that panel. I want to come back to these in a few minutes.

So we have this group of people with intellectual disabilities. About 30% are in the labour force, but the vast majority spend their lives on social assistance. Why does that happen? I think we need to tackle the multiple sets of barriers that people with disabilities and people with intellectual disabilities face.

One is not getting access to education. Only about 50% of students with intellectual disabilities are fully included in education. They're not going on to post-secondary education and training, even though we have excellent examples of people with intellectual disabilities, even significant disabilities, participating in post-secondary education. Maybe they're not getting high-level academic and technical degrees, but they're getting the social capital that others who participate in post-secondary education are getting, and they're getting training and skills.

In demonstration initiatives in Alberta for post-secondary access—and these aren't special programs at universities or colleges, but are fully integrated into programs—80% of those adults with intellectual disabilities are leaving university and college to go on to a paid job.

So it can be done. Post-secondary education works for people generally. We know there are labour market challenges, but it works for people with intellectual disabilities as well.

There is certainly a lack of access to needed disability supports in the form of personal assistance and sometimes of technical aids and

devices. I note in the terms of reference for the study by the committee the recognition that disability supports and services are the jurisdiction of provinces and territories. We fully recognize that, but we also recognize, and it's one of the key findings of the labour market panel, that employers lack effective community partnerships to enable people with disabilities to get into the labour market in their communities. I think that's one of the big pieces the federal government can focus on, and I think there's a mandate for the federal government to focus on it.

● (1225)

The number one strategic outcome in the planning and priorities framework for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is a skilled, adaptable, and inclusive labour force and an efficient labour market. We applaud the government for stating that as its number one strategic outcome. We believe in it, and we take very seriously the qualifier of inclusive labour force in that strategic outcome. The federal government has said that it's one of our key outcomes. The strategies that CCD have laid out and the recommendations that we lay out in our brief can take us a significant way down that path.

Creating an inclusive labour force for people with disabilities has to happen at the community level. There need to be tools at the community level to address the barriers to school, to post-secondary training, to making sure that people get the individualized supports they need, and to making sure we've got effective transportation systems and that we're linking employers with people with disabilities. What makes that work is effective community capacity.

The problem is we have largely an outmoded service delivery system at the community level for people with intellectual and other disabilities. On the one hand, the labour market services delivery has taken a generic approach, and there isn't the specialization and skills within that generic HR services delivery at the community level to respond to the unique needs of people with disabilities, provide the referrals and the package of supports, and link people up to what they may need.

On the other hand, we have a designated disability employment service system that is largely outmoded. When it comes to people with intellectual disabilities, it's still largely day programs and sheltered workshops, despite the best efforts of some to try to transition out of that really outmoded system. That system basically provides a place for people who are on social assistance to go, to put the plastic on our earphones and things like that, and they're getting paid a couple of dollars a day to do it. We don't think this is the trajectory for people with intellectual disabilities and we think it can be changed. That's going to take the federal government really thinking about how it shapes and attaches some requirements to its investment tools, which are for labour market inclusion of people with disabilities. That's in the labour market agreements, and that's in the labour market agreements for persons with disabilities.

Our view, and this is cross-disabilities, is that there needs to be more proactive effort by the Government of Canada in negotiating those agreements. Right now, the \$22 million that's flowing through the LMAPDs is largely going into this outmoded service delivery system. It's not having the impact it should have. The feds are not getting the bang for their buck, despite their number one strategic outcome saying we need an inclusive labour force. We're not going to get an inclusive labour force in this country unless the federal government is more proactive with the dollars that it has. We would really encourage leadership by the Government of Canada in the negotiations coming up to the renewal of those labour market development agreements.

The labour market agreements provide funds to provinces and territories to address the needs of those who are labour market disadvantaged. The bulk of those dollars are going into that generic system that doesn't have the capacity or the expertise to adequately serve people with intellectual or other disabilities. This is why we're very supportive of CCD's number one recommendation, to create a five-year strategic plan, establish a technical advisory committee, and figure out how to do this. At this point, quite frankly, our view is that the feds are wasting their money. It's not having the impact that it could have. We want to be part of the solution to make sure that the investment is resulting in an inclusive and effective labour market in this country.

We have a number of recommendations that are in our brief. Overall, we would recommend that the policy tools and investments by the Government of Canada be guided by what we would call an employment first policy framework. Employment has got to be the first option, the preferred option for people with disabilities. The 500,000 people with disabilities in this country, even with significant disabilities who are on social assistance, could benefit from a more proactive set of interventions. The brief lays out a number of specific recommendations, but we'll leave that for discussion.

