

BUILDING BRIDGES:

Linking Employers to
Postsecondary Graduates
with Disabilities



BUILDING BRIDGES

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INTRODUCTION

Ontario's economy is undergoing transformation. Many sectors that were once Ontario's strengths are now struggling. More than ever, Ontario's businesses face stiff competition for investment, markets, and talent.

To this end, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) recently released its second annual agenda, *Emerging Stronger 2013*, for the province and the economy. Building a 21st century workforce is one of five pillars of this agenda.

The OCC is profoundly confident that the province has all the assets it needs to secure its position as the best place to do business, invest, work, and live. But we need to act collectively, strategically, and with purpose to leverage these assets.

About 1.9 million people in Ontario, or 15.5 percent of the population live with a disability. Forty-three percent of this population has postsecondary accreditation (McCloy and DeClou 7). Yet, the unemployment rate among persons with disabilities in Ontario is 30 percent higher than that of the general population (Statistics Canada. PALS 2006).

With 46,700 students with disabilities currently enrolled in colleges and universities in Ontario, employers need to recognize the potential of a highly skilled yet underutilized labour pool of postsecondary graduates with disabilities.

The purpose of this paper is to examine why skilled individuals with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and how their labour market participation rate can be improved. The paper's key findings are as follows:

- 29 percent of Ontario's small and medium-sized enterprises are having difficulty filling job vacancies due to the absence of qualified individuals.
- Yet, there exists a skilled labour pool of postsecondary graduates with disabilities in our own backyard who are disproportionately unemployed, underemployed, and have lower earnings than their non-disabled counterparts.
- While employer myths and misperceptions present a barrier to employment for persons with disabilities, they are not as large a barrier as many suspect.
- In fact, a larger barrier faced by small and medium-sized enterprises is the opportunity costs^[1] associated with targeted hiring practices and actually tapping into this pool of labour.
- Small and medium-sized enterprise opinion on what type of assistance would be useful in the hiring and retaining of a person with a disability did not coalesce around a particular set of solutions, but rather spanned the spectrum from financial assistance to recruitment training.

We focus on small and medium-sized enterprises for two important reasons. First, small firms have outpaced large firms in new hires since 2009. Projections suggest that they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Second, barriers to hiring persons with disabilities are most acute among small and medium-sized enterprises.

¹ By opportunity costs, we mean the foregone resources (time, money, effort, etc.) of making a hire; the proverbial 'time is money.'

Methodology

This paper is the product of a robust research effort undertaken by the OCC. The research involved a comprehensive review of existing literature and data on both the barriers to labour market participation for postsecondary graduates with disabilities, as well as the proven methods practiced by other jurisdictions and businesses to lower these barriers.

Additionally, the OCC surveyed 2,059 Ontario businesses across the province and in all major sectors as part of the 2013 *Ontario Chamber of Commerce Membership Survey*. This survey tested perceptions held among employers about employees with disabilities and the viability of potential solutions.

The Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) used the same questions to survey 780 human resource professionals across Ontario.

The OCC conducted focus groups with sixteen disability stakeholders, eight small and medium-sized businesses, six large firm employers, and eight postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities. The College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) was also consulted on the challenges facing Ontario colleges in providing support for students with disabilities as they enter the workforce.

The validated research findings from the focus groups and surveys are embedded throughout the paper.

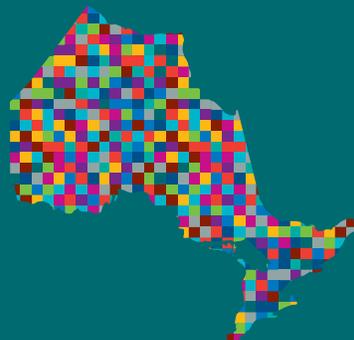
Report Outline

Section one of the report examines the labour market paradox Ontario is currently facing and showcases the under-tapped labour potential of postsecondary graduates with disabilities. It also highlights that the challenges facing small and medium-sized enterprises in accessing this pool of talent are particularly acute.

Section two outlines some of the most common barriers to employment for persons with disabilities from a demand-side and a supply-side perspective. These barriers include the myths and misperceptions held by employers about employees with disabilities, the high opportunity costs facing small and medium-sized enterprises in targeting this labour pool, and an absence of small and medium-sized enterprise specific information on the subject.

The report showcases elements of delivery models to consider in bridging the gap between small and medium-sized enterprise employers and postsecondary graduates with disabilities. These best practice models are utilized by employers who actively hire postsecondary graduates with

ONTARIO'S LABOUR MARKET PARADOX



ONTARIO'S LABOUR MARKET PARADOX

Ontario faces a profound labour market paradox - a skills deficit and projected labour market shortages yet pockets of historically high unemployment and underemployment.

For the province to succeed in a 21st century economy, it needs a workforce that is highly skilled and adaptable.

As the baby boom generation exits the workforce, Ontario's working-age population as a share of the total population is expected to decline by almost 9 percent from 2011 to 2036 (Ontario. Ministry of Finance 2012).

According to the Conference Board of Canada (2007), Ontario could face a shortfall of 364,000 workers by 2025, increasing in number to 564,000 by 2030 (5).

Compounding the demographic shift is a thinning labour pool of skilled workers. By some estimates, 70 percent of new jobs in 2011 required a postsecondary credential (Association of Canadian Community Colleges 1). However, only about 60 percent of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 currently meet this requirement (Association of Canadian Community Colleges 1).

The business community, as well as the federal and provincial governments, are developing immigrant attraction and selection strategies to fill the existing and looming labour shortages.

While a step in the right direction, immigrant recruitment alone is insufficient to meet the growing labour needs of Ontario businesses. Immigration would have to grow by 250 percent in order to plug the gap caused by the aging demographic (Expert Roundtable on Immigration 23).

The province and employers need to jointly develop explicit strategies to better connect with the existing pools of talented persons who are currently under-represented in the labour force, including those with disabilities.

The population of persons with disabilities can help meet the demand of small and medium-sized enterprises across Ontario for skilled workers.

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of persons who reported having a disability in Canada increased by 22 percent. Over the next 20 years, this number is set to increase further as the population ages (Statistics Canada. PALS 2006).

ONTARIO'S LABOUR MARKET SHORTAGES – A SECTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Key sectors particularly affected by Ontario's skills deficit include the trades, mining, financial services, information and communications technology, and hospitality and tourism (Ontario's Workplace Shortage Coalition 8).

