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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills 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 Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** I'd like to bring the meeting to order.

I have one matter of committee business. As everyone knows, the budget will be introduced on Thursday. That would be the day of our meeting for the committee. Normally on that day we would deal with the study regarding apprenticeships, and we would also deal with that on Tuesday of the following week. In general discussion with all members, I think there is a consensus that we will cancel Thursday's committee meeting and instead meet on Tuesday only, from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock, to deal with the report.

Unless I see any objection, that is what we'll instruct the clerk to do.

Seeing no objection, that is what we will then do.

We will now move to our study today. We certainly welcome all of our witnesses who were able to make it through the snow. Tomorrow is spring, but today we're not so sure.

We have with us Maureen Haan and Elizabeth Smith from the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.

We have Johanne Curodeau, vice-president, board of directors, from Association pour l'intégration sociale d'Ottawa.

We have Deepak Soni from Corbrook.

We will hear from each of you. We'll start with Ms. Haan.

**Ms. Maureen Haan (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work):** Thank you very much for inviting CCRW to present to you today.

My name is Maureen Haan. I am the president and CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, and this is my colleague, Elizabeth Smith. She is the manager of the Ontario workplace inclusion program.

You have asked us here today because you've recognized that CCRW is the only national not-for-profit organization that supports people with disabilities in the achievement of their career goals and entry into the workforce. We believe in meaningful and equitable employment of persons with disabilities.

Carla came to CCRW after experiencing sudden vision loss that resulted in her inability to continue her work from her home-based

company. She came to our Toronto program in 2010 after being referred to us by the CNIB with the following doubts: Who would hire me? What can I contribute as a blind person? How will I be able to make the commute to work?

Through her involvement with our Toronto program, Carla stated, "I learned how to manage disclosure and understand the accommodations I require. I experienced an increase in confidence and was able to focus on my skills and unique perspective." Through her relationship with the CCRW Toronto job developer, Carla secured a challenging full-time internship position with Scotiabank that has led to full-time employment. In fact, Carla works in the diversity and inclusion team at Scotiabank, paving the way for others.

We tell you this tale of success to outline a few areas of CCRW's commitment. First is to engage private businesses to be champions of diversity issues while understanding that the disability component of diversity is not lost. Next is a collaboration within not-for-profits to benefit both clients that CCRW serves: job seekers with disabilities and employers. Job developers are crucial to ensuring employers obtain a labour force of appropriately skilled workers who have disabilities. Last, the training of employability or soft skills and accommodation for job seekers with disabilities is vital to success.

It is critical that the government continue to engage and empower organizations such as CCRW. To this end, we applaud the federal government in the following areas: continued provincial and federal funding for people with disabilities with an emphasis on employment; the recognition of the talent in this untapped labour force; the general growing recognition of the need to reform financial supports such as EI, ODSP, and CPPD; and the accepted labour market agreement for people with disabilities.

In all CCRW programs and services we have a dual client focus: employers and job seekers with disabilities. We recognize that both stakeholders must be involved to ensure the advancement of this labour force. This service structure allows us to have unique insights into the needs of both groups.

When working with the private sector, we engage employers in understanding how to hire and accommodate people with disabilities, which allows the private sector to step up to the plate and become champions. This is critical in ensuring the landscape changes, and barriers to hiring people with disabilities are removed.

To engage the private sector, it's imperative employers find the process of hiring people with disabilities to be easy, or at least not complicated. The impediments with complex wage subsidies, navigating multiple service providers, and understanding appropriate job accommodations dissuade business from recruiting qualified job seekers with disabilities. Cleaning up the system and appropriate education for employers is the key to this transformation.

Of course, the most important area to ensure continued successful relationships with the private sector is to get the right people into the right job. We have heard from employers that soft skills, or EQ, is the one aspect for which employers are unable to provide training, yet social exclusion often leaves people with disabilities without the understanding of workplace norms.

CCRW's approach to supporting job seekers is to ensure that being job ready includes addressing hygiene, workplace etiquette, disclosure of disability, and providing funding for work appropriate attire, which may include workboots, ties, and general clothing without holes. These small measures increase client confidence, which gets them in the door, at which point the right fit for the job can be appropriately measured and lead to employment.

At CCRW we also recognize that return to work goes beyond wage subsidy. We have internally changed viewing wage subsidy to training and accommodation for employers, but we feel it should be called that because it is not subsidized labour.

• (1110)

With this alteration in thinking, the expectation of on-the-job skills training will shift to be the responsibility of the employer, creating accountability and therefore buy-in from all parties. We strongly suggest a similar shift in thinking at the funding and policy levels of the government.

Time and time again employers have stated that a single point of entry would alleviate confusion created with multiple service providers. Not-for-profits are the best approach for this service delivery as our agencies are client based, not profit driven. CCRW, in fact, has been contacted by a U.S. collaborative of government, private, and not-for-profit to build a U.S.-Canada partnership around a national employment team, which is a national team of business consultants working directly with employers.

We have many ideas on how this can occur, citing progressive systems in both the U.S. and the U.K. We know that at first, employers are confused and apprehensive to hire people with disabilities, but when they experience success in hiring a qualified, motivated staff member, they are sold.

A single point of entry will help to alleviate the fear factor because there will be someone there, a corporate champion, to help work through the process. We recommend a subcommittee be formed to review the feasibility of establishing a single point of entry system based on information from the U.S. and the U.K. and modified to the uniqueness of Canadian needs.

To assist with accommodations, CCRW strongly suggests the establishment of a person with disabilities accommodation fund for small to medium-sized enterprises. Such a fund would allow relatively resource restrained small to medium-sized enterprises to hire new and qualified people with a disability, allowing them the

financial flexibility needed to accommodate. The fund can be administered by HRSDC directly, or by contract to a not-for-profit organization working in the disability and employment sector.

To further engage the private sector, CCRW hosts business awards luncheons for businesses engaged in hiring people with disabilities through CCRW. In this model, businesses are recognized at an annual luncheon for best practices. Those in the private sector involved with the awards luncheons tell us that the recognition they receive is motivating, but the opportunity to meet and network with other like-minded employers is extremely valuable. The forum allows individuals to speak to each other on a peer-to-peer level while allowing the recognition of champions. From these luncheons, businesses are asked to sit on business advisory committees, providing a direct line of communication from local employers to the CCRW programs, which allows CCRW to respond quickly and accurately to current issues faced by businesses employing workers with disabilities.

While fundraising, sponsorship, donations, and funding partnerships are vital, many issues arise when funding is fragmented, and not-for-profits are being encouraged to rely on the private sector for funding. This dynamic becomes much more complicated when the private sector is a client.

In order to encourage a circle of support, trust needs to be developed between businesses and agencies serving this sector. Asking for funding in early days of developing this type of partnership does not encourage trust. Therefore, government funding is essential to not-for-profits to ensure the continued engagement of the private sector in the area of employment and disability.

A business case for hiring people with disabilities needs to be created by government and stakeholders, and advertised. As we know from the report, workers with disabilities are known to have a low turnover rate, and the cost of accommodation is far less than the cost of replacing a worker. We need to educate the private sector about this along with other important realities on hiring people with disabilities through large-scale advertising, employer engagement through working groups, peer-to-peer education, and the recognition of champions. The focus of information needs to be on the disability sector, which cannot be lost in the overarching diversity issues.

My closing comment is around collaboration within the not-for-profit sector. The current structure of competition of funding for not-for-profits needs to cease. Although this process works well for the private industry, pitting not-for-profits against each other creates a disservice to both of our clients: job seekers with disabilities and employers. To expect organizations in competition to then partner and work together becomes complicated. There is no base of trust.

Not-for-profits are worried about sharing their best practices in fear of losing contracts and other funding sources, and clients are unable to access all services available due to project funding constraints. A collaborative approach is recommended for government funding contracts with proven support from community agencies.

• (1115)

We all agree that partnerships work and are of the utmost importance to break down barriers to employment of people with disabilities. Therefore, with this vision, partnerships need to be encouraged as early as possible and entwined in the fabric of expectations, from service delivery to funding contracts.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation, observations, suggestions, and vision for going forward. We appreciate that very much.