Thank you.

•(1230)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much, Mr. Bach.

Madam Boutin-Sweet.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Thank you, gentlemen.

I am so glad you made it here, Mr. Bach.

I am not sure if you are aware, but the last two studies that this committee has conducted dealt with the labour shortage in some occupations and with apprenticeship programs. We asked the witnesses about how to attract underrepresented groups, including those with physical or intellectual disabilities. As you are in a very good position to tell us about that situation, I would like to ask you some questions about it.

How could the federal government make sure that existing apprenticeship programs are inclusive and meet the needs of those with physical or intellectual disabilities? You may have already started talking about infrastructure programs, but could you give us some more details?

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Bach:** We were pleased to see that focus with the committee. There are a couple of challenges when it comes to apprenticeship programs, and I'll speak to people with intellectual disabilities specifically, and then more generally Laurie and Vangelis can pick that up.

Because of the nature of the technical skills that are required, there's no question there is a group of people with intellectual disabilities who could participate. What this is going to require, though, is a concerted effort, just as we do in education, to provide more diversified approaches to learning, some assistance in that training and in that learning, and some accommodation for meeting the requirements of the program.

We have examples of people across the country who have participated in those programs and have gone on to participate in the trades, but they're few and far between, given the potential. I think it largely comes back to having a community service system that provides the linkage and the support to those apprenticeship programs, just like the labour market panel rethinking disability said we're lacking the effective community partners. It's the same issue here in terms of accessing post-secondary education. We're still investing in this outmoded service system, and I think that's the lynchpin to enabling people to access these opportunities.

•(1235)

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** Interestingly, some years ago—and as I mentioned, I've been in this business for a while—when we talked about accommodation, we talked about it with an affirmative action component as well. It was not simply offsetting and covering the additional cost of disability, but we had some years ago affirmative action programs that were paying more than simply the cost of disability. Many of the leaders of our community, frankly, got their post-secondary education because at that time tuition, books, a living allowance, and their disability costs were covered under an old program called the vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. It is not simply covering the disability costs; it is creating a climate where we're actually creating incentive for people to get post-secondary education. Many of those programs don't exist any longer.

We assume that new technologies and new levels of access have removed barriers, and they have to some extent, but they've also created new barriers. For many people who are blind, frankly, information is now in formats that are not accessible. They may be accessible if you can afford an iPad. If you're blind it has an accessibility feature. It is wonderful. But if you can't afford it, much of that information is inaccessible. Recently we had to have someone with a disability actually challenge the federal government's website information, to ensure that government websites were fully accessible and met web accessibility standards.

Those are the battles we're fighting. We're still fighting battles of transportation access at local levels, at provincial levels, and at the federal level. We challenged VIA Rail, which purchased inaccessible passenger rail cars in 2000, and we won at the Supreme Court in 2007. Now the cars are being retrofitted. In 2013, this summer, we only have about six of them coming onto the tracks. The other 30 that were purchased in 2000 are still being retrofitted.

This is a long-term business, folks. It is not that you're going to remove the barriers overnight, but we have created systems....

I'll give you another example. We worked long and hard to ensure that television was captioned so that people who were deaf had captioning. But now how do we get captioning? How do we get our news and our information? We get it through the Internet, which is not regulated. No captioning is provided. When CTV covered the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, everything that was over broadcast was captioned. Everything that was live was not captioned. There were no regulations requiring captioning.

So as our society evolves, as we create new ways of doing business, as we create new ways of getting information and access, we have to ensure that those same standards are in place to create access for people with disabilities. Apprenticeship programs will not be accessible until we have information systems accessible, until transportation systems are accessible, and we don't penalize people when they go off social assistance and make them lose all their benefits.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much, Mr. Beachell.

Mr. Butt.

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Thank you very much, gentlemen, for being here today.

I'm more of a glass half full than a glass half empty kind of person and I think you are, too. I was very inspired by your presentation to committee, because you talked about the fact that we're all in this together, so let's get something done and let's move forward.

I'm certainly more familiar with Community Living. Community Living Mississauga, where I am from, is very active in the community. It's a very well-run organization and they have excellent partnerships with employers.