Trades: Skills Canada reports that 40 percent of new jobs created in the next decade will be in the skilled trades (e.g. cooks, electricians, mechanics and carpenters). However, currently, only 26 percent of young people aged 13 to 24 are considering a career in these areas (Spence 2012).

The shortage of trades people could amount to over one million by 2020 (Curry 2013).

Mining: Nationally, there is anticipated demand for 92,000 additional workers across all mining occupational groups by 2016 (Mining Industry Human Resources Council 21).

Nearly 95 percent of the sector is also made up of micro and small-sized enterprises. In fact, 60 percent of employers have fewer than five employees (Mining Industry Human Resources Council 3).

Financial Services: Over 25,000 financial services workers (more than 10 percent of the total industry workforce) are now 55 years of age or older (Toronto Financial Services Alliance 22). Approximately 26,800 members of Toronto's financial services workforce could elect to retire at age 61 in the next five years, with nearly one-third likely to retire by 2020 (Toronto Financial Services Alliance 25).

Information and Communications Technology (ICT): In the ICT industry an additional 106,000 workers will be needed by 2016, particularly in positions such as computer and information system managers, telecommunication carriers, and information systems analysts and consultants (Faisal 2012).

Hospitality and Tourism: By 2025, Ontario's tourism sector could face a shortfall in labour supply of 9.5 per cent. Shortages will be particularly acute in the food and beverage and accommodation sectors, with the shortage of labour in the province's accommodation industry projected to grow to nearly 3,600 full time jobs by the same year (Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council 2).

THE LABOUR MARKET PARADOX: THE SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE PERSPECTIVE

Industry Canada defines small and medium-sized enterprises as all businesses with fewer than 500 employees (Public Works and Government Services 2011).

Between 2005 and 2010, 95 percent of the fastest growing businesses in Canada were small and medium-sized enterprises (Industry Canada 2012). In Ontario, 97 percent of businesses are small-sized, with fewer than 100 employees (Ontario. Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation 2012).

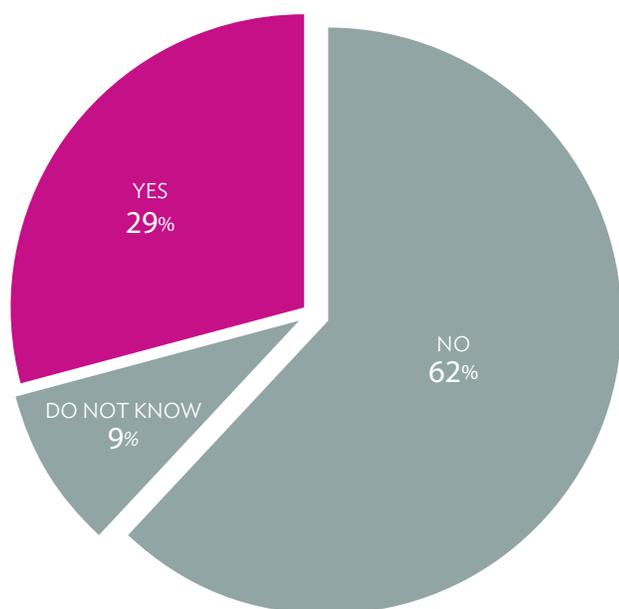
In 2011, small and medium-sized enterprises accounted for:

- 45 percent of Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- 60 percent of all jobs
- 75 percent of net employment growth (Public Works and Government Services 2011)

Small and medium-sized enterprises are fast outpacing large corporations in new hires. In 2011, small and medium-sized enterprises were responsible for the creation of 53.9 percent of all jobs on average in the private sector. During the same year, small and medium-sized enterprises employed 63.7 percent of private sector employees or 6.8 million people across the country (BDC 2013).

Accompanying the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises are labour market challenges. In the 2013 *Ontario Chamber of Commerce Membership Survey*, **29 percent of small and medium-sized enterprises stated that they had difficulty filling a job opening over the last 12-18 months due to the fact they could not find someone with the right qualifications** (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Has your business had difficulty filling a job opening over the past 12-18 months because you couldn't find someone with the right qualifications*?



*Small and medium-sized enterprise specific data

POSTSECONDARY GRADUATES WITH DISABILITIES: UNDER-TAPPED LABOUR MARKET POTENTIAL

Across Canada in 2012, 8 percent of university students self-reported some type of disability. This number has increased from 4 percent in 2003 (Canadian University Survey Consortium 8).

In Ontario, between 2011 and 2012, approximately 46,700 postsecondary students were registered with the Offices for Students with Disabilities (OSDs) at publicly funded postsecondary institutions across the province. This figure includes 25,032 students with disabilities at publicly funded colleges, representing almost 14 percent of total college enrolment (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities 2013).

The number of postsecondary students with disabilities is rising across the province, as demonstrated by the 66 percent increase in number of students registering with disability offices since 2003-04 (McCoy and DeClou 9).

The following chart illustrates the disparity between the attainment levels of college and university accreditation for Ontarians with and without disabilities in 2006. Compared to the rest of Canada, Ontario has a much higher proportion of students with a disability who attended college, but fewer students with a disability who attended university (McCloy and DeClou 7). Overall, 43 percent of the population in Ontario with disabilities had some type of postsecondary credential in 2008, one percent higher than the rest of country.

According to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), a “disability” is defined as: a. any degree of physical disability (infirmary, malformation, or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury); b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability; c. a learning disability; d. a mental disorder; e. any injury for which benefits were claimed.

Figure 2: Level of Educational Attainment for Adults with and without Disabilities in Ontario, aged 25-44, 2006

Level of Education	People with Disabilities	People without Disabilities
	%	%
College Credential	31.5	32.1
University Degree	22.4	36.1

Source: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

Employment Outcomes

The rising levels of postsecondary education among the population with disabilities has resulted in a narrowing of the gap between the earnings and employment of the general population and persons with disabilities. This can be partly attributed to the fact that higher levels of education are linked to higher levels of employment, regardless of disability status (McCloy and DeClou 26).

Despite high levels of educational attainment, postsecondary graduates with disabilities have a lower employment rate and lower earnings than individuals without disabilities.

In 2006, there was a 12 percent gap in the national employment rate for those with and without disabilities aged 15 to 64 with a university degree and higher (McCloy and DeClou 25). Among individuals with a college diploma, the difference between those with disabilities and those without was even larger at 21 percent.