We'll now hear from Mr. Soni. Go ahead.

**Mr. Deepak Soni (Executive Director, Corbrook):** Good morning, everybody. My name is Deepak Soni. I'm the executive director of Corbrook. We're a Toronto-based agency funded by the Province of Ontario.

Corbrook has been supporting people with physical and developmental disabilities to achieve independence, self-reliance, and become full participating members of our society for over 62 years. Our vision is simple: to awaken abilities.

Corbrook prides itself as a centre of learning. We offer many programs and services to people with disabilities in order to empower them with choices and opportunities. We have been assisting people in finding and maintaining jobs for over 25 years. We offer a number of programs that are geared toward employment, including employment counselling and placement, transition to work, literacy, and our new partnership with Centennial College in food packaging and processing.

I'd like to highlight three main points today that identify some of the challenges and successes on how to enhance the employment of people with disabilities and the role the federal government can play in supporting this role.

First of all, one of the biggest challenges we face, and I think Maureen mentioned it, is the restrictive funding model. Corbrook provides a successful transition-to-work program that offers people the necessary skills to find employment. The program focuses on teaching not only the technical skills related to the job, but some of the softer skills, such as issues relating to hygiene, dressing, attendance, sexuality, etc., that are essential in maintaining a job. Through this program, we also help to find employment and provide people with job coaching and training skills directly on the job.

However, given the funding that comes from the Province of Ontario through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the program is only restricted to people who have a developmental disability. This restrictive nature of funding means that many other people with other disabilities are not offered the program unless they pay for it on their own. Every year we turn away hundreds of people. Last fiscal year it was 300 people with mental health issues, acquired disabilities, and physical disabilities that did not qualify for the program.

Corbrook also provides a literacy and learning program that focuses on building literacy in people who have never had the opportunity of a formal education. This program stresses on building math, English, and life skills, such as money management. Participants of this program also attend our transition-to-work program and are extremely successful when it comes to finding and maintaining employment. However, this program is also offered with the same restrictive funding model as our transition-to-work program and is only open to people with development disabilities.

I look to the federal government and HRSDC to support agencies like Corbrook and broaden our funding base so that we are able to support more people in finding employment.

I will identify a couple of successes and some unique partnerships that we have that really have achieved strong results.

The first one is our partnership with Centennial College. Research has shown that a person with a disability is successful in securing and maintaining employment if they not only have the training or education behind them, but the work experience to go along with it. Many people with disabilities, unfortunately, do not have this opportunity. Corbrook in collaboration with Centennial College in Toronto have created a certificate program in food packaging and processing that addresses this issue. People with disabilities get the opportunity to attend a community college. The best part is that the program is non-segregated. They learn the theory related to food management and preparation at the college, while getting the practical experience related to food handling and packaging in the Corbrook state-of-the-art clean room. In the second semester, Corbrook helps people find co-op placements in the food and hospitality sector. On completion of the program, students are awarded a certificate in food processing and packaging.

Students pay \$3,000 annually to attend the program. The fees are shared between Corbrook and Centennial and they barely meet the expenses of the program, but it is something that our boards have decided collaboratively to work on.

The program has the capacity for 15 students every year. The needs are so great that in our first year of offering it, there were 10 students on the wait list and 25 who could not afford the program as they did not have any financial means to pay for it. Unfortunately, the program doesn't qualify for provincial financial assistance. Of the 15 students enrolled this year, 13 have ended up with employment with their co-op employers. This is an example of a unique program that, unfortunately, has no funding from any level of government, yet is so effective in breaking down barriers to employment.

Funding for programs such as this would allow even more people to become successful in finding employment, as right now it's limited to those who can afford to pay for it. Many people with disabilities often do not have the means to pay for such programs.

• (1120)

Our second partnership that I'd like to highlight is at Starwood Hotels. Corbrook, through an RFP process, was awarded a small amount of provincial money to develop an innovative and modern employer awareness tool. This tool, which is a pilot, will provide real-life scenarios, ideas, and strategies for HR managers and hiring managers who are engaged in employing and working with people with disabilities.

What's unique about this approach is that it gets away from the generic sensitivity training offered in a class-like environment, which can be costly for a lot of employers. Instead, it will be devised to be accessed by the click of an icon on a manager's desktop.

**The Chair:** Could you slow down a bit? The interpreters are having a bit of a time keeping up with you. If you could do that, we'd appreciate it.

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** Sure.

We will be partnering with Starwood—the owners of the Westins and Sheratons—in Toronto to run this pilot. If it's successful, this is something that will be of great benefit to all employers.

Funding from the federal government for initiatives such as this are necessary in order to reduce the existing barriers to people with disabilities even being considered for an interview, let alone a position. If additional funding were made available through the federal government, the money would be used to make this training even more easy to access for employers by building an app for a mobile device, etc., and accessible to employers across Canada by simply downloading the app or programming directly from the Service Canada website.

Awareness of employers is essential in breaking down barriers to employment. Investment by the federal government to work with agencies like Corbrook and my partners around the table to develop modern innovative tools such as this should be considered as opposed to the traditional models we have, which are often expensive in the long run, too generic in their approach, and not effective enough in changing the attitudes of employers.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to talk to you more about Corbrook and what we are doing to help people build opportunities for employment. I look forward to working with all of you in the future.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I do hear the word “partnership” coming up quite a bit, a unique partnership certainly in your case. With the development of modern innovative tools, it's all very important, for sure.

We'll now move to Ms. Curodeau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Curodeau (Vice-President, Board of directors, Association pour l'intégration sociale d'Ottawa):** Ladies and gentlemen, members of Parliament, good morning.

It is with great pleasure that our organization, the Association pour l'intégration sociale d'Ottawa, or AISO, has agreed to join the ranks of this committee as a witness.

As a francophone agency working with people with intellectual disabilities and their families, we are at the forefront of observing the multiple opportunities and skills available to them. I represent the association today as vice-president of the board of directors, but I am, first and foremost, a parent of an adult with an intellectual disability: my son, Louis-Philippe, who is a labour market success story.

I am also accompanied by Ms. Gisèle Parisien, who is a support supervisor at AISO.

To provide you with some background, the AISO was founded in 1991 and offers diversified services, including employment services, to francophones with intellectual disabilities. We are designated under the French Services Act of Ontario, and our main funding comes from the Ministry of Community and Social Services of Ontario. Our organization is also a provincial member of Community Living Ontario, or CLO, and works closely with the CACL, the Canadian Association for Community Living. Lastly, we are the founding members of another organization that offered employment services. These services were integrated into our organization in April 2011.

There are 55 people who are actively supported, including 22 who are employed and 14 who are interns or volunteers. Of the 22 people who are employed or interns, only 7 work more than 20 hours a week, and only 2 of them earn a little more than minimum wage. That said, the vast majority of them would like to work more than 20 hours a week for an appropriate contribution, because they are ready, eager and able. Close to 58% of people we support are, unfortunately, not considered competitive on the labour market, a proportion of 32 out of 55.

As my colleagues said, the working population of people with intellectual disabilities is underrepresented on the labour market, whereas this population can be a driving force. In this context, in November 2012, we attended the unveiling of the National Strategy for Employment of the Canadian Association for Community Living, here in Ottawa. According to the latest data produced by the CACL, there are approximately 500,000 people who would be a viable human solution, and thus contribute to their personal development on their own and that of a great country, and their communities and localities. To do this, they need the appropriate support, or need to be the beneficiaries of some investment from the community, combined with the leadership of potential employers. Unfortunately, we still see that several of these people, the majority of them even, continue to be excluded, live a segregated life, and are isolated.

When we talk about supporting or assisting a person with a view to including him or her into the labour market, our organization, like several others in the country, begins by developing an evaluation and initial assessment of their competencies and skills, including helping them prepare and seek employment. This approach also includes assisting with their integration, supporting them in the workplace, as well as mentoring the employer, as my colleagues mentioned. Since people with intellectual disabilities are also often exposed to more precarious and less desirable employment, it is key that our organization remain present in order to offer support and assistance based on the needs of the person and their work environment.