Can you share with us some of the best practices with employers? Who's getting it right? We know there are many corporate citizens in Canada who are actively employing people with a range of disabilities. It's part of their corporate philosophy. They're doing it not necessarily because government is or isn't doing anything to support that, although some of them certainly are taking advantage of the fact that governments at all three levels and community organizations are playing a role in helping with that. I'd like to hear some of the success stories. I'd like to hear about some of the best practices. What is working? These champions in the corporate community who are employing people with disabilities, and it's working out for their companies, why are they getting it right and what can we learn from that?

Mr. Bach, maybe you would want to start.

• (1240)

**Mr. Michael Bach:** Sure. I take that approach, too, in terms of the glass being half full. There are some very successful examples across the country. We've been looking at this very intensely over the last year and a half or so to figure out what the key factors are and what needs to happen.

In terms of some very practical examples, I think of the rotary clubs across Canada. There's an initiative in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Alberta. This fits very much with the approach that's outlined in the "Rethinking disAbility" labour market panel report. Employers themselves take the leadership and inspire one another, and demonstrate how someone has hired someone with a disability. What makes those programs effective, those employer-to-employer networks, is having a community-based partner, because they need information, they need confidence, they need to be linked to people in the community who may have an intellectual or other disability, who they can hire. They may need some ongoing coaching, some co-worker training.

The first thing is employer leadership, confidence, and awareness. There are employers across this country, as that panel report made very clear, who want to do this. I think one of the effective practices is employer-to-employer networks, through the chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, other service clubs, and really investing in their leadership.

I have another example along that line. It's not employer to employer so much. We've seen some excellent examples in Tim Hortons. Mark Wafer was on that labour market panel and has shown real leadership. Actually, it's like inclusive education, which is another one of our major priorities, and they're obviously linked. You can't drive it all from policy down. You need leaders on the ground. In education, it takes principals and teachers who get inspired, who change their minds. It's the same thing as with employers. The frustration for employers, as they've gone out to do that and they've tried to make it happen, as the panel pointed out, is they don't know where to go for information. They don't have the ongoing kind of support and investment. I think that piece is really critical.

Another fundamentally important piece here, a factor in terms of best practice, is youth. You recognize that in the priorities of CCD, youth from 18 to 25 years are a priority. The research shows that for people with even significant intellectual disabilities, the number one factor related to employment, being employed two years after high school, is having a job while in high school. That's the number one factor. The same evidence shows for people who are injured on the job. The longer you're out of the job, the harder it is to get back in.

For those of us around the table who may have a child who doesn't have a disability, my assumption was never that my sons would turn 19 and go on social assistance, so why have we pushed parents into that position in this country? We need teachers, principals, employers who are willing to support youth to be in a cooperative education workplace, summer employment. We have some great examples of using the Canada summer employment program to support youth with intellectual disabilities to get part-time jobs.

I'll finish there and hand it over to my colleague Laurie to pick that up.

• (1245)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** I'm sorry, I think we're going to have to move on, unless you have a very brief comment.

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** Just quickly, Boeing, the banks, and a number of other institutions have done so, but they have been large employers that actually have long-term employment opportunities and benefit packages. It is a real challenge in a smaller business, where there is no benefit package that covers some drug costs or dental costs, or other kinds of things, and that's the nature of the labour force.

Just one quick thing. We have created in the past what we call team Canada to go internationally to sell trade. Why don't we create a team Canada here that goes to our employers to sell, to market, to push, and to promote, to do initiatives to get the message out? Create something that we do internationally here. The fellow from Tim Hortons has a damn good message. It's good for business. Do it. You'll reap rewards.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Sullivan.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Thank you, all of you, for some compelling testimony.

I want to go back to where we started this, which was at the UN convention and the fact that it's the overarching piece that people in the disabled community are hoping will actually provide some guidance, or some power more than guidance. But I'm afraid we've signed something with no teeth, or at least the federal government hasn't exercised the teeth that it should have.

For example, in one of the provinces, the earnings of persons with disabilities were frozen against inflation. That's in violation of the UN convention, which says people with disabilities shouldn't go backwards, that they should always go forward.

What would the federal government be able to do to that province to prevent that happening, if anything?

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** Canada did ratify the convention, and did rather quickly do so. We do not as yet have the Government of Canada's first report to the United Nations. Having signed, they are obligated within two years to provide that report. We're still awaiting that.

Our disappointment here is that we do not have two things.

We do not seem to have a strategy for how we're going to move forward and use this document, in which people from around the world came together and said that this is the new vision, that this is

the way forward. We don't seem to have a strategy. Yes, as new policy initiatives are going forward, we believe in some cases they're being measured against the convention, but we don't know that there's a strategy going forward.