The charts below detail the difference in employment and unemployment rates among persons with and without disabilities across Canada and their relative levels of educational attainment.

Figure 3: Employment rate, by highest level of educational attainment and disability status for working-age adults aged 15 to 64 (%) in Canada, 2006

Highest Level of Education Attainment	People with Disabilities	People without Disabilities	% Difference (people with vs. people without disabilities)
Below high school diploma	35.0	64.0	45
High school diploma or equivalent	53.9	75.2	28
Trades certificate or equivalent	65.8	81.8	20
College diploma or equivalent	63.2	79.5	21
University degree or above	73.5	83.6	12
TOTAL	53.5	75.1	29

Source: HRSDC Canada; Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) 2006
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/disability_profile/2011/fact_sheet/labour_force.shtml

Figure 4: Unemployment rate, by highest level of education attained and disability status for working-age adults aged 15 to 64 (%) in Canada, 2006

Highest Level of Education Attainment	People with Disabilities	People without Disabilities	% Difference (people with vs. people without disabilities)
Below high school diploma	14.0	10.3	34
High school diploma or equivalent	10.0	6.7	49
Trades certificate or equivalent	11.8	6.0	96
College diploma or equivalent	10.8	6.3	71
University degree or above	6.3	4.3	47
TOTAL	10.4	6.8	53

Source: HRSDC Canada; Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) 2006
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/disability_profile/2011/fact_sheet/labour_force.shtml

From this data, we can see that in 2006, **the employment gap was particularly acute among individuals with trades certificates and individuals with college diplomas.**

DATA PROBLEMS:

Throughout the literature, we found three existing gaps in the data related to postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities.

First, there is an absence of clear and consistent data on the number of students with disabilities who are currently attending postsecondary institutions, particularly in the trades and at the graduate level. Current data underestimates the number of students living with a disability since the only metric for measurement is based on whether a student has reported to accessibility services at their respective institution.

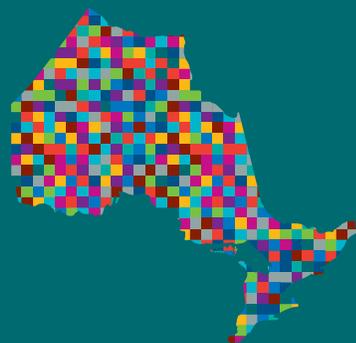
Second, the existing data is outdated. The data on employment and unemployment levels of persons with disabilities is from the 2006 *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey* (PALS) and represents the most robust collection of data in the country to date. There is also a lack of provincial-level data.

We expect that like other under-represented populations in the labour market, the population with disabilities is disproportionately hit harder by general downturns in the economy than the population without (Hogarth et al. 67). This assertion, however, is subject to empirical confirmation.

Third, the data does not capture underemployment, which we suspect is more prevalent among the population with disabilities. Many postsecondary graduates with disabilities may report that they have gained employment. However, the data does not account for those working part-time, in precarious employment, or in jobs unrelated to their field of study.

Overall, we function in a data vacuum. We need more recent and representative data, including on the employment status of graduates with and without disabilities post-graduation (McMaster University 2).

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT



BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Building bridges between small and medium-sized enterprises and the skilled, under-tapped labour pool of postsecondary graduates with disabilities is key to creating a 21st century workforce.

In order to do so, we must first understand the barriers to employment for postsecondary graduates with disabilities within the small and medium-sized enterprise community, and the solutions that can be designed to address them.

Our research identified two types of barriers to employment for postsecondary graduates with disabilities: demand-side and supply-side.

Demand-side barriers are encountered by employers in hiring postsecondary graduates with disabilities.

Supply-side barriers are the challenges facing postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities in their job search and placement with employers.

Demand-Side Barriers

The three main demand-side barriers that emerged from our research were:

1. Myths and misperceptions held by employers about the constraints and costs of employing persons with disabilities.
2. High opportunity costs associated with tapping into the labour pool of persons with disabilities, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises.
3. Absence of information on how to recruit, accommodate, and retain potential employees with disabilities and the overall hiring process.

1. Myths and Misperceptions

One of the biggest demand-side barriers that emerged from the literature review was the misperceptions held by employers regarding the skills, education, workplace behaviour, and costs associated with hiring and retaining persons with disabilities.

The four most common myths and misperceptions identified in the literature are:

1. Employees with disabilities are less productive than their colleagues.
2. Employees with disabilities are harder to dismiss for underperformance.
3. Costs associated with hiring and accommodating employees with disabilities are too high.
4. Employees with disabilities will be a burden to other employees without disabilities.

The 2013 *Ontario Chamber of Commerce Membership Survey* tested the common myths and misperceptions held by Ontario employers about employees with disabilities.

The following myths resonated the most among small and medium-sized enterprise survey respondents:

- 38 percent believe it is more difficult to dismiss an underperforming employee with a disability than one without.
- 21 percent think that considerable expense is necessary to accommodate employees with disabilities.
- 12 percent believe it too costly and time consuming to find potential employees among persons with disabilities.

Some myths identified through the literature review did not resonate as strongly:

- 9 percent of small and medium-sized enterprise respondents feel that candidates with disabilities do not have the knowledge, skills, or education necessary to perform the jobs for which they are being hired.
- 6 percent believe employees with disabilities will be a burden to other employees without disabilities.

Dispelling the myths and misperceptions held by small and medium-sized enterprises about employees with disabilities is an important first step in breaking down the barriers between employers and this significant pool of talent. As such, the following information informs the OCC's demand-side recommendations.

Myth 1: Employees with disabilities are less productive than their colleagues.

Fact: Research shows no job performance difference between employees with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts.

According to a WCG International Consultants' survey for the Government of British Columbia:

- 90 percent of employees with disabilities rated average or better on job performance than their non-disabled colleagues.
- 86 percent of employees with disabilities rated average or better on attendance than their non-disabled colleagues.

The experiences of large corporations who have successfully integrated diversity strategies into their hiring processes, such as Dupont and Royal Bank of Canada, show that when businesses recruit employees with disabilities, they either meet or exceed employer expectations (Maver).

Myth 2: Employees with disabilities are harder to dismiss for underperformance.

Fact: Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, employees with disabilities fall under the same legislation and provisions as employees without disabilities when it comes to lawful termination, and are therefore no more difficult to dismiss than any other employee group.