As several barriers are still very present, there are solutions that would allow people with intellectual disabilities to increase their civic and economic contributions, by providing support to employers in particular.

Research indicates that one of the main reasons employers do not hire people with intellectual disabilities lies in the fact that they know little about these people, do not understand their needs, and do not know how to interact with them. Raising awareness through promotion of campaigns at the national level would certainly address this form of prejudice.

• (1125)

Moreover, we need to facilitate the transition between high school and the labour market. A vast majority of people with intellectual disabilities find themselves with virtually nothing at the end of high school. They do not have access to any services and seldom have, if at all, the opportunity to attend postsecondary schools or are on long waiting lists to obtain resources that can support them. Therefore, they are shut out when they could actively participate and contribute to the economic development and advancement of our communities.

We also have to ensure education and postsecondary inclusion. Experience shows that when there is inclusion of postsecondary education as well as programs tailored to their needs, 80% get and maintain employment in their fields of study. Again, it is important that this access be provided in the language of their choice.

Let's use Ottawa as an example. Despite the large francophone community of people with intellectual disabilities, only a handful of them have access to postsecondary education in French because no such program exists currently. We, along with families from the community and various partners, are putting our efforts into

mitigating the situation leading to the emergence of a postsecondary program in French that would enable them to acquire competencies and develop their skills to be able to obtain remunerated employment through inclusion. In addition to contributing to the rise and prosperity of our communities, they would be able to improve their situation and quality of life, as well as reach levels of acceptable and suitable annual income. As it is, only those persons who are proficient in English can benefit from postsecondary education but they must go to English schools.

We also need to develop a network of employers. It is essential to educate communities and employers about the labour opportunities that people with intellectual disabilities can offer. Communications strategies must be implemented in communities so that we can establish a greater number of partnerships, while educating associations and occupational groups through targeted messaging with a goal of full employment for this important group of our population. We must build on success stories. There are so many. Yet, they remain unknown when they should be promoted.

I am now going to talk to you as a parent. I cannot overlook the success story of my son Louis-Philippe who, thanks to services offered by agencies like the AISO and the support from its counsellors, first held a part-time, then a full-time job. Versatile, he likes to learn and has developed various skills at major retailers, mainly: Rona, Home Depot and Loblaws. Now working at Canadian Tire for almost six years, he has a full-time position as a front-store clerk. As a handyman, he helps his colleagues from various departments. He assembles bicycles, installs display units, gets carts in the parking lot and assists clients by carrying their purchases to their vehicles. Louis-Philippe is always ready to serve with a smile—more so at work than at home, I must confess.

In addition to being a major asset for any employer, people with intellectual disabilities are loyal employees: they are punctual and are often a source of inspiration for their environment and, according to their supervisors, their co-workers.

In addition, we need to develop entrepreneurship and support the emergence of small businesses. The development of entrepreneurship from a unique idea represents a promising solution for people with intellectual disabilities. They should have access to any program that supports entrepreneurship like any other citizen, but based on an approach tailored to their needs, and based on expected results. Furthermore, there are many social enterprises that want to be the innovative and creative answer to new labour market niches. In our opinion, this is one of the key components that must be prioritized in a search of prospects for full inclusion in the workforce.

•(1130)

Lastly, we need to modernize the systems. To ensure the prospect of full employment and professional inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities, we must all re-evaluate our ways of doing things; refine our vision to include people with intellectual disabilities like anyone else, aiming for their active participation in the labour market, not to mention the important economic contribution they could make. We should collectively reconsider our strategies and our approach so that we become innovative in our practices.

In addition to the solutions put forward that could become, without a doubt, elements of action, as well as sustainable and favourable social changes, we must stay the course in educating the general public, with a focus on educational and labour communities. We also need to work closely with existing networks in order to re-examine our service models and approaches geared at full and complete inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the work force. We should ask ourselves on an ongoing basis how we can include, both socially and economically, people with intellectual disabilities who are ready, willing and able. We should help them succeed and support them in achieving their goals.

I thank you for your time. I'm available to answer your questions in either French or English.

Thank you.

•(1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Curodeau.

[English]

We certainly appreciate that you have a personal interest. As a parent you're obviously very proud of your son. We're dealing with a group of individuals who are indeed highly motivated and ready, eager, and able, to work and contribute with the appropriate supports. We appreciate hearing from you. We have heard from others that the transitioning from high school to the labour force is very important and post-secondary education as well. We appreciate what you've had to say.

We'll now move to Madame Perreault for five minutes of questions and answers.

[Translation]

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP):** Good morning. Thank you for coming here. Your presentations were really very interesting.

I would like to ask Ms. Haan a question.

Earlier, you spoke about the competition that exists between organizations to secure funding. This has been going on for years and years. If I base myself on how things work in Montcalm, I would say that this really is a very huge problem.

I know that you did refer to this, but I would like to know one thing. Perhaps we need to mitigate this competition and adopt, at one point, approaches that are healthier and more collaborative between the organizations. Think, for example, about the disability component of the Social Development Partnerships Program. I was recently told that the model had been changed, and that there were new requirements now and that it was more competitive.

Right now, what are the biggest barriers for securing funding?

[English]

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** That's a very good question.

There are lots of obstacles. I think all not-for-profits who are sitting in front of you will attest to the obstacles of funding and there are many.

The first and largest we feel is the competition for funding among not-for-profits. We are client-based, but we are expected to be cutthroats and undercut our competitors to get a contract. Then go back and work within the community in partnership with the people who we've just undercut. I don't believe not-for-profits are set up in that way. I think you should make it a collaboration of not-for-profits in the very beginning and have that set forward from the very start with the call for proposals or the request for funding so that it's a collaborative approach among all not-for-profits and the government.

I also think competition arises with the current funding structure so that clients can't access services from CCRW and from another organization. They don't have the freedom to flow between programs and projects. It's very limiting for the clients at the end of the day as well.

**Ms. Elizabeth Smith (Manager, Ontario Workplace Inclusion Program, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work):** If I may, the only thing I would add is that not only is it limiting for the client, but it is also limiting for employers. We hear this from employers who are navigating the multiple service providers and job developers who can only speak for the specific clients that they have available. A lot of times the failed or the employment situations that don't work out is because there's a hustle to make the numbers. Instead of being able to draw upon all of the clients and eligible people with disabilities in the community, there can be clients who are put into employment situations that aren't suited to their goals and needs. If we are able to develop more consultation and collaboration at the outset, as Maureen was saying, that would better serve both our people with disabilities and our employers.

•(1140)

[Translation]

**Ms. Manon Perreault:** I recently spoke to some people in my riding. They said more or less what we have been hearing here, since we began our study. I am referring to wage subsidies.

From what I can gather, we have to stop thinking about wage subsidies and instead look to creating some long-term support. This is all well and good, but in your opinion, how can such a transition be accomplished in practical terms?

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth Smith:** It's something that we're implementing right now in our programs. As you know, with the wage subsidy there are a lot of misconceptions in the employment community. The employers view wage subsidy as subsidized labour. That therefore devalues the contribution of qualified persons with disabilities in the workforce.



With the understanding that many persons with disabilities do face social exclusion, when they enter an employment situation, they may require additional support in becoming fully trained and acclimatized, whether that be with regard to familiarization with accommodations, or for the employer also by developing strategies around accommodation.

What we are doing with employers is we are framing it as a training subsidy that perhaps the person might require more focus in that training period, and for that additional contribution of time the wages are then subsidized for that training period. In return, they would have support from us, as an organization, to help implement those strategies, to ensure accommodations are in place and to troubleshoot any questions that may arise, but that period of time is designed so that both the client and the employer can have success.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Thank you, Madame Perreault. Your time is up.

We'll move to Mr. McColeman.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Thank you, Chairman. Especially thank you to the witnesses for being here today. Your testimony is very broad and I'm trying to narrow in on a couple of things I'd like to talk about.

First of all, when you talk about a model of government funding to not-for-profits in a collaborative fashion, in an ideal world that would be perfect. I agree. But frankly, I think the need for results-driven accountability, value for dollars, sometimes falls out of that decision.