The second thing is that in this convention it's different. It's the first that obligates governments to name a monitoring body, to name someone who will monitor that implementation. We had hoped that would be the Canadian Human Rights Commission, but that has not come about. There has been no naming of a monitoring body in Canada, and that monitoring body, according to the convention, must meet the Paris principles. The only body in Canada that would meet that would be the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

We continue to work with the commission, with departments and officials, hoping for some outcome of about eight years of work into language in the convention, and as yet we're not seeing that realized.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** The other power the federal government has, besides that convention, is the power to dole out money. They dole out significant numbers of dollars to the provinces and to individuals, to individuals in EI and CPP, and to the provinces generally in infrastructure money, in money that is spent on social transfers, on health transfers. But there are no strings attached to those transfers as far as disabled persons are concerned.

In fact, the most recent example is that the changes to the EI system, in my view, discriminate against persons with disabilities, because it takes them longer to find a job, and that seven weeks where you have to find a job that's lower in wages is not amended for a person with a disability. What I'm hoping the government will do is take the results of this committee and use them to look at their actions through a disability lens, to actually use the disability lens to make the Canada pension plan changes in Bill C-45 a positive change rather than a negative change. We still don't know what the results of that will be.

• (1250)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Mr. Beachell, if you could respond in about a minute, that would be terrific.

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** When it comes to Canada pension plan disability benefits, there have been some significant improvements over the years. Right now you can earn money. You can retain benefits. We have changed eligibility. If you made contributions for 25 years, you can get benefits. There are small incremental changes. You can go off the benefit and take work for two years and if, because of disability, you have to go back on, no questions are asked, and you go back on the benefit. CPPDB has done some significant work. The challenge is you have to have worked to be eligible.

That's the challenge with EI. EI has a real problem with those people who have episodic disabilities, mental health concerns, MS, those people who are well at periods of time in their life and can work, and then cannot work at certain times. They cannot establish eligibility. We can't find a way of doing benefits for EI. EI sickness benefits are only 15 weeks. We think they should be increased to recognize people with episodic disabilities, particularly people with mental health concerns who at points are in the labour force and at some points are out.

It is probably the challenge of insurable weeks. We base it on weeks rather than days.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Shory.

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here, and thank you for your hard work on this.

This is a moving file for me. When I was in my riding last week I visited an organization. I met a young man who would be about 22 years old. He told me his story. Most of his life he stayed on the street and had all kinds of issues, and mental health issues. Somehow he got involved in this organization. At present he is mentally stable and he is now able to work as a forklift operator. He is trained now.

I kept on thinking what other witnesses told us. There are 200,000-plus vacancies and almost 800,000 people with a disability who are able to work. There is some sort of disconnect. I wonder if in your organizations you have experienced gaining proper and appropriate employment for this kind of individual. If you have, how do you do it? The federal government could benefit from that input.

**Mr. Michael Bach:** Yes. We have experience with our local associations and other local agencies across the country. They're non-profit organizations run by community boards, and people with disabilities and family members often themselves. They're often contracted by provincial governments to deliver employment support services of one form or another. As I said before, that infrastructure needs a transformation because it's based on some really outmoded ideas in many cases that people with disabilities can't fully participate, that they may need a facility or day program where they can go and have some activities, etc.

There aren't effective partnerships between those community organizations and employers and employer councils. This piece keeps coming up, as I said, in the labour market panel, in the research. That community partnership, that community capacity is critical. I think it's important, as in other areas, that the federal government see that community capacity as integral to its goal to achieve an effective and inclusive labour market.

Those community organizations aren't simply instruments of the provinces. The federal government, it seems to me, needs a relationship with local communities in this country that can assist employers and those community organizations, put partnerships together to get people who have skills and opportunities into the labour market.

I think that's going to take a more targeted investment of the tools the federal government has under the labour market agreements for persons with disabilities and the labour market agreements. That means a targeted investment through those two federal instruments with some clear expectations to the provinces and territories for how those funds should be invested.

•(1255)

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** The federal government has the opportunity to fund a program, for example to assist it and facilitate some of the programs. What other non-monetary programs or steps can the

federal government take to basically encourage the employers? You mentioned some measures. What other steps should be taken by the federal government to look after this part??

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** Let's get a plan. Let's develop something together that lays out a course of action over the next five years that engages the disability community, federal government, provincial governments, and employers.