Moreover, according to the 2013 *Ontario Chamber of Commerce Membership Survey*, **75 percent of Ontario small and medium-sized enterprises rated the performance of employees with a disability the same when compared with other employee groups.**

According to the Human Resources Professionals Association survey, 79 percent of human resource professionals in Ontario rated the performance of employees with disabilities the same when compared with other employee groups.

Myth 3: The costs associated with hiring and accommodating employees with disabilities are too high.

The perception that accommodation costs are prohibitive is a significant barrier for employers, and is largely attributable to a lack of information on the needs of this labour pool. In a recent BMO Financial Group study from 2012, 67 percent of survey respondents did not know how much accommodations would cost, with the average guess being \$10,000 CAD.

Fact: Research demonstrates that cost is a minimal issue, and given high job performance indicators, hiring employees with disabilities makes good business sense.

While the data is inconsistent, generally speaking, accommodations for persons with disabilities may entail small up-front costs or none at all. The same BMO Financial Group study from 2012 shows that 20 percent of employees with a disability require no accommodation at all, with the average cost for those who do being \$500 (BMO Financial Group 2012).

In another study of almost 2,000 employers conducted by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) between 2004 and 2012, 57 percent said the accommodations needed by employees cost absolutely nothing, while 37 percent reported a one-time cost (Fredeen et. al 2013).

For those that do require accommodations, the top five most common workplace accommodations required are (Wright 42):

- Modified duties
- Flexible scheduling
- Workspace/equipment modifications
- Building modifications
- Assistive devices

Because the most common disabilities among postsecondary students and graduates are mental health and learning related, the priority needs expressed by students in the OCC's focus groups were additional time, scheduling flexibility, and the ability to take work off-site - accommodations that would cost a business little to nothing to implement.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Businesses can experience multiple direct and indirect economic benefits from hiring an employee with a disability.

Employees with disabilities tend to have a longer history with employers than their non-disabled counterparts.

The business benefits of having lower turnover rates is emphasized when the cost-per-hire and training for new employees is factored into the equation: a recent study by the Corporate Leadership Council estimates that the cost-per-hire (including training) of entry level college positions is roughly \$9,798, while mid-level positions are around \$8,291 (Fredeen et. al 2013).

Companies who have actively hired employees with disabilities have also seen no increases in workplace and safety claims. In fact, in the United States, Walgreens has witnessed 78 percent lower overall costs associated with accidents and a 40 percent lower safety incident rate at its two distribution centres with large disability forces compared to other distribution centres across the country (Fredeen et. al 2013).

Myth 4: Employees with disabilities will be a burden to other employees without disabilities.

Fact: Research shows that inclusive workplaces are better, more energizing places to work and are actually more profitable over the long-run.

In a knowledge economy, talent and innovation spur competitive advantage and drive overall success (Lynch 2011).

According to a Deloitte survey conducted in 2011, 70 percent of young individuals aged 18 to 26 say a company's commitment to the community, including the hiring of a diverse workforce, has an influence on their decision to work there (Wharton School 2012).

Diversity drives innovation because it brings in new ways of thinking.

Tammy Kelly, IBM Canada

IMPROVING CORPORATE IMAGE AND CONSUMER SPENDING

Embassy Suites Hotels has found that the presence of employees with disabilities has increased the number of clients with disabilities using their services (Gandz 27).

Businesses that employ people that reflect their customer base, such as persons with disabilities, can grow their top and bottom lines by accessing a consumer spending base of \$25 billion (Wright 25).

When this base is expanded to include the population of disability stakeholders (friends/family/colleagues), this consumer pool represents almost 53 percent of the population (Onley 8).

While myths and misperceptions do exist among small and medium-sized enterprises, the OCC focus group consultations found that barriers 2 and 3, high opportunity costs and an absence of information for small and medium-sized enterprises on how to recruit, accommodate, and retain employees with disabilities, **are in fact the most significant demand-side barriers.**

2. High Opportunity Costs

The opportunity costs (foregone resources, i.e. time, money, effort) in tapping specialized labour pools and developing explicit diversity programs are disproportionately high for small and medium-sized enterprises, even if they make good business sense.

Small and medium-sized enterprises lack economies of scale. Economies of scale “permit larger organizations to employ a team of specialists to address the complexities involved in managing HR programs, but this is not a viable option for many small and medium-sized enterprises” (Kishore, Mousumi and Kiran 2).

Human Resource (HR) decisions in small and medium-sized enterprises are often the direct responsibility of the business owners and general managers who are consumed by the day-to-day operations of a business. As such, small and medium-sized enterprises tend to rely on informal hiring practices, including networking or referrals from current employees.

Since postsecondary graduates with disabilities may not have access to large employment networks, small and medium-sized enterprises may not meet candidates with disabilities through these unconventional hiring practices.

Due to high opportunity costs, small and medium-sized enterprises are also less likely to “go that extra mile” to tap unconventional labour pools, even when a generalized labour shortage exists.

3. Absence of Information

An abundance of information currently exists on how to recruit, accommodate, and retain employees with disabilities. However, the information is not specific to small and medium-sized enterprises, nor does it address the hiring of postsecondary graduates with disabilities. The existing information is geared towards large firm employers with human resource departments (that often have federally mandated diversity requirements).

Small and medium-sized enterprise focus group participants as well as Human Resources Professionals Association survey respondents highlighted that best practices and success stories from other organizations, as well as guidelines on how to find and accommodate postsecondary graduates with disabilities are missing.

A one-stop or centralized information resource outlining the necessary steps to successfully recruit, accommodate, and retain employees with disabilities was identified as a mechanism that could help lower opportunity costs for small and medium-sized enterprises and successfully connect them with graduates with disabilities.

Most people do not engage an individual with a disability because they do not know now.

Scott Burton, Dolphin Digital Technologies Inc.

Demand-Side Best Practice Models

The following are elements of delivery models to consider for bridging the gap between employers and graduates with disabilities.

1. Business to Business (B2B) Model

A Business-to-Business (B2B) partnership model facilitates the creation of mentorships among businesses in order to communicate best practices to mentee small and medium-sized enterprises.

BEST PRACTICE

CCRW Skills Training Partnership (STP)

The idea behind B2B partnerships is that business leaders are more likely to listen to the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities when espoused from a champion within a similar field.