As a legislator having to make decisions on how the government spends money, please tell me how we can assure ourselves that we're getting all those elements when we allow a single source?

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** I'd love to answer that.

We only have suggestions, obviously, but we know that at CCRW, for example, an average client at CCRW who is in our Toronto area, who is on ODS, receives around \$1,075 a month in support. At CCRW, to get that one client back to work, it cost us \$761.66 in 2012, so that is a good return on investment. That takes people off of disability quite easily.

If we frame how we understand going back to work in a business case and put not-for-profits at the forefront of getting that business case together, and encourage a working environment right from the beginning before the funding is identified, before the call for proposal goes out, to have stakeholder meetings of organizations like CCRW, like my colleagues sitting at the table, then we can say that maybe we should go down this road or maybe that is an idea for this funding as opposed to only seeing it backwards.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Are for-profit agencies providing these services in your area?

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** They are.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** What's your opinion of their services?

• (1145)

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** Go ahead, Elizabeth.

**Ms. Elizabeth Smith:** In one of the offices I manage in my program we're sharing a building with a for-profit that does

recruitment and placement. My experience in working with employers in that field is that, just like any other employer, they don't have the expertise and awareness to understand the specific needs of a person with a disability.

I want to echo our colleagues here today. The focus was on intellectual disabilities but we're cross-disability. We hear no matter what the disability is that employers need to have greater understanding of what the needs are and what it means to have any type of disability, whether it be mental health, intellectual, or episodic, that type of knowledge.

You're speaking about return on investment and results-based funding, and we absolutely understand that need for accountability when funding is provided. There are some ideas out there of other ways we can measure such as looking at the long term, employment retention, how clients excel in the workforce. The danger with a sole focus on the employment outcomes, which often are very aggressive, is that clients who require greater attention can be left behind.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** I want to move on because I've got a lot of questions, but very limited time.

Mr. Soni, I wanted to get into the community college thing, but I'm not going to go there because I don't have enough time. My office and I have done quite a bit of research lately on the way the federal government flows dollars to organizations through labour market agreements. Many of the national organizations would like to see some reform in this area by the federal government.

Are you aware of that? If you are, can you comment on some of the things you think the federal government may want to do to formulate labour market agreements for people with disabilities?

**The Chair:** We'll conclude with that response.

Go ahead, Mr. Soni.

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** We're not a national organization, we're provincial. Most of our money comes through MCSS in Ontario. We have been part of certain agreements recently. One was called a person-directed planning initiative that came through MCSS and is tied to the LMA dollars. I don't have a lot of experience at the national level, but I often find we don't have a lot of say in how the money is spent when it flows through the province and then comes into organizations like ours.

Given the experience we have, having a round table discussion to be able to allocate those dollars more effectively would be a lot more efficient, I think.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We'll now move to Mr. Sullivan.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Thank you to all of you for being here. It's yet another wonderful group of individuals who care deeply about their clients, as you call them, who are really just persons.

One of your topics was the need to reform financial supports. We've heard that from a number of other organizations that have been here, that persons who are on ODSP, and I imagine there are similar programs in every province, when faced with the prospect of a job that doesn't include benefits are faced with a terrible choice. Often they will choose not to take the job because there is no other mechanism to support their need for medical support.

The EI system also isn't very conducive to persons with disabilities, particularly people with episodic disabilities where a person with MS, for example—I'm not sure about the developmentally delayed individuals you're dealing with—has good times and bad, but the EI system does not take that into account.

I'm probably disagreeing with you on all these things. If you want to comment further, that would be great. I'm very pleased to hear of Corbrook's success with the education system. It's too bad there isn't any provincial support for that, but perhaps there can be federal support.

I'm also very intrigued by the app you've created and the ask, which is a pretty simple ask of the federal government, to allow that app to be present on the Service Canada website so employers can have access to accessibility training or accommodation training online. It's really simple.

Can you give us a little more detail?

• (1150)

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** The ask was to make that happen with funding from the federal government. Right now we're developing an innovative tool to put on the desktops of HR managers and hiring managers to guide them through the whole concept of how to work with a person with a developmental disability, how to support a person with a developmental disability, how to ask the questions. Right now we're in the preliminary stages of putting this tool together. We have Starwood Hotels piloting it for us, provincially.

I've heard from the business community that there's a strong need for awareness. A lot of times, the training is very generic. It's not specific. People are secluded in a classroom setting, and it's not at all engaging, so we came up with this idea of developing an innovative model that will be easy to access for managers. It will guide them through questions, scenarios, issues that they may face when hiring a person with a disability.

I'm pretty confident, after doing sort of a focus group of employers in Ontario, that there's a huge need. I know this will be a great success if we're able to expand it nationally. We're in an app-driven society now, and I think it's just the next step to have something on an iPhone or whatever to answer those questions. That's where we're going with this. Our first one is the actual model. It's going to be a desktop-based model. Then, if we're able to get support, we will be able to develop it into something nationally in an app-based format.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Would it be exportable to other forms of disabilities?

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** Yes. We've partnered with the Geneva Centre for Autism, Kerry's Place, Corbrook, and I'm the chair of the Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network, which is a group that lobbies the business community to hire people with disabilities. There are a number of disabilities that will be included as we grow this forward. That's the goal.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** I understand that your organization, the people you work with, are in many circumstances viewed as completely unemployable—

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** Yes.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** —but you in fact turn them around.

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** We have.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** I'm absolutely amazed that this is happening. Can you speak a little bit about the challenges, and how long that kind of thing takes from start to finish?

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** It depends on the individual, but one thing is for sure: people are extremely motivated and they're extremely geared towards getting that opportunity. It could take from four months to a year for some people, and for other people, it would be a lot less. It depends on the individual.

What we find really works is the concept of having the job developers and the job coaches working side by side at the place of employment, collaborating with the employer and the employee to help educate the employer and provide the confidence the individual needs while working. Our transition-to-work program is a large manufacturing-based environment. We run a workplace environment where people get the chance to get a simulated work environment. People are held accountable. The whole idea is to train folks. It's not the technical skills, but rather the softer skills that are so important, the transitional skills necessary to maintain a person's employment. We guide and coach folks as they go along. Some people coming into the work centre are there for three, four or five years and some are ready within a few months, and we know they'll be successful in moving on. It varies.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that response.

We'll now move to Mr. Daniel.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to the witnesses for being here. I really appreciate it.

My first question is for Madam Haan. In your statement you said that cleaning up the system and appropriate education for employers is key to the transformation. Can you expand on that and say exactly what you mean?

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** Absolutely. There was a very good ad campaign by Viable Calgary that happened a little while ago, and the target audience was employers. It was saying to employers that having somebody with a disability in their organizations was a possibility. They had examples of smokers having to butt out at work. That's a change that we've made and we've evolved to. Viable Calgary is a great model for a large ad campaign like that.

The other thing we would like to mention is to engage employers on a one-on-one level. In Toronto there's an organization called JOIN, and they do that very well. They recognize employers and provide a standard that employers seek to achieve. I think taking that one step further and having the employers be accountable for that status will further the buy-in of the employers. There's nothing better than peer-to-peer encouragement through champions.

• (1155)

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** One of the other things that rests on my mind is that more than 80% of all the businesses in Canada are small to medium-sized. You've talked about people getting engaged and getting jobs primarily in the larger businesses. What are the opportunities you see to be able to educate smaller businesses? How can the government further encourage employers to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities, particularly in this huge market where more than 80% of our businesses are small to medium-sized, where the difference of one person has a huge impact on the business?

It's open to any of you.

Deepak?

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** In our experience I think it's working one-on-one with the small to medium-sized businesses. I think there's a myth among a lot of small businesses around the costs associated with hiring folks with disabilities. From our experience with the Centennial College program whereby we have grads who are doing their co-op experiences, 70% of these students are getting their experience with very small employers. I think that once you take the small steps and work one-to-one with the individual employers and they get a chance to work directly with the individual, they really understand it's not that difficult. Then you slowly start breaking down those myths.