I think the panel report opens that door that says this is good for business, and that we should be doing this. We have a labour market shortage. We can do it. Let's design a plan.

I'm sorry, but the answers are not simple because we are a diverse community. What works in the community for people with intellectual disability may be different for people with mental health concerns, may be different for the Canadian Association of the Deaf, may be different for people who are blind. However, we do have some overarching common issues around barriers we face within the design of programs, barriers we face within the way our work environment is presently structured. We have to improve access, education, and collaborative partnerships.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much.

The last five minutes go to Mr. Cuzner.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thanks very much for your very worthwhile testimony today.

I'll ask two questions and then get out of the way.

Mr. Beachell, you had referenced the disability savings plan. This is about work for persons with disabilities. I would think a disproportionate amount of the hurt will be laid at the feet of persons with disabilities with the change in the OAS and GIS from 65 to 67 years, especially in light of the hardship they have in securing work. Would you comment on that?

Also do you see the rationale in supporting a change to the disability savings plan to allow... Right now you can't contribute until you're receiving the benefit, but some families would prefer to be putting money away earlier on for a son or daughter, especially if they have a progressive disease such as cystic fibrosis or MS.

Most times with poverty we see people with disabilities not able to secure work or whatever. As you say, it's complex, and a lot of it goes back to housing, without question.

Are CMHC's program lines flexible enough to support community initiatives? Are the initiatives out there adequate through the support of the federal government to support the community-based initiatives to develop right now? Could you respond to that?

**Mr. Laurie Beachell:** Sadly many within our community look forward to turning 65 because they will get a better income benefit than they have had all their life living on social assistance.

Canada has done a good job. There's more to be done to address the poverty of seniors. We have not done a substantive job to address the poverty of Canadians with disabilities.

In this country having a disability means living in poverty. Living in poverty actually means you're likely to become more disabled. Frankly, the change of eligibility from 65 to 67 years will extend poverty for people with disabilities for two years unless we create a plan so people are actually employed. If you live on social assistance your whole life, you'll be better off on OAS and GIS.

On the registered disability savings plan, it's a great plan if you're eligible, and that eligibility is based on the disability tax credit. That eligibility works well for people who have visual, hearing, or mobility impairments. It works less well for people who have cognitive impairments or mental health concerns. Therefore, if we're going to base programs on the eligibility for the disability tax credit, we need to go back and look at what that definition is. It was designed to offset additional costs of disability and unfair tax treatment. It's now used as the gatekeeper for a variety of other federal programs.

• (1300)

**Mr. Michael Bach:** CMHC's programs for non-profit housing and those kinds of investment tools have been more and more restricted over the last number of years, but its data make very clear that there is a hugely disproportionate number of people with disabilities who live in core housing need. I'm sorry I don't have the numbers, but I'm sure the clerk or researchers could get them. That has certainly come up in the research we're doing under our CURA SSHRC-funded initiative.

I think there's much to learn from the homelessness partnering strategy as an approach to tackling labour market issues. What that strategy recognizes is that local actors need to figure out the solutions together. They need to come together, put a plan together, and figure out how they're going to create a housing market that people can access in their community. I think a very similar approach

can be used in this area as well. Some of the infrastructure that has been tested in that initiative could easily be adapted to the labour market piece to give the federal government more control over some delivery vehicles, because the partnership strategy is about creating some innovative solutions. Right now the federal government doesn't have a vehicle to generate the kind of innovative solutions that the "Rethinking disAbility" labour market panel report talks about. I think that's an example you might consider.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you all very, very much.

Mr. Nikias, very briefly please.

**Mr. Vangelis Nikias:** Yes, just a very brief word.

The emphasis on the private sector initiatives is very, very important and very encouraging, but I think we need to remember that our successes have been based so far on a conducive public policy environment. That means, in your case, the federal government's leadership on the basis of unanimity and consensus, which you have been able to do in the past.

It also means, and this is very important, continued support for the role of persons with disabilities in society, the organizations of persons with disabilities in our system, not only because of public policy reasons, but because of personal peer support, which I think has been in the background of some of the questions today.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Chris Charlton):** Thank you very much. I apologize if you felt that I was cutting you off prematurely on a number of occasions. I hope for all of us that it's just the beginning of a dialogue and we'll continue to have it outside of the committee.

Thank you so much for being here today. I hope you have a safe trip home.

This meeting is adjourned.

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