The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work's (CCRW) Skills Training Partnership (STP) currently represents an active B2B partnership that connects employers in the same industry to provide guidance in the recruiting and successful training of persons with disabilities. The STP model is a CCRW trademarked and federal government recognized "effective practices" approach to integrating persons with disabilities into the workforce (CCRW).

2. Employer Roadmap for Recruiting, Accommodating, and Retaining Graduates with Disabilities

Information is provided to employers on the processes involved in recruiting, accommodating, and retaining employees with disabilities. The information within the roadmap is based on proven strategies identified within both the small and medium-sized enterprise and large firm business communities.

‘Tone from the Top’	Inclusive Hiring Practices	Community Partnerships	Internships, Co-op Opportunities and Part-time Employment
Messaging			
<p>Developing an inclusive and flexible working environment for all employees starts with ‘tone from the top’.</p> <p>Employers need to understand what reasonable accommodation looks like.</p> <p>Messaging to leadership, hiring managers, and general employees must help emphasize that inclusiveness is about proportionality; what each business can do, not what it cannot.</p>	<p>Changing hiring practices to be more inclusive is one of the simplest and most cost-effective strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises to begin recruiting postsecondary graduates with disabilities.</p> <p>Stating that a business is an “inclusive” employer in job postings, as well as including wheelchair accessible signs in an office/workplace, signals to a potential employee that a business is open to thinking about disability in a tangible way.</p> <p>Small and medium-sized enterprises can ask candidates if there are any accommodations required for the interview.</p> <p>Additionally, asking new hires if they are comfortable working with a person with a disability will foster inclusivity throughout the entire organization.</p>	<p>Developing partnerships within the community is an important step that can help small and medium-sized enterprises decrease the search costs associated with finding prospective candidates with disabilities.</p> <p>Community partners can play an important role in helping employers accommodate and retain employees.</p> <p>Many community partners provide support throughout the entire employment cycle, including workplace readiness and accommodation and post-employment transition assistance for when an employee with a disability is ready to pursue new opportunities.</p>	<p>Opportunities for internships, mentoring, and co-op programs particularly aimed at postsecondary graduates with disabilities are important strategies to increasing employment among this labour pool.</p> <p>Through part-time employment opportunities, students with disabilities are able to try out a potential career path and gain valuable work experience, while employers are given the opportunity to become more familiar with a variety of accommodation needs.</p>

Best Practice Examples			
<p>IBM Canada “Shades of Blue” training program for hiring managers combines presentations, group discussions, role-playing, and videos to build understanding and skills for diverse engagement. Role-playing training programs are effective in this regard, since they put the employer or individual in the position of the employee with a disability, increasing their awareness and understanding of individual needs first hand.</p> <p>Mental Health Works delivered by the Canadian Mental Health Association offers an online learning series for business leadership teams, workshops, and consulting services that can deepen employer awareness and understanding of invisible disabilities in the workplace.</p>	<p>Dolphin Digital Technologies Inc. include ‘equal opportunity’ or ‘inclusive’ employer within all online job postings.</p> <p>Within its job postings, Bombardier Aerospace includes a statement stipulating that they “encourage women, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities to apply”.</p>	<p>Lime Connect is a global not-for-profit organization that attracts, prepares, and connects students with disabilities to scholarships and internships. It also offers full time career opportunities with corporate partners and businesses across the continent.</p> <p>Bank of Montreal (BMO) engages in specific outreach and recruitment activities to attract applicants with disabilities, specifically working in partnership with community agencies such as the CNIB, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, and the Canadian Hearing Society.</p>	<p>Ability Edge is a paid internship program, under the larger umbrella of the Career Edge organization, for recent graduates with self-declared disabilities who have a college or university bachelor’s degree and have little or no related work experience.</p> <p>Bank of Montreal (BMO) utilizes job fairs and campus recruitment, as well as internships and part-time programs, to provide work experience to university students and graduates with disabilities.</p>

3. One-stop Web Resource for connecting Employers with Students and Graduates with Disabilities

A centralized web resource connects employers with potential job candidates with disabilities.

BEST PRACTICE

British Columbia WorkAble Solutions

WorkAble Solutions BC is an initiative of the Government of British Columbia that connects employers to employees with disabilities by providing employment supports and resources. The WorkAble Solutions website provides employers with a one-stop online resource where they can post employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. It also gives job seekers with disabilities access to employers who are specifically interested in hiring from this labour pool and who understand their needs. WorkAble Solutions provides employers with a toolkit to help them recruit and retain employees with disabilities, giving them a “how-to” guide on accessing this labour pool.

WorkBay.net

Workbay.net provides free training to job seekers before employment, to help them prepare for the jobs and careers that they want. Workbay.net also offers a job matching program that allows individuals to align their skills and work needs with available jobs. In addition, the tool allows job seekers to use the information to tailor their employment search or pursue job-specific training.

Supply-Side Barriers

While beyond the mandate of the paper, the OCC research found that there are significant supply-side barriers that prevent the labour pool of postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities from connecting with small and medium-sized enterprises.

The three main supply side-barriers are:

1. Lack of work related experience
2. Institutional barriers
3. Absence of transitional support to employment

1. Work Experience

One of the biggest barriers to the employment of postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities is their lack of work experience. Student focus group participants noted that they often do not have the time to hold part-time jobs or internships while managing a full-time postsecondary course load.

As a result, when students with disabilities apply for jobs post-graduation, often their resumes are missing the vital experience necessary to compete on a level playing field with other applicants.

Due to their lack of work experience, many students with disabilities do not have the same level of exposure to networking opportunities as their non-disabled counterparts. Because the scope of their potential employment network may be smaller, finding employment with smaller organizations becomes all the more challenging as they tend to rely more on informal hiring practices such as personal referrals.

2. Institutional barriers

Accessibility counsellors and students reported gaps in information sharing between accessibility service and career service departments.

Career services in postsecondary institutions play an important role in helping interested students gain the relevant work experience while in school. However, since career advisors serve the general student population, they are often unfamiliar with the specific employment needs of students with disabilities, including issues of disclosure, interviewing, and requesting accommodations.

While accessibility services provide supports for students with disabilities to be successful academically, they are not mandated to provide general employment supports to these students.