As chair of JOIN, the Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network, I have also talked to the Minister of Community and Social Services around developing an ad campaign specifically targeted towards small to medium-sized employers to really highlight the myths around hiring people with disabilities. At more of a micro level, I think it's more about the one-to-one work you do with individual employers, and once the people get a chance to work with individuals it's pretty successful.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** The other part of the question was what you think the Government of Canada can do to encourage these employers.

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** We've talked about marketing media. I think awareness campaigns have worked well. JOIN did a huge media campaign that was very successful in Ontario. We can keep hammering away with those things.

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** I would like to reiterate that CCRW really feels the need for a job accommodation fund that is accessible by small to medium-sized enterprises.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** What exactly do you mean by that?

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** Currently we have wage subsidies. It could be taking some of those wage subsidies or job accommodation funding that comes with current funding contracts with the government and reallocating those so that small to medium-sized enterprises can actually apply for this funding directly.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Daniel.

Does anyone else wish to make a comment?

**Ms. Johanne Curodeau:** If I may, as a mother, the experience of my son, now that he's been working at Canadian Tire for almost six years, started small. It started in small businesses where he acquired the skills to be able to progress and eventually land a permanent job. It's baby steps, but if we stick together I think we'll get there. What these people have to offer is priceless in terms of the good to the overall community. It's certainly an asset for the companies, as has been our experience. I certainly hope that this committee will be able to open doors to our people who are so ready to be part of the whole workforce.

Thank you.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that intervention.

Mr. Cuzner, we'll conclude with you.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Maybe what I'll do is I'll ask my questions and then just let you guys finish it up, okay? You can bring us home.

Thanks very much for being here.

Mr. Soni, I wanted to ask you, because it sounds as if you have a pretty neat thing in place with the community colleges, are there sufficient resources there to help train the trainers, to teach the teachers? Is that money coming from the education system or from community services? It would be a provincial thing.

How about you just sit on that one for a second, and I'll get the other two questions in.

This is probably for someone down at this end of the table. You mentioned the growing recognition of the need for reform in supports like EI. Could you comment on some of the changes that have been made and where we should go? I agree with Mr. Sullivan. When you look at episodic conditions such as MS, how do we build that into the system? Could you comment on that?

My final question is on some of the results. On the wage subsidies, what kind of results are there and where can we go to find the measurement on that? What type of success are we having? Is there a place that we should be looking to see where that's being measured, such as job retention? I really like the comment about the job accommodation funding. I'm sure the government benches are paying attention. I saw them making notes.

We'll go back to Mr. Soni.

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** Thank you, Mr. Cuzner.

With regard to the program, this is a unique initiative. I think it's one of the first of its kind across the country. We connected with the community college because we felt that a lot of people have either the work experience and no education, or education and no experience, so we decided to collaborate.

We approached the province for dollars and there was none for that. What we decided to do with the college was to really offer it at.... It cost a lot more money than we were asking for, but we wanted to make it available to anybody who wanted to take it, and the price was set at what it would normally cost for a community college program that is often funded by the province anyway, so \$3,000 for the year.

People who have the dollars pay for it. Corbrook receives \$1,500 a year, which doesn't really cover any of our expenses, and \$1,500 goes to Centennial College. They have a full faculty geared to teaching the program, the theoretical component of the food packaging, hygiene issues. Then our board decided to invest a significant amount of money to develop a clean room. We actually asked for funding from the Trillium Foundation, but our request was rejected, to develop this fantastic facility to teach people the skills.

Right now there is no funding for it. We went through OSAP to see if people could obtain some sort of funding for it, and that was declined. It's too bad. We had—

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Do you think there's room there for a federal program?

**Mr. Deepak Soni:** There is, and this is an opportunity to grow that further, yes, for sure.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Soni.

We'd like to hear the response to the other two questions on EI and the wage subsidy.

Go ahead, Ms. Smith.

**Ms. Elizabeth Smith:** In regard to a wage subsidy, I think that organizations that are delivering wage subsidies would be your first source for stats on how effective it can be. I think where wage subsidy is strong is for clients who wouldn't pass the interview phase in an open competition. Having that training and accommodation bursary and support provides that required incentive, especially for small to medium-sized businesses in retaining people with disabilities.

Right now, I'm not aware of a funding model that asks you to track long-term success, but I would urge that as something to look at when we're looking at sustainable changes so that agencies, employers, and the government have a picture of how people are progressing, and that retention.

•(1205)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Haan, go ahead.

**Ms. Maureen Haan:** To address the question about EI, we don't have any specific recommendations coming forward about EI. We do recognize that it is a time for reform. CCRW is a member of the Episodic Disabilities Network, and they will be providing a brief to this committee. They will be talking a little bit more about that at that time, I believe. That's insider information.

**The Chair:** Okay. We appreciate that insider information.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I'd like to thank all of you for appearing before the committee and sharing your thoughts and suggestions. We'll certainly take them into account.

With that, I'm going to suspend the meeting for five minutes.

•(1205)

(Pause)

•(1210)

**The Chair:** We'll call the meeting back to order.

We have a new panel here with us, representatives from Houselink Community Homes, L'Arche Ottawa, and Independent Living-Montreal.

You'll have an opportunity to present, and then each of you who presents will then be open to questions from each of the members as we go ahead.

We're going to start with Jacqueline Rankine. Go ahead with a five-minute presentation.

**Ms. Jacqueline Rankine (Program Manager, Houselink Community Homes):** Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to address you.

My name is Jackie Rankine. I'm the program manager at Houselink Community Homes.

Houselink was established in 1977 by family members and mental health professionals to respond to community needs for supportive housing. Houselink has continued to grow over the past 35 years, supported by all levels of government and by all major political parties. Everyone involved in Houselink has come together to agree that people with serious and persistent mental illness need a house, a job, and a friend.

Today Houselink operates or administers housing for more than 450 people. We also offer programs only to an additional 100 non-resident members. We call our residents and clients members because Houselink is a membership-based organization wherein half of our board of directors is comprised of people who use our programs and services. We operate in 22 different locations scattered throughout the Toronto downtown core.

Over 10 years ago we began formalizing and developing our efforts to provide employment to our members. Today we provide over 100 part-time, casual jobs to members in work such as building cleaning, landscaping, cooking, programming, and reception. All these part-time positions are supported by full-time staff who organize, schedule, supervise, train, and support the casual positions. Some people in these casual positions have also transitioned to become permanent staff.

At the same time, Houselink has adopted employment equity hiring procedures. As a result, one-third of our permanent labour force share characteristics with our client group—and I should say we have about 75 permanent employees—so a third of our staff have experienced mental illness and/or addictions and/or homelessness. These two strategies, a member-worker program and an equity hiring policy, are outlined and discussed in our report, "Working for Recovery", which was submitted to your committee and which was just handed out.

We have also submitted three employment success stories from staff who have moved from poverty and homelessness to full-time employment: Judy, Robert, and Keith. It was difficult to select stories to showcase because we have literally dozens of examples of people who have made it. We believe that the intersection of housing, employment supports, and a supportive community offers a unique synergy that makes labour force entry or re-entry possible.

We would like to suggest three ways in which the federal government might strengthen and support return to work for people with mental illness. First, we suggest you strengthen and develop the opportunities program that runs out of Service Canada. Second, we suggest you create a funding stream for supported employment, building upon existing wage supplement programs that are already offered within Service Canada. Third, we suggest that you support public education programs that reduce stigma and discrimination against the mentally ill.

While this kind of education needs to be done at the general societal level, it is especially important to target it towards employers. Unemployment rates among the mentally ill are estimated to be between 70% and 90%.

● (1215)

To speak to each of those points, first, we are very grateful that we are in receipt of annual funding from the opportunities fund. We would like to see the fund developed. We would like to see the fund recognized because people with mental health challenges have often experienced profound setbacks. This can include loss of job and career, housing, and family and friends. People who have undergone these kinds of ordeals often find it hard to follow a program that involves keeping a schedule, maintaining a course of action, and maintaining the demands of government regulations. Despite this, many can and do succeed. We need our funders to be flexible in their requirements and to recognize soft outcomes, such as enhanced self-esteem and confidence, as valid and important steps in long-term change.