Nancy Moulday of TD Canada Trust and the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) emphasized this disconnect, stating, **“I recruit at 35 different universities. The student accessibility services office is there to just support them while there, not to help them with their career. The career office is there to support them in finding employment but do not understand the (career assistance) nuances needed.”**

Both disability stakeholders and postsecondary students with disabilities reiterated the need for increased information sharing between career services and accessibility services that could better prepare postsecondary students with disabilities for the workforce.

3. Transitional Supports

While in school, students with disabilities have access to support mechanisms that help them succeed in their postsecondary career. However, once they leave the academic setting, it can be challenging for many graduates to navigate the employment landscape. They may not know how to independently address workplace issues, such as disclosure and accommodation.

Both disability stakeholders and postsecondary students with disabilities emphasized the severity of this gap in transitional support and the critical nature of post-graduation and post-employment support to the overall labour market attachment of postsecondary graduates with disabilities.

Even though this paper is focused on addressing demand-side barriers, the issue of disclosure was identified repeatedly in focus groups as a key supply-side barrier that is an impediment to bridging the gap between small and medium-sized enterprises and postsecondary graduates.

TO DISCLOSE OR NOT DISCLOSE?

Although postsecondary educational attainment narrows the employment gap between those with and without a disability, fears of stigmatization in the workplace remain (McCloy and DeClou 26).

In a 2011 survey of employed graduates with learning disabilities by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), 62 percent of respondents reported that they chose not to reveal their disability, often for fear of being stigmatized (25).

Students who chose not to disclose their disability often cited the fear that doing so would either preclude them from obtaining employment or negatively impact their career prospects after employment.

One student focus group participant expressed apprehension at applying to jobs in the private sector because he believed a private sector firm would not be as willing to accommodate him upon disclosure as a non-profit or government employer would.

Invisible vs. Visible Disabilities

Disclosure is a particularly sensitive issue for students with invisible disabilities, a group that comprises two-thirds of the student population with disabilities.

The three most common disabilities reported among provincial postsecondary accessibility offices are learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and chronic illness.

Student focus group participants with invisible disabilities expressed that it is harder to gain employment because some invisible disabilities, such as psychiatric disabilities, tend to be more frequently misunderstood and more heavily stigmatized.

There were differing opinions among students with invisible disabilities on when and how to disclose. While some students emphasized the need for full-disclosure in the interview, many disagreed, believing that if they were to disclose at the interview stage they would not be considered for the job.

When employees do not disclose, employers are unaware of their employees' needs. If an employee with a disability is underperforming because they lack the necessary supports to excel in the workplace, both employers and employees lose out.

Students do not want to disclose because they feel they will be stigmatized...even when they think there may be a benefit to disclosing, they are reluctant because of fear of being pigeon-holed.

Jayne Greene-Black, York University

As employers learn how to tap the labour pool of persons with disabilities and as the myths are dispelled, individuals will have less of a disincentive to disclose.

Supply-Side Best Practice Models

The following is a delivery model to consider for bridging the gap between employers and graduates with disabilities.

1. Information sharing and support for career service departments in postsecondary institutions to better assist students with disabilities.

BEST PRACTICE

Accessible Career Transition (ACT) Program at McMaster University

The objective of the ACT program was to build upon existing institutional structures to engage various departments (e.g. academic, administrative, student groups) at McMaster University in the implementation of a service delivery model for students and graduates with disabilities.

Included within this model was individualized support services from an ACT case manager that helped students realize employment goals and manage disability issues from the beginning of their educational career until after graduation.

The program also connected students to the Career Transition Success Team that utilized the external community of employers, agencies, and government to realize the employment goals of students with disabilities. Due to lack of funding, the program was discontinued in 2009.

CALL TO ACTION

The global economic downturn continues to have a profound effect on Ontario. Unemployment remains high, the province has lost thousands of manufacturing jobs, and the debt burden is growing.

Ontarians should never lose sight of the fact that in spite of our challenges we remain the envy of the world—and for good reason. Ontario has the highest level of postsecondary credential attainment in the OECD.

For Ontario to prosper we must continue to take tangible steps towards building a strong and sustainable 21st century workforce.

A competitive, productive, and innovative 21st century Ontario depends upon our collective ability to leverage the population of skilled yet under-tapped people in our own backyard, most notably postsecondary graduates with disabilities.

This report has argued that there are two sets of barriers to greater labour market attachment among postsecondary graduates with disabilities - supply-side and demand-side.

The three demand-side barriers identified are:

1. Myths and misperceptions held by employers about the constraints and costs of employing persons with disabilities.
2. High opportunity costs associated with tapping into the labour pool of persons with disabilities, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises.
3. Absence of information on how to recruit, accommodate, and retain potential employees with disabilities and the overall hiring process.

The three supply-side barriers are:

1. Lack of work related experience
2. Institutional barriers
3. Absence of transitional support to employment

Through consultations with small and medium-sized enterprises, large firm employers, and disability stakeholders, the OCC identified the following strategies for employing persons and postsecondary graduates with disabilities within both the small and medium-sized enterprise and large firm business communities:

1. A Business to Business (B2B) Mentorship Program
2. An employer roadmap for recruiting, accommodating and retaining graduates with disabilities
3. A one-stop web resource to connect employers with students and graduates with disabilities
4. Information sharing and support for career service departments in postsecondary institutions to better assist students with disabilities

These best practice models have proven successful in alleviating the friction between supply and demand, overcoming the high opportunity costs facing small and medium-sized enterprises, and providing step-by-step examples of how businesses can begin hiring, accommodating, and retaining postsecondary graduates with disabilities.

The OCC is hopeful that this report will help address the disconnect between small and medium-sized enterprise employers and postsecondary graduates with disabilities.

We invite government, business, civic leaders, and all Ontarians to join us in bridging the gap between small and medium-sized enterprise employers and postsecondary graduates in Ontario.

GLOSSARY

Disability: For the purposes of this report, we use the definition of disability included under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

According to Section 2 of the AODA, “disability” refers to:

(a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

(b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

(c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

(d) a mental disorder, or

(e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Labour Market Attachment: The degree of integration into the regular labour market.

Typically, there are three distinct groups of individuals (or different forms of attachment to the labour market):

1. Strong attachment: individuals with stable, regular employment
2. No attachment: inactive individuals (participating in education, retired, or taking care of the household)
3. Weaker attachment: all other individuals who may be engaged in short-term or informal employment or interrupted by long periods of unemployment

Opportunity Costs: The forgone resources (time, money, effort, etc.) of making one choice over another. For small and medium-sized enterprises, opportunity costs are particularly acute since resources, specifically time and money, are fairly limited, due to a small employee base and managerial scarcity.

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APPENDIX 1: 2013 ONTARIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

A survey distributed to the OCC membership across Ontario probed employer attitudes on hiring persons with disabilities. Distributed as part of our quarterly survey, and released in partnership with Leger Marketing, the survey was an overall success and garnered 2,059 responses from across the province.

The data and information collected from these survey results has been integrated throughout the report, as well as included in more detail below.

The following questions were included in the survey:

1. Does your workplace have a policy that encourages the hiring of people with disabilities?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know/prefer not to answer
 - Not applicable

2. Have you ever hired a person who has identified as having a disability?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know/prefer not to answer
 - Not applicable

3. Have you ever hired a postsecondary graduate with a disability (e.g. university, college, trades/apprenticeships)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know/prefer not to answer
 - Not applicable

If “yes” for either 2 or 3, respondents were asked question 4. If no to both questions 2 and 3 - the survey jumped to question 5.

4. How would you rate your overall impression with the job performance of the employee(s) with a disability?
 - Same as other employee groups
 - Better than other employee groups
 - Worse than other employee groups
 - Don't know/prefer not to answer

5. To the best of your knowledge, please rank the following statements on a scale between 1 and 7, where 1 is completely untrue and 7 is very true.
- Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate employees with disabilities.
 - Persons with disabilities do not have the knowledge, skills, or education necessary to perform the jobs for which I am hiring.
 - Workers with disabilities will be a burden to other employees without disabilities.
 - It is more difficult to dismiss an underperforming employee with a disability than one without.
 - It is too costly and time consuming to find potential employees from this population group.
6. What type of assistance would your company find useful in hiring or retaining a person with a disability? (check all that apply)
- Workplace support for employees with disabilities
 - Disability awareness training for staff
 - Access to information on how to recruit a person with a disability
 - Connections to community partners that aid in recruiting graduates with disabilities (e.g. universities, employment organizations, etc.)
 - Financial assistance with workplace modifications and training
 - Other assistance, please specify:
 - Don't know/prefer not to answer
 - None of the above

Key Results

Small and medium-sized enterprises (those with 1 to 499 employees) represented 85.5 percent of businesses who responded to the survey.

Sectors with the largest percentage of respondents included business services, not-for-profit, financial services/investment management, and retail services.

The following graphs detail the survey results.

Figure 5: Sectors of the economy that had difficulty hiring someone with the right qualifications

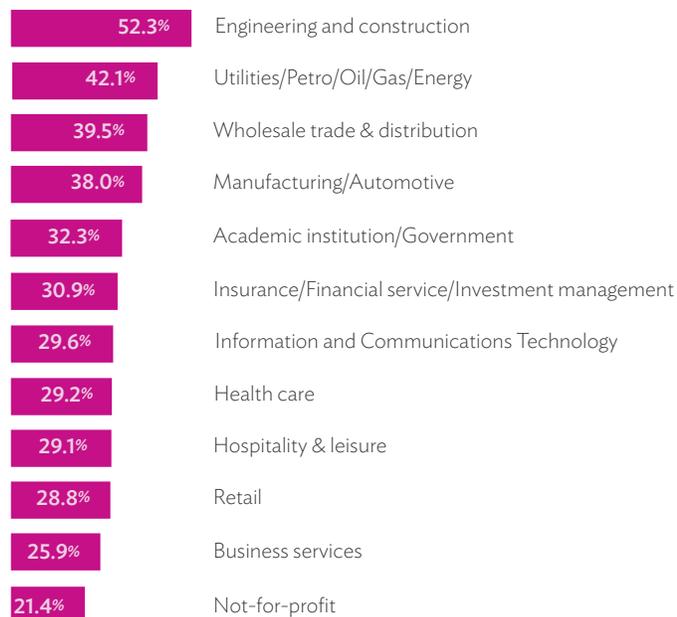
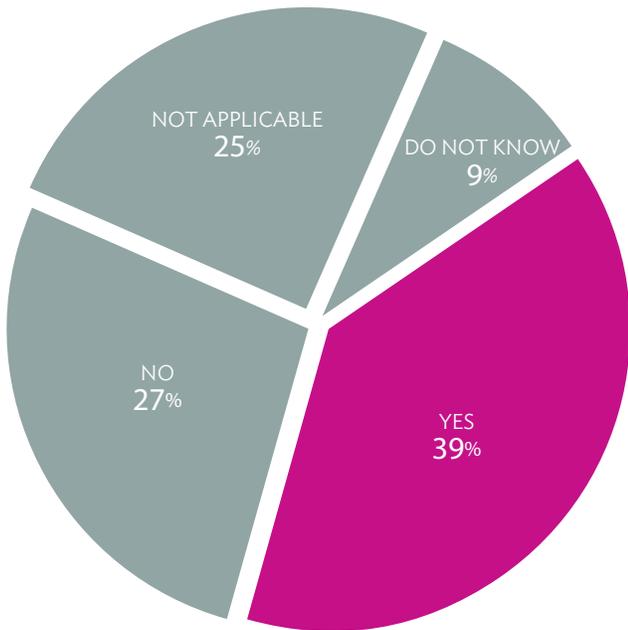
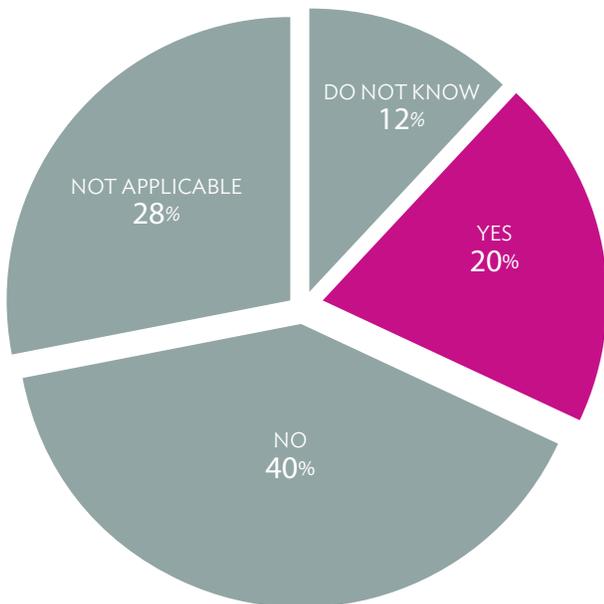


Figure 6: Have you ever hired a person who has identified as having a disability*?