We encourage our funding programs to recognize the need for supported employment. Perhaps an enhanced program could draw upon existing wage supplement programs. We believe a supported employment program needs to last at least a year and in some way protect the health and medical benefits that are provided by provincial social assistance programs.

We draw your attention to a supplementary employment program that is being offered in the City of Toronto to people on welfare. It is called the investing in neighbourhoods program and its outcomes are very, very successful.

Finally, we encourage the federal government to support public education initiatives that reduce stigma and discrimination against the mentally ill. Imagine overcoming all the barriers to job seeking that a person with mental illness often faces, only to be confronted by discriminatory attitudes in a job interview.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has undertaken a review of public education initiatives across Canada in their study, "Opening Minds". One of the subjects of this review was the Dream Team. The Dream Team is a group of consumer survivors who tell their story. They speak mainly to high schools, colleges, and

universities, and I should say they are also sponsored by Houselink. As part of next year's plan, they hope to reach out to the medical profession. Support for the Dream Team and other similar initiatives would go a long way to dispelling some of the myths and fears involved in mental illness.

Finally, I have submitted to the committee a couple of annual reports. There are copies of "Working for Recovery", which you have before you, and two related reports for your consideration: "What stops us from working?" by John Stapleton, which is about provincial disincentives to employment; and the DREEM report, which is about the possibility of building a recovery-enhancing environment based in our supportive housing stock.

Thank you very much.

● (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you for that presentation.

We'll move to Ms. Hanak.

**Ms. Lucie Hanak (Community Life Coordinator, L'Arche Ottawa):** Thank you for welcoming us to your standing committee. We are from the L'Arche Ottawa community and we wish to contribute to this dialogue on employment from the perspective of people with developmental disabilities.

L'Arche is an international organization founded by Canadian Jean Vanier. It has over 130 communities around the world. Each community supports people with and without developmental disabilities in live-in home models. This of course includes supporting people in day programs and work environments.

L'Arche's conviction is that every person with a developmental disability who wants a job should have access to meaningful work. People with developmental disabilities have demonstrated that they can be valuable employees when they are given the chance. The following stories will illustrate how people with developmental disabilities contribute to the workforce across Canada.

Our first example is here in Ottawa. It will illustrate how the federal government directly participates in creating jobs for people with developmental disabilities. The Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, OCAPDD, is a local agency. Part of its holistic vision is to provide meaningful work for people.

Ten years ago a tripartite agreement was made between the federal government, the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and OCAPDD to maintain and sustain an employment program that was created over 30 years ago at the National Archives. The work program at the National Archives is to destroy confidential government documents that are no longer needed. Sixty people with developmental disabilities working full-time and part-time are remunerated with a per-hour training allowance from the contract with the federal government, and the three full-time staff wages are funded by the provincial government.

Now we'll take a bird's-eye view of work opportunities in large communities in Canada.

We'll go to Winnipeg. The L'Arche community there operates the Tova Cafe. This cafe is based on a social enterprise model that provides daytime employment. The cafe offers a bistro-style menu to the general public, and also includes catering and take out. This inclusive model of employment provides not only a pleasant atmosphere, but also a place of hope both for people with developmental disabilities and their parents who may feel socially isolated and rejected in society.

Moving to Toronto, L'Arche Daybreak operates a woodery housed in a renovated barn. People with developmental disabilities work to make surveying and horticultural stakes as well as other wood products for commercial, industrial, and residential applications.

Going across the river to Quebec, the L'Arche community in Gatineau provides a work day program called *Jouets d'arc-en-ciel*. Here people with developmental disabilities collect, wash, and disinfect toys from a local daycare. In all aspects of the program, from the work itself to the decisions taken, people with disabilities participate.

Jim Cassidy is here with us today. He's a member of L'Arche Ottawa and he works at the Loeb Centre. Jim, tell us what you do at the Loeb Centre for work.

• (1225)

**Mr. James Cassidy (Core Member, L'Arche Ottawa):** At Loeb Centre, everybody, I have to watch because there's been a bad break in one of those great big TVs. The supervisor of my program, Joe Silverman, said, "Jimmy, we're going to have to get you to help out."

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** So you work with security in two buildings.

**Mr. James Cassidy:** In two buildings.

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** You work with codes on the doors and monitor who comes in and who comes out.

**Mr. James Cassidy:** That's right.

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** Jim, what is important for you about working?

**Mr. James Cassidy:** For me, everybody, I like to work. For me, personally again, I don't want my job going to somebody else.

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** I think when we were prepping for this, Jim was saying he doesn't want to be sitting around drinking tea. He wants to work. He wants to contribute to the workforce.

Jim, if you didn't work, how would you feel about that?

**Mr. James Cassidy:** Very, very bad.

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** I think we've demonstrated that the contribution is strong and that people with developmental disabilities in the workforce create a more human society.

**Ms. Emily Taylor-King (Homes Coordinator, L'Arche Ottawa):** As requested by your invitation, we're proposing several policy recommendations on how employability for people with developmental disabilities can be enhanced.

First, I'd like to talk about seed funding. Social enterprise is a popular concept in recent days for creating sustainable social services. Making seed funding available to start these enterprises and to purchase existing enterprises would both enhance the possibility

of employment for people with developmental disabilities as well as create sustainable income for agencies that are supporting people with disabilities. One example we cited was the Tova Cafe in Winnipeg.

Second is task-focused work. Today's society is largely focused on having one job for one person, with the most qualified person being selected to do the work. We were thinking that we could re-envision work in such a way that an employer pays a salary for a set amount of work, but maybe there could be a number of different people with developmental disabilities with complementary skill sets who work together as a team. To achieve this, it's possible you'd need developmental service workers who could act as a bridge between employers and people with disabilities to put such an arrangement in place.

Third is targeted contracting. The one way the federal government in particular can directly participate in ensuring employability for people with disabilities is to designate a small percentage of government service contracts awarded to go to organizations that employ people with developmental disabilities. As we cited in our example of the National Archives and the OCAPDD program, the federal government has played a vital role this way.

The final point is adjustments to the Employment Equity Act. The current Employment Equity Act makes specifications for people with disabilities as a rather broad category, but in our opinion, the needs of the developmental disability group are not really homogenous with the needs of accommodation required for other types of disabilities. We would suggest the creation of a specific provision for people with developmental disabilities in the act, so that the percentage of public service workers with developmental disabilities is equal to the percentage in the working-age population.

We've included a few other suggestions in the brief that we've circulated to you, but at this moment I'd just like to invite you to take a look at that when you have a chance.

Thank you for inviting us to come and participate today. I hope we've shown you that people with developmental disabilities can have much to offer the workplace when given the opportunity.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that.

It's a certainly an interesting range of work from shredding confidential documents, to security, to a bistro, and to disinfecting toys. It took some imaginative, cooperative work to make that happen.

We'll now move to hearing from Rosie, please go ahead.

**Ms. Rosie Arcuri (Program Coordinator, Independent Living - Montreal):** I'm here on behalf of Independent Living - Montreal, and we're here as employees with disabilities. I am the program coordinator, and we thought we would share very briefly our stories that we thought would be helpful, what we've learned, and our suggestions.

For me, there were three things that hindered my success. One is access to information. For example, I only learned about a program in Quebec that turned student loans into bursaries four years after I was eligible. For people who had little support or for whom finances were a big problem, that could have prevented them from going to school, because of lack of employment.

The other thing I think is really important to mention is to note how professionals can have a massive impact in the lives of people with disabilities, particularly when you're young and you don't really know what your abilities are, because you don't have the same experiences as a teenager who worked at a summer camp, let's say, or who worked wherever else.

There are amazing people who impact in a positive way, but for example, when I went to register and apply for a college program, I was told, "Oh, with your disability that program would be virtually impossible; try going into business." I was also told two years later, at 18, that there's pretty much no employment you can do until you have at least a bachelor's degree. When I asked that if I tried to find employment in this area could I get ZoomText, could I get services, he basically told me after seeing me for 15 minutes that he didn't think my personality was conducive to that job and that he could not support my request.

The last thing I have to say is how important experiences are. It leads to networking and it leads to self-confidence and self-esteem, so find different ways to do it. Obviously, employment is crucial, and to get there, maybe be on a board of directors, be a volunteer, and find innovative ways to do that. I've actually been told both at a summer job employment and here at Independent Living - Montreal that it was my extracurricular activities and my other experiences that were not paid that actually made them consider hiring me.

I'll pass it on to Rose-Marie Wakil.

**Ms. Rose-Marie Wakil (Information and Networking Agent, Independent Living - Montreal):** Hi. My name is Rose-Marie. I'm going to talk in French.

[Translation]

I work for Vie autonome-Montréal. I have had a disability since birth. I am here to tell you about my schooling and career path.

Towards the end of high school, I unfortunately received bad advice from my guidance counsellor, who based his advice on my disability. Because I had some talent in the area of photography, I wanted to study it at the CEGEP, but he told me that my disability would prevent me from working in that field in the future. I followed his advice and I unfortunately dropped out of CEGEP. It was out of a lack of interest and skills, and also out of a lack of financial support.

After I had dropped out, I remained unemployed for a few years. By happenstance, I met people who were offering specialized employment services that I had never heard of before. I was unaware

of all of the services available to persons with disabilities. As a result of that meeting, I was able to define new school and career goals for myself, and this led me to go back to school, in graphic design in a private school.

When I made this choice, I was still dealing with the same financial roadblocks. Unfortunately, I had to fight. In fact, I had to appeal a decision against me to prove that I was indeed a person with a disability. Depending on the level of government, you may be considered insufficiently disabled or too disabled. So I had to fight to get access to scholarships for people with disabilities. Once that was done, I managed to get a degree in graphic arts. The time had come for me to find a job.

Productivity really matters in the area of graphic arts. Employers were uncertain of my level of productivity, even though they did not know me. Nevertheless, I was able to find myself work. I then found a job through a government program apprenticeship, under the training and employability development program for persons with a disability. I did an 18-month internship. Further to that, my employment period was extended by a few months and then I was given the opportunity to become self-employed.

I liked the idea of being self-employed. I thought it would avoid my having to travel and give me a more flexible schedule, better suited to my needs. I wanted to apply for a scholarship or financial assistance from SPHÈRE-Québec, but one of this agency's criteria was that the applicant should not have worked over the last three years. In other words, I was ineligible. I had been in the labour force for too long.

Regardless, I stayed the course. I always managed to find work, but it was unfortunately not always related to my skills. So, I had to make compromises: be a secretary, assistant to this or to that. Today, I am somewhat far from the field of graphic design, but I am continuing on this path nevertheless. I have achieved some good successes, allowing me to never stop moving forward.

I'd now like to turn over the floor to Rosie.

● (1235)

**Ms. Rosie Arcuri:** What we have learned is that educational and professional decisions can be dictated by the disability. There is a lack of information that affects professionals, both at school and among those that people with a disability know.

There is also inconsistency and a lack of information concerning what is accessible. It would be good to have a place where people with a disability could say who they are and what their disabilities are, and see what services they can access. There is a lot of help and services, but people are not aware, do not have access or have difficulty getting there. It is very difficult to find your first job or your first experience.

We have found that organizations like the External Employment Service were very helpful, that they could help people find a job. That is important. There is also volunteering. However, even if you tell people that you are willing to work as a volunteer, that you really want to help them, if they think you can't do anything, they won't want you. That is also an important aspect.

As I mentioned, there are a great deal of prejudices. We must therefore work with employers, but also with the public. Everyone knows an employer or other people. It is a matter of networking. If nobody thinks you are capable of doing the work, you obviously won't be kept in the company. Once again, it is really the employers' responsibility. People with a disability must also be allowed to speak for themselves. It is nice to give out a textbook or something like that, but if people with a disability are not involved, if it is not them expressing themselves, it is less real, less close to the true reality.

Finally, the people themselves must have a role to play in professional integration. They must know the laws, the services, etc. They must also have confidence in themselves. Programs like CAMO or other community resources can help along the way. It is very useful. People who have had a number of work experiences are more able to find a new job on their own or with less help.

● (1240)

**Ms. Rose-Marie Wakil:** We believe that the federal government has a number of roles to play in support measures for people with a disability.

The first role is to maintain a core funding of our organizations, such as Independent Living-Montreal and, more broadly, Independent Living Canada. We want to inform you—as you probably already know—that core funding will decrease until we no longer receive anything in 2015. At that point, you will have to compete with foundations, hospitals and university institutions, which have internal resources for funding requests and projects. For our part, we will be excluded from that because we don't have enough people internally or enough funding to hire people who really specialize in funding.

Core funding allows us to not only run an employment support program that is an alternative and complementary to what already exists, but also to provide resources and workshops on essential non-work steps to obtaining and maintaining a job, or facilitate peer support and mentoring.

The government's second role would be to fund employment support services within organizations.

Our third recommendation would be to put in place financial measures to facilitate mobilization, taking into account employers, productivity and the work situation. For everything related to employment accommodation, it takes much too long to achieve a minimum possible productivity.

Moreover, employers have obligations regarding means, but they don't have obligations of result. To obtain results, the government could propose incentives to all employers. To encourage them to hire people with a disability, we propose giving them a financial incentive.

As well, lastly, for people with a disability to be able to work, we know they need to have home support and assistant services, appropriate adapted transportation and accessible and adapted housing. If we don't have those services, we can't continue working. We need all of those services. Those services shouldn't be reduced.

Thank you.

● (1245)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I let you go over time by quite a lot.

We're going to change the order of things. We'll have one question from each party before we conclude. We'll start with Madame Boutin-Sweet.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Thank you, everyone. Thank you for having shared your experiences with us.

I would like to talk a bit about housing. We know that many homeless people have mental health problems. Ms. Rankine, you talked about housing. Housing can certainly help break a certain cycle, help people integrate society socially and economically and help them develop self-confidence.

[English]

**Ms. Jacqueline Rankine:** I'm hearing this in French.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** I'll say it in English. I was talking about housing and how housing can be at the very basis for certain things.

I wanted to talk about housing. You talked about housing and how it can be a determinant for self-esteem. You said as well that a lot of homeless people have mental health problems and that having a house, somewhere to live, can break the cycle and give people self-esteem and reintegrate people economically and also socially.

How could the federal government help with housing as part of this process to reintegrate people into the workforce? For example, if there was a national housing policy across Canada could there be something included in there that would speak to the needs of people who have mental health problems?

**Ms. Jacqueline Rankine:** Yes. We need a national housing strategy or policy in order to have the construction of more supportive housing. I only know the statistics in downtown Toronto, where we have set up for the first time ever a centralized unit registry, a wait list for people who need supportive housing, in other words, people with serious and persistent mental illness. The most recent number is that there are 6,500 people on that wait list. This is for downtown Toronto alone.



It's just plain common sense that once you have a foundation of some security and stability, then you can build. Among the success stories we have submitted today, two were of people who had been literally sleeping rough, homeless, and one person lived in deep poverty. They are all gainfully employed, well-functioning members of the community now.

I try not to politicize my views, but it's a cruel joke to talk about any kind of employment strategy unless there is a firm basis in housing.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Housing is one of the social determinants of health, which then leads to being better adapted and then having a job. I think it all goes together.

[Translation]

My second question is for Ms. Hanak.

Do you hear the English interpretation?

[English]

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** Yes, I can hear.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** We are talking about people who have a physical or intellectual disability, as you said yourself, there are many kinds of disabilities. How could programs be applied well to all of these groups? Should we reach agreements, for example, with groups who are familiar with local needs and who have local solutions?

You talked about different funding types. I would like to have your opinion on that topic.

[English]

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** Absolutely the partnership model with local agencies is key, because they can advocate and provide the support in linking people with developmental disability to employment. I mentioned the National Archives, where you have an agency that facilitates the training and assessment of people with developmental disabilities for the job tasks. It's very key, where you see a wonderful three-part approach.