*Small and medium-sized enterprise specific data

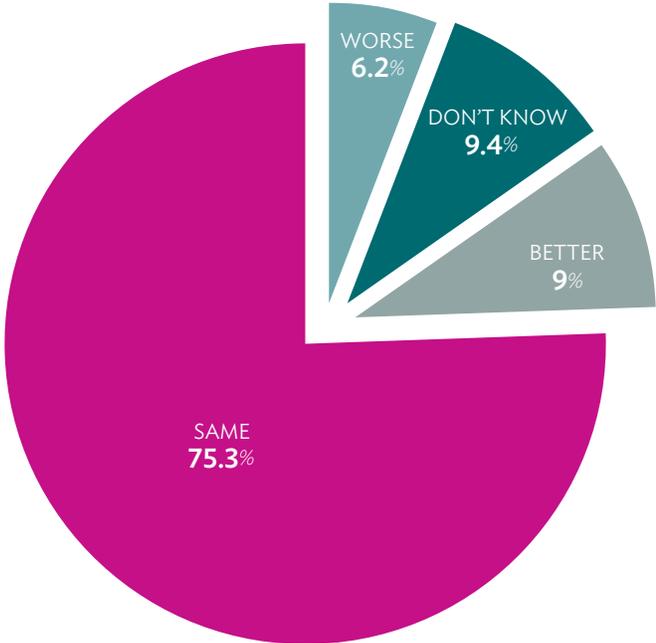
Figure 7: Have you ever hired a postsecondary graduate with a disability*?



*Small and medium-sized enterprise specific data

**Comparative information regarding the number of small and medium-sized enterprise positions that require postsecondary education is not available

Figure 8: How would you rate your overall impression with the job performance of the employee(s) with a disability*?



*Small and medium-sized enterprise specific data

According to the survey, small and medium-sized enterprise opinion on what type of assistance would be useful in the hiring and retaining of a person with a disability did not coalesce around a particular set of solutions. In fact, our survey found the following:

Figure 9: What type of assistance would your company find useful in hiring or retaining a person with a disability?



*Small and medium-sized enterprise specific data

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups with large firm employers, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the disability stakeholder community tested the high level solutions identified in the literature review.

Information gathered from the consultations played an important role in filling the gaps from the literature review.

Focus groups with postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities further informed our research on barriers to employment by providing the valuable perspective of job seekers with disabilities.

The questions asked of each respective focus group are listed below.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

The focus group with small and medium-sized enterprises included businesses with experience hiring persons with disabilities, as well as those without.

1. For those who have hired persons with a disability, can you speak to why you have made a concerted effort to do so?
2. For those who have not, why is that the case? What do you imagine is involved in the hiring process of a person with a disability?
3. Within your organization, can you identify some of the barriers or potential barriers to successfully recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities?
4. What incentives/assistance would help you consider hiring persons with disabilities?
5. What do you need to help bridge the existing employment gap?

Large Firm Employers

1. Does your organization have programs (co-ops, internships, etc.) geared towards postsecondary educated persons with disabilities?
2. What is the impetus for these programs?
3. What are some of the benefits of recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities? Some of the challenges?
4. What are the lessons learned on hiring persons with disabilities for other organizations who wish to set up similar employment programs?

Disability Stakeholder Community

The disability stakeholder focus group had robust representation from employment and community organizations serving persons with disabilities, career and accessibility services from various Ontario universities and colleges, and professional associations.

1. Is there a gap between employment levels of graduates with disabilities and those without?
2. What do employers need to know about employing and retaining persons with disabilities?
3. Can you share some of the partnerships your organization has developed with employers?
4. What kinds of supports and resources do you think are most important for connecting employers with students?

Feedback was also solicited from the college community through a presentation to the College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) at the Provincial Meeting in Toronto in February 2013.

With representatives from college accessibility services across the province, this was an important opportunity to share our preliminary findings and garner feedback on barriers facing college students in their quest for employment. The following questions were posed to attendees:

1. What supports should be carried over by employers for students who are graduating from college?
2. What advice can you give employers for hiring and supporting students with disabilities?
3. What do employers need to know about connecting with colleges to find talent among the population of students with disabilities?

Students with disabilities

A focus group was held with students at McMaster University in mid-February 2013 to further explore the perspective of postsecondary students with disabilities. Individual interviews were also conducted with students and recent graduates with disabilities in Toronto. The following questions were asked:

1. Are you currently employed?
2. If not, have you thought about or actively searched for employment while in school (part-time, summer internship etc.)?
3. Have you experienced any challenges finding employment?
4. If you are or were looking for work, what would help/have helped you in your job search?
5. What has been your experience with accommodations in the workplace? OR What accommodations, if any, would you need from a prospective employer?
6. How do you feel about disclosing your disability to potential employers?
7. How do you feel about looking for employment upon graduation? Specifically as a job candidate with a disability?

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- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
- Career Edge Organization/Ability Edge
- CIBC
- College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI)
- Contingent Workforce Solutions
- Dolphin Digital Technologies Inc.
- IBM Canada
- Inter-University Disability Issues Association (IDIA)
- Job Opportunity Information Network (JOIN)
- Loblaws Companies Ltd.
- McMaster University
- National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)
- One Voice Network
- Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)
- RAPP OPTICAL Ltd.
- SOL CUISINE
- Xiris Automation
- York University

ABOUT THE ONTARIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is the most diverse and representational business group in the province. The OCC works closely with governments, labour, academia, and other business associations to create a stronger and more vibrant Ontario economy.

The OCC represents 60,000 businesses across the province through our network of local chambers of commerce and boards of trade. Our members employ about two million people and produce roughly 17 percent of Ontario's Gross Domestic Product.

Ontario Chamber of Commerce Current Taskforces

- Immigration Taskforce
- Energy Taskforce
- The Big Move Taskforce

Upcoming OCC Policy Releases

- *Report on the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board* (spring 2013)
- *Report on Ontario's Electricity System* (Summer 2013)

Get Involved

If you would like to get involved in the OCC's taskforces, please contact Josh Hjartarson at joshhjartarson@occ.on.ca

TO NARROW ONTARIO'S
SKILLS GAP, EMPLOYERS
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POTENTIAL OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES



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