The federal government pays the people with developmental disability... We're looking at \$2 to \$3 an hour for 60 people with developmental disability. The federal government provides the salary income. A number of the people have been there for 20 to 30 years. It's a huge commitment from people with developmental disability. Then you see the provincial government coming in with their funding to pay the staff who monitor the day-to-day activities, making sure that the documents are shredded and destroyed. The OCAPDD pretty much supplies people with developmental disability who have the ability to work.

Definitely that kind of model, in which the federal government can be involved, is very successful in this program.

• (1250)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that exchange.

We'll now move to Mr. Mayes.

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much to the witnesses for being here today.

I have a sister who has a disability. The challenges that I feel she faced as an adult were in housing, mobility—she was in a wheelchair—and then the opportunity for employment.

As far as housing is concerned, our government has spent \$13.1 billion on housing in Canada and \$1.7 billion for 605,000 units. It's a big challenge. There's a great need there, but we definitely have started and have worked with the provinces to fund housing on a greater scale than there was before. Also, in our economic action plan we allocated \$2 billion for housing.

That is the first area.

It's hard to talk about employment opportunities without linking the rest of this. Mobility is one issue which, as I said, my sister had. She was fortunate enough to have the Easter Seal bus come to pick her up and take her to work. I'm not too sure what they have in other provinces.

I want to talk a little about accessibility, the ability to get to the job, and then once you're at the job.... There were certain things she needed in the washroom for mobility, and there are other needs in the workplace.

The question I want to talk about now is what funding there is for those types of things, to help the employer and then also help the employee. Not everyone can jump on a bus. Even if it is wheelchair accessible, there are other issues.

I would like to throw this issue out to you.

**The Chair:** Would anyone care to respond?

Ms. Hanak, or—

**Ms. Jacqueline Rankine:** Is this about the kind of capital funding there is for enhancing physical plant to make it accessible?

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** That's right.

**Ms. Jacqueline Rankine:** I'm sorry, I don't have the answer to that. In my experience throughout the downtown core, we are talking about the need for programs to convert some of our housing, because one thing happening is that the baby boomers are moving to our housing. They are aging and are beginning to experience mobility issues, and accessibility in our existing housing stock is becoming a problem.

I don't know whether there's a CMHC program. I think that if there were one, we would be using it, and we don't have any.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** I know that our government came out with accessibility to public buildings and made a lot of funds available for it. As for the workplace, I'm wondering whether you see a need for some sort of support, whether provincial or federal, to help.

I'm going to ask the other question too, because I have limited time. Who should be communicating this to the employers? Should it be the government? Should it be the non-profits? Should it be agencies such as yours that work with folks?

I think it's important to communicate the opportunity that the employers have—not the employees, but the employers. I had a grocery store with 60 people working there. We hired a couple of disabled employees, and it was really interesting that my employees were better employees because of it.

•(1255)

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** Yes, it's seeing the human society.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Absolutely. I have to say that their appreciation of me as an employer went up, too. There's a multiple benefit here.

Could you speak to that?

**The Chair:** Ms. Hanak and Ms. Taylor-King may have a comment, or anyone else.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Lucie Hanak:** I want to talk about the transportation. I think the bigger issue is what the barriers are.

The Loeb Centre, where Jim works, is all on one level. The Loeb Centre buildings were bought by the Loeb family. These two buildings were then converted for day programs and work programs.

Can there be an incentive for large businesses to buy such buildings and accommodate these kinds of workplaces for people with developmental disability? The issue of barriers for the employer, what they are, and whether they can be minimized so that people are welcomed into those workplaces, is a bigger issue.

**Ms. Emily Taylor-King:** I agree. I'm not aware of any particular incentives that currently exist allowing employers to do that kind of refit. It would be really key to have a communications strategy that shows, as you did, what the benefits are of having people with disability on staff. There really are some key benefits. It's hard to collect some of the data about this, but we think there is less absenteeism, and there are the social benefits within the workplace of having a positive work environment, which then has economic benefits down the road. Those are part of the incentive structure.

We'd like to be able to collect some better information about this so that we can present it to you.

On the transportation piece, we're probably better versed about it here in Ottawa than elsewhere in the country. One of the barriers we face frequently is that in order to have access to Para Transpo, which is the service available here in Ottawa, you have to provide proof of physical disability. Mental disability or intellectual disability is not considered sufficient.

For example, we have a gentleman who needs to go to his workplace every day and is having real difficulty getting there, because he's a selective mute. He often will be left behind by the buses. We've tried to have access to Para Transpo and have been denied because he's fully able-bodied. That's a struggle that we're continuing to have. There is a conversation happening about this, but at the moment, it still remains a barrier.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that response.

We'll conclude with Mr. Cuzner.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have to ask Jim a question. I have to get some advice from him. Everybody has a boss, and as members of Parliament on the committee, our boss is the chair. Some days when he comes in, he's pretty cranky, but he's pretty good most of the time. Do you have any advice on what you can do to soften up the boss, to be good with the boss? Do you have any advice on that, Jim?

**Mr. James Cassidy:** Well, the way I look at it, and I've been around that kind of thing, not where I live, but where I and my friend work, our boss is right at the door, and the first thing we hear... I said, "Joe, why do you have to say that word?" He said, "That's what I was told to do." I said, "By whom?"

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Maybe it was the PMO or something like that.

**The Chair:** That's your opinion, but I think we'll let him go for a bit yet.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. James Cassidy:** The thing is, you see, the problem with that is, the main office over our workshop tells him what to do.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Okay.

**Mr. James Cassidy:** Not only that, though, what I found out was a gentleman from Toronto had it written up, sent out from Toronto to here.

I said, "Joe, just call him and tell him people are not happy with this." I'm sorry, there's no reason for that.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Jim, you walk in the same shoes, partner. You walk in the same shoes.

We are short on time, but I really appreciate your answer. I know the committee members will appreciate that as well.

What I'm hearing through the testimony is that education is critical. In your case, Rose-Marie, a professional guidance counsellor actually offered you advice that would limit your success. Obviously, that professional wasn't well educated.

I look at some of the concerns, Jacqueline, that you brought forward. You look at a bed, a job, and a friend. A lot of times things are complicated because of a police record. People with mental illness or addiction problems can have complicated backgrounds.

Is there a role for the federal government in educating the professionals who offer the advice or apply the laws? Are the people we're dealing with becoming aware of some of the intricacies of the issues you people deal with on a daily basis? Is there a role for the federal government there?

•(1300)

**Ms. Jacqueline Rankine:** One of the three success stories in your kit is from Robert. Robert was addicted to hard drugs, hears voices, was homeless for many years, slept rough, ended up in jail, and finally came to us through the justice system. He's now almost fully recovered. He still hears voices, but he manages to cope with his symptoms, and he's working in a meaningful job. It's doable. It can be done.

I think in answer to this gentleman's question earlier, the best promoters of these success stories are the people who have lived the experiences themselves. Normally I would not be sitting here. Normally it is the people with lived experience who speak for our organization. I perhaps misunderstood and thought only one person could come today.

There are groups like the Dream Team, and there are others such as A-Way Express. There are dozens of stories of people who are doing better. They can speak for themselves, and they are compelling.

They go into high schools, to colleges, and they change minds. There was an evaluative study by the Mental Health Commission of Canada called "Opening Minds" that compares various anti-discrimination education strategies across the country. Financial support for that kind of public education could go a long way.

**The Chair:** If anyone else has a comment, go ahead.

**Ms. Rosie Arcuri:** The public education thing is a massive one. Most professionals mean well. I don't think many of them are bitter or whatever. They mean well. But whether it's professionals,

potential employees, or the general public, I feel there are two things here. One is public education to change the perception of what disability means, what we need, and what can we do. The other thing has to do with employers and who we are as employees. The basic idea is that people with disabilities are just people who maybe have to find different ways to do things but can still do them. Without that idea, employers are not going to want to hire somebody. You need to be okay with who we are before you can consider hiring us, and then you have to figure out the logistics.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for sharing that with us.

Certainly, a house, a job, and a friend are very important. Until just a few moments ago, Mr. Cuzner was working pretty well with all three of them.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** That said, we appreciate you sharing your thoughts with us and your suggestions going forward. We certainly do appreciate that.

With that, we'll adjourn.